

Masukagami Ō

*The Clear Mirror*

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A Chronicle of the Japanese Court  
During the Kamakura Period  
(1185-1333)

Translated, with Notes and an Introduction, by  
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## Preface

On the fifteenth of the second month, the day when the Buddha's life ended in the crane grove, "like firewood utterly consumed by fire," I made a pilgrimage to the Shōryōji Temple in Saga, drawn by thoughts of the twice-transmitted memento of the Tathāgata; and there I paid my respects with silent chants, such as "Ever am I on the Mount of the Numinous Eagle."<sup>1</sup> While I was thus engaged, an old nun came up beside me—well over 80 by the look of her, leaning on a pigeon staff.<sup>2</sup> Presently, she sent off her attendant, a young woman whose appearance seemed appropriate to her mistress's status.

"I told myself I could manage, but this backache is unbearable," she said to her. "I'll have to spend the night in one of the rooms here. Go to the monks' quarters and speak to them about a sacred lamp."<sup>3</sup> After chanting the name of Śākyamuni Buddha several times, she turned her gaze to the brilliant evening light, which was flooding the hall. "Ah! It reminds me of myself—that sun just about to sink behind the mountains!" She leaned against a support, her figure conveying an indefinable suggestion of elegance and discernment.

I moved closer. "How far have you come? Shall I keep you company until your attendant returns?" I asked.

"I live near here, but the trip seemed endless. Maybe it's because I'm getting along in years. It's not easy, being old," she said.

"Might I ask your age?"

"It's so great that I myself can't really say: well over a hundred, anyway." With old-fashioned refinement, she continued, "This temple was the only place that survived unscathed during those bizarre disorders.<sup>4</sup> Most assuredly, it was thanks to the power of the holy Tathāgata."

Much impressed by her remarkable age, and well aware that such people were reputed to tell tales of earlier days, I pursued the conversation with enthusiasm. "I've always wanted to learn things about the past—always hoped

to meet someone far advanced in years. This is a wonderful treat! Won't you talk to me a little while? Even when I happen across an old poem on a scrap of paper, I feel that I'm in touch with a lost world," I said.

Her shrunken lips moved in a toothless smile. "How could I tell you anything? After all these years, the things I heard and saw in my youth are hazier than faded dreams. I don't remember anything at all." Even as she spoke, she seemed not disinclined to agree.

"I believe others have bestowed the accolade *Kana Nihongi* on the words of an old man somebody encountered when there was an enlightenment lecture at the Urin-in. And there are many people who read and admire the tale told by a white-haired lady who is said to have been Yotsugi's granddaughter—someone probably much like yourself.<sup>1</sup> So please do speak," I urged.

She seemed to recognize that I was trying to flatter her, but she opened her shriveled lips and replied. "Back in those days, everyone lived longer and had greater abilities than we do now, so it was natural that those two people could think straight enough to tell everything the way they did. I am a woman of no account at all, just someone who has accumulated lots of empty years. I feel quite vague even about what's happened in the past few days; and I would be bound to make shocking mistakes if I tried to go back any further. But tell me about the old books you've seen. What are they like?"

"There was one I barely glanced at, called *Mizukagami* [The Water Mirror], I believe—a very general history of the period from the reign of Emperor Jimmu on. Next, *Okagami* [The Great Mirror]: as I remember, that one began way back in the reign of Emperor Montoku and continued to Emperor Go-Ichijō. Then there was another in 40 chapters, called something like *Yotsugi* [A Chronicle], which was a fairly detailed account of the reigns from the Enji Emperor, Daigo, to Retired Emperor Horikawa. Also, there was *Imakagami* [The New Mirror], which I understand was written by a certain minister of state, and which seems to have covered the reigns from Go-Ichijō to Takakura. And yes, I think another one, *Iya yotsugi* [Further Chronicles], by Lord Takanobu, carried events up to the beginning of Emperor Go-Toba's reign. But when it comes to more recent occurrences, very little seems to be known with any certainty. Won't you please be so kind as to tell me whatever you can remember? Everyone here tonight would be delighted to listen. It must have been my karma to meet someone like you!" I said.

"I feel very unclear about the past," she replied, "but it's true that much would remain in doubt if I declined to talk about what happened next, so I'll tell you a little something—just a few odds and ends. I'll probably make all kinds of mistakes; please be sure to correct them. It can't help but be a pitiful performance. Please don't compare it to those old books."

She produced a poem in a quavering voice:

oroka naru  
kokoro ya mien  
masukagami

Adding reflections  
far short of old images,  
the clear mirror

furuki sugata ni  
tachiyoobade

will undoubtedly reveal  
only a foolish heart.

It was a refined, old-fashioned thing to do.

"I gather that you want your words recorded, just as was done in those earlier works," I said. I replied to her poem with this:

ima mo mata  
mukashi o kakeba  
masukagami  
furinuru yoyo no  
ato ni kasanen

Now that once again  
we make a record of the past,  
a clear mirror  
will reflect reigns of old,  
continuing an ancient line.

## Poets:

Hideyoshi, Ietaka, Jien, Kuniakyo, Masatsune, Teika, Yoshitsune.

The 82nd sovereign after the founding of the imperial line was Emperor Go-Toba, whose personal name was Takanari. He was Retired Emperor Takakura's fourth son. His mother was Shichijō-in, a daughter of Nobutaka, the master of the palace repairs office. Shichijō-in seems to have been something of a secret imperial favorite during Emperor Takakura's reign (a time when she served the empress as Lady Hyōe-no-kami), for the future emperor was born to her on the fifteenth of the seventh month in the fourth year of Jishō [1180]. Around the spring of that same year, Emperor Takakura abdicated in favor of the three-year-old son of his empress, Kenreimon-in, and the consequent ascendancy of the Heike clan prevented the younger prince from receiving any special attention. Then the former emperor died on the fourteenth of the first month of the following year, which made it seem even less likely that the boy might succeed to the throne.

After the Heike carried off the new emperor, Antoku, to wander distant western seas, Priestly Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa summoned his remaining grandsons.<sup>1</sup> It was in his mind to elevate the oldest, the Third Prince, to the imperial dignity, but the Third Prince took a dislike to him and burst into tears. He dismissed the child in a huff and called for the Fourth Prince, who went straight to his arms and settled happily onto his knee. "This is my real grandson," he said. "He looks just the way his father did when he was a little boy. He's delightful." He placed the four-year-old prince on the throne on the twentieth of the eighth month in the second year of Juei [1183].

The Sacred Mirror, the Bead Strand, and the Sword are always transmitted to a new emperor when his predecessor steps down, but now, for the first time, the three treasures were missing, carried off to Tsukushi by Emperor Antoku. It was an extraordinary accession. (The Mirror and the Bead Strand were returned later. Most regrettably, the Sword sank with Emperor Antoku when he entered the sea.)

Emperor Go-Toba's accession audience took place on the 28th day of the seventh month in the first year of Genryaku [1184]. The ceremonies seem to have been performed in the customary manner. It is awesome to imagine the feelings of his older brother, the former emperor, and of all the others, high and low, when the news reached the Heike, who were still wandering in Tsukushi.

The imperial purification was held on the 25th of the tenth month in that same year, and the great thanksgiving festival followed on the 18th of the eleventh month. This poem by Middle Counselor Kanemitsu was inscribed on a folding screen in the Hall of the West. (I think the subject was a place in Tamba Province called Nagata Village.)

kamiyo yori  
kyō no tame to ya

Have they been waiting  
since the age of the gods

yatsukaho ni  
nagata no ine no  
shinai someken

for today's events—  
Nagata's long, rich rice heads,  
bent low with ripening grain?

The young sovereign was very grown up and bright, and the retired emperor was well pleased with him.

The first reading took place on the first day of the twelfth month in the second year of Bunji [1186]; when His Majesty was seven. A junior consort entered the palace in the sixth year of the same era. A daughter of Tsukinowa Chancellor Kanezane, she progressed to the status of empress and later came to be styled Gishūmon-in. Her only child was Shunkamon-in.

The emperor performed the capping ceremony on the third of the first month in the first year of Kenkyū [1190], when he was eleven. He began to rule alone after the death of Priestly Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, which occurred on the thirteenth of the third month in the third year of the same era. No billows rose on the seas in the four directions; no winds disturbed the branches. The realm was peaceful; the populace was tranquil. The waves of the sovereign's encompassing mercy overflowed the confines of our Isles of Rich Harvests; his benevolence was deeper than the shadows on Mt. Tsukuba.<sup>2</sup> Because he was skilled in every pursuit, many men of talent appeared in the provinces, and the age was in no way inferior to earlier times.

His Majesty displayed particular talent as a poet. People quoted any number of his verses, including this noble composition, which was a clear indication of his concern for proper government [SKKS 1635]:

okuyama no  
odoro no shita o  
fumiwakete  
michi aru yo zo to  
hito ni shirasen

Through tangled thickets  
deep, deep in the mountain heart  
I would push my way,  
that I might show to others,  
"Even there lies the right path."

In the first month of the ninth year of Kenkyū [1198], the emperor ceded the throne to his oldest son, who had just turned four. He had reigned for fifteen years. He was barely twenty, not yet of an age to retire, but he may have preferred the freedom of movement and the peace and quiet of a former sovereign's life to the ever-present constraints imposed on a reigning emperor. Happily, he continued to govern as before.

The newly retired sovereign's customary residences were the Toba and Shirakawa mansions, both of which he had refurbished. He also built an indescribably elegant villa at Minase, where, during frequent visits, he celebrated spring blossoms and autumn leaves with entertainments so elaborate that they became the talk of society. The view of the distant Minase River from the villa was especially striking. The retired emperor composed these lines for a Chinese-Japanese poetry competition held around the Genkyū era [1204-1205]:



It may be true that when a man of stature masters an accomplishment, his inferiors will wish to follow in his footsteps. Perhaps that is why there were so many excellent poets of both sexes in Retired Emperor Go-Toba's day. One of them was a certain Lady Kunaikyō. A descendant of Emperor Murakami through Minister of the Left Toshifusa, she belonged to a house that had once enjoyed great prestige, but her father had died as a mere gentleman of fourth rank after holding a succession of minor offices. Although she was very young, she wrote poetry of almost unfathomable depth—quite an extraordinary thing. Before the contest in 1,500 rounds, the retired emperor said to her, "The other participants in this competition are all famous and experienced poets. You may not quite fit into the same category yet, but I thought it wouldn't do any harm to include you. Try your best to compose verses that will be a credit to me." The blush that suffused the lady's face and the tears that filled her eyes were moving evidence of her devotion to the art. Among the 100 poems she submitted, each one of special interest, there was this [SKS 76]:

usuku koki  
nobe no midori no  
wakakusa ni  
ato made miyuru  
yuki no muragie

Pale here, deeper there—  
the green of the young grasses  
on the wild meadow  
where can be seen the traces  
of the snow's uneven melt.

Who would have expected a novice to think of gauging the rate of last winter's snow melt by the color of the grasses? If she had lived to mature years, she would have "moved the invisible spirits and gods." We can only regret her premature death.

The anthology of which I have been speaking was called *Shinkokinshū* [New Collection of Early and Modern Poetry]. On the 26th of the third month in the second year of Genkyū [1205], Retired Emperor Go-Toba held a banquet at the Kasuga Hall to mark its completion—an affair that created a great stir. The former sovereign composed this poem in allusion to *Kokinshū*, the collection compiled in the Engi era [901-922]:

isonokami  
furuki o ima ni  
narabekoshi  
mukashi no ato o  
mata tazunetsutsu

Again we follow  
the old pattern transmitted  
from the ancient age  
when songs of the past were placed  
alongside those of the day.

Regent Yoshitsune:

shikishima ya  
yamato koto no ha  
umi ni shite  
hitoishi tama wa  
migakarenikeri

Well have they been polished—  
the precious jewels gathered  
from the vast ocean  
of poetry composed  
in this land of Yamato!

The other guests seem to have presented poems by turns, but it would be too much trouble to repeat them all.

Uneventful days passed until the second year of Jōgen [1208]. Then, on the 25th of the twelfth month, there was a coming-of-age ceremony for Retired Emperor Go-Toba's second son, a prince born of Shumeimon-in. The retired emperor doted on the boy. He provided him with incomparable costumes and furniture, paid close attention to his upbringing, and finally put him on the throne, in the eleventh month of the fourth year of the same era [1210].

Having just turned sixteen, Emperor Tsuchimikado ought to have been able to look forward to many prosperous years. It was a terrible blow to be deposed. Back in the Eiji era [1141], Emperor Sutoku had not wanted to step down when Priestly Retired Emperor Toba made him abdicate in favor of Emperor Konoe. He had sent pleading messages to the priestly retired emperor until the very night of his successor's elevation, and had turned over the imperial regalia with great reluctance, nursing an anger that led ultimately to the Hōgen Disturbance. But Emperor Tsuchimikado's nature was noble and magnanimous. Granted that he could scarcely have been happy about the situation, he never let his feelings show. People thought he had been ill treated, and his mother, Shōmeimon-in, was heartbroken.

In the twelfth month of that year, the former emperor Tsuchimikado was given the honorific title of retired emperor. He was called the new retired emperor. Go-Toba continued to control the government as senior retired emperor.

The new Emperor Juntoku, whose name, I believe, was Morinari, turned fourteen. His great thanksgiving festival took place on the thirteenth of the eleventh month in the second year of Kenryaku [1212]. Middle Counselor Sukezane, the man who had performed the same function for Emperor Tsuchimikado, composed poems for a ceremonial screen in the Hall of the East. On Nagarayama [shokukks 1912]:

suga no ne no  
nagara no yama no  
mine no matsu  
fukikuru kaze mo  
yorozuyo no koe

Even the pine wind  
on the peak of Nagara,  
timeless as its name,  
seems a voice portending  
a reign for endless ages.

But you probably know all this. It seems to be a failing of the aged to retell familiar tales as though they were new.

Emperor Juntoku's reign was pleasant, a period of gaiety and frequent imperial travel. Particularly interesting was the visit to the Kasuga Shrine in the second year of Kempō [1214], when all the members of the entourage went to remarkable lengths to outdo one another in the splendor of their attire. The emperor recalled the occasion when he composed a 100-poem sequence the following year [shokukks 721]:

kasugayama  
kozo no yayoi no  
hana no ka ni  
someshi kokoro wa  
kami zo shiruran

Last spring at Kasuga  
the scent of cherry blossoms  
sank deep in my soul:  
the gods will have understood  
the fervor of my prayers.

Somewhat more talented and lively than his predecessor, Emperor Juntoku excelled in both Japanese and Chinese learning. He composed poetry morning and evening, and it was he who wrote *Yakumo mishô* [Revered Notes on the Art of the Eightfold Clouds] in his later years.<sup>8</sup>

Regent Yoshitsune's daughter was installed as an imperial consort, a brilliant and splendid match.<sup>9</sup> She gave birth to Emperor Juntoku's first son on the tenth of the tenth month in the sixth year of Kempô [1218]. Everyone was happy and excited, satisfied that now, at last, things were as they should be. The child was formally designated an imperial prince very soon, on the 21st of the eleventh month, and was installed in the crown prince's residence on the 26th. It was probably because the emperor was concerned about his son's future that those steps were taken with such unusual haste, even before the ceremony marking the 50th day after the baby's birth. Once the succession was settled, all seemed more right with the world. Retired Emperor Tsuchimikado appeared to have reconciled himself to the situation.

Retired Emperor Go-Toba lived just as he pleased. Almost all his time was spent at the Minase villa, where he filled the hours with agreeable occupations, listening to the strains of koto and flute and enjoying the blossoms in springtime and the colored leaves in autumn. The boundless prosperity of his era seemed destined to endure forever.

While playing a game of *go* one day, he called in his younger courtiers, told them to engage in competitions of their own choice, and observed with amusement their valiant efforts to outdo one another at everything from small-bow archery to backgammon. Wishing to obtain some interesting prizes for them, he dispatched a middle captain with a message to Shumeimon-in. "Please send me some things I can use as prizes. Anything will do," he told her. The imperial lady promptly produced a small, metal-fitted Chinese chest, which seemed to be remarkably heavy. When the captain cracked one end open, afraid that something might be amiss, he was astonished to discover a collection of coins.

The retired emperor smiled at his flushed, dismayed face. "Poor fellow! Don't you really know about a thing like that? Coins have been used as stakes in courtiers' archery contests since ancient times. When you asked Her Ladyship for things to serve as prizes, she gave you these because she knows the old customs. It was an admirable response," he said. The captain must have felt embarrassed.

Retired Emperor Go-Toba was adept at virtually all pursuits, cheerful in disposition, and thoroughly knowledgeable in customs and practices. On a certain summer day at the lakeside pavilion in Minase, he drank iced water

and presented the young senior nobles and courtiers with chilled rice and other such dishes. Sipping a bowl of wine, he said, "What a marvelous writer Murasaki Shikibu was! People especially praise the passage in the *Genji* that runs, 'They prepared trout from the nearby river and bullheads from the western river in his presence.'<sup>10</sup> I wonder if anyone can perform a culinary feat for us now."

Leaving his post near the balustrade, a guard from the Hata clan washed some white rice in cold water and offered it on a few leaves, which he plucked from the bamboo grass at the water's edge.

"He must want us to remember, . . . ready to vanish if we pick them up. A clever idea!" His Majesty took off a robe to bestow as a reward.

A master in the art of drinking as in all else, the retired emperor used to drain his bowl time after time. Whatever the circumstances, his personal charm made others feel as though they could never weary of his august presence, not in a thousand years.

I think it was also at the Minase villa that His Majesty held the so-called "Competition Between Selected Poems," a contest for which he chose the entries with scrupulous care. The judging was done on the spot by the participants, which must have caused the authors keen anxiety. The event took place in the ninth month of the second year of Kempô [1214]. All the compositions were outstanding, especially the poem of the left in round seven, from the retired emperor's own brush [cvs 739]:

akashigata  
uraji hareyuku  
asanagi ni  
kiri ni koguru  
ama no tsuribune

In the quiet dawn,  
when clearing skies reveal  
Akashi's shoreline,  
fishing boats row out of sight  
into the lingering mist.

One of the retired emperor's north guards, a certain Fujiwara Hideyoshi, was always commanded to participate in literary events because he was known to be an excellent poet. Although some gentlemen of high rank were represented by no more than one or two verses apiece in this "Competition Between Selected Poems," nine of Hideyoshi's were accepted. Furthermore, it was he who became the retired emperor's opponent in the seventh round, which matched this poem against the one about the fishing boats:

chigirikishi  
yama no ko no ha no  
shitamomiji  
someshi koromo ni  
akikaze zo fuku

Though we vowed to meet  
when the mountain trees turned gold,  
the wind of autumn,  
symbol of satiety,  
pierces my leaf-colored robe.<sup>12</sup>

I have heard that it was considered the honor of a lifetime for a man of his station.

It has always been regarded as impressive that Emperor Daigo should have

## The New Island Guard



Time span: 1190–1222.

Main subjects: Rise of the military; early history of the Kamakura shogunate; Jōkyū Disturbance of 1221; exile of Go-Toba.

Principal characters:

*Chūkyō, Emperor.* Son of Juntoku, whom he succeeded in 1221; deposed by shogunate after Jōkyū Disturbance.

*Go-Toba, Emperor.* Reigning sovereign until abdication in 1198; thereafter governed through chancellor until exile in 1221.

*Juntoku, Emperor.* Son of Go-Toba and Shūmeimon-in. Succeeded Tsuchimikado in 1210; abdicated in favor of Chūkyō in 1221.

*Kintsune, Saionji.* Powerful pro-Kamakura husband of Yoritomo's niece; actually became a minister of state in 1221, two years after his grandson was named shogun.

*Masako, Hōjō.* Daughter of Tokimasa; influential wife of Yoritomo; mother of Yoritomo and Sanetomo.

*Michie, Kujō.* A key figure at court. During this period, he was successively palace minister (1212), minister of the right (1215), minister of the left (1218), and regent (1221); thus, he was actually minister of the left when his son Yoritomo became shogun in 1219.

*Sanetomo, Minamoto.* Second son of Yoritomo; third Kamakura shogun (1203–1219).

*Shichijō-in.* Mother of Go-Toba.

*Shūmeimon-in.* A consort of Go-Toba; mother of Juntoku.

*Tokimasa, Hōjō.* Father-in-law of Yoritomo.

*Tsuchimikado, Emperor.* Son of Go-Toba and Shōmeimon-in. Succeeded Go-Toba in 1198; forced by father to abdicate in 1210.

*Yoritomo, Minamoto.* First son of Yoritomo; second Kamakura shogun (1202–1203).

*Yoritomo, Minamoto.* Victor in the Gempei War; first Kamakura shogun (1192–1199).

*Yoshitoki, Hōjō.* Son of Tokimasa; dominated shogunate after death of Sanetomo in 1219.

them, two clans, the Minamoto and the Taira, have protected the throne from antiquity to the present, each providing its services as times and circumstances have dictated.

The emperor known as Kammu was also called Kashiwabara. He had a son, Prince Katsurahara, minister of ceremonial, whose descendant in the fifth generation, the Taira general Sadamori, had two sons called Korehira and Koretoki. Lord Kiyomori from Nishihachijō, the man who prospered so greatly not long ago, was a descendant in the sixth generation of the older son, Korehira. That branch of the clan met with disaster, and nowadays nobody seems to know whether or not it still barely survives. Koretoki's descendants became mere commoners, except for a certain Heishirō Tokimasa, who seems to have lived in a place in Izu Province called Hōjō District, and to have been Koretoki's descendant in the sixth generation.

Now as regards the Minamoto warriors, some are descended from Emperor Seiwa and others from Retired Emperor Uda. And as regards Assistant Military Guards Commander Yoritomo, who suffered exile to Hirugashima, in Izu Province, after the Heiji Disturbance in Emperor Nijō's reign—that person traced his ancestry to Emperor Seiwa in the eighth generation, and was a grandson of Rokujō Police Lieutenant Tameyoshi. He was the third son of Yoshitomo, the head of the imperial stables of the left. When, his power in decline, Novice-Chancellor Kiyomori presumed to harass Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, the angry former sovereign summoned that same Yoritomo and mustered military forces.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps because it was fated, in an autumn of the Juei era [1182–1183] the Taira scattered like leaves blown by a wintry blast, and at last they sank to the bottom of the sea as debris.

Thereafter, Yoritomo wielded more and more power; it was he who re-placed the Taira as the new guardian of the throne. He lived in a village called Kamakura in Sagami Province, but to his way of thinking he held the world in the palm of his hand. Of course, you all know these things, and I fear it may simply be tiresome to rehearse them, but anyway, it was at around the time of Emperor Go-Toba's accession that Yoritomo became the guardian of the state. He acquired second court rank in the fourth month of the first year of Bunji [1185]—a reward, it was said, for the capture of Taira Munemori, the Yashima Palace Minister. Then, at the start of the Ken'yū era [1190–1198], he journeyed to the capital. Needless to say, his procession was an awe-inspiring spectacle. Female entertainers came to meet the party along the way; and when they reached the post station at Hashimoto [Bridgeside], in Sagami Province, great numbers of them appeared in indescribably gorgeous costumes.

With a smile, Yoritomo said:

hashimoto no  
kimi ni nani o ka  
watasubeki

What should be our gifts  
to the maidens who greet us  
beside the bridge?

The warrior Kajiwara Heizō Kagetoki answered at once:

The origins of the valiant warrior class may be traced to ancient generals like Yōgo and Toshihito, but I know too little of such men to discuss them. After



tada somayama no  
kurede arabaya

It would be my desire  
to give them nothing at all!

It was an ungracious response.<sup>2</sup> But Yoritomo brought out saddles, bolts of dark blue tie-dyed cloth, and other presents, all of which the women received with transports of delight.

On the ninth day of the twelfth month in that year [1190], Yoritomo was named provisional major counselor, and he also received a concurrent major captaincy in the bodyguards of the right.<sup>3</sup> On the first day of the twelfth month, he offered formal expressions of gratitude; on the fourth day, he resigned both offices. It was at that time that he was named constable-general of all the provinces, and that he moved to gather stewardships into the hands of his own retainers. And it must surely have been then that imperial authority in our nation began to decline.

People of all degrees showered Yoritomo with farewell presents when he was ready to set out toward the east. He received this poem from Archbishop Jien, who was the author of the long poem I told you about, and who had offered prayers on his behalf for many years [shokuzs 792]:

azumaji no  
kata ni nakoso no  
seki no na wa  
kimi o miyako ni  
sume to narikeri

The barrier name  
Nakoso, "Do not come,"  
on the eastland road  
commands you to remain  
forever in the capital.

Yoritomo sent this reply [shokuzs 793]:

miyako ni wa  
kimi ni ōsaka  
chikakereba  
nakoso no seki wa  
tōki to o shire

Know that Nakoso  
is far from where I live.  
Since Ōsaka  
is close to the capital,  
we two shall meet very soon.

Later, he traveled westward again to attend the dedicatory services at the Tōdaiji Temple. He took Buddhist vows in the east in the first month of the first year of Shōji [1199], near the beginning of Retired Emperor Tsuchimikado's reign, and died at the age of 53 on the thirteenth of the same month. It must have been about twenty years since he had first come to prominence in the fourth year of Jishō [1180].

Yoritomo's wife was the daughter of Hōjō Shiro Tokimasa, the man I mentioned a while ago. He had two sons by her: Yoriie, the elder, and Sanetomo, the younger. Yoriie succeeded to the clan chieftaincy immediately after his father's death. The court granted him junior second rank on the 22nd of the sixth month in the first year of Kennin [1201] and invested him with the title of shōgun on the same day. In the following year, he was made commander of the gate guards of the left. But his somewhat rash temperament gradually lost

him the support of the warriors.

Even during Yoritomo's lifetime, Tokimasa had held the title of governor of Tōtōmi Province and had acted as personal adviser to the shōgun; but now, with his grandson in office, his prestige soared, his power kept increasing, and he behaved just as he pleased. He had two sons. The older one was Munetoki. The second, Yoshitoki, was a bold and clever man who allied himself with Yoritomo's younger son, Sanetomo, in formulating plans to the disadvantage of Yoriie, whom he considered unfit to be shōgun.<sup>4</sup>

Beset by the disaffection that swelled with every passing day, and further threatened by a severe illness, Yoriie took Buddhist vows at the age of 22, on the sixteenth day of the ninth month in the third year of Kennin [1203]. It must have been a bitter disappointment: he was at a time in life when attachments abound and the secular world offers powerful attractions. He chose his infant son, Ichiman, as his successor, but nobody accepted the child. In the end, Yoriie was cut down at Shūzenji in Izu Province, where he had gone from Kamakura to seek a cure in the hot springs. Before long, Ichiman also perished.<sup>5</sup> All this was undoubtedly plotted by Sanetomo and Yoshitoki.

Thus, as Yoritomo's sole heir, Sanetomo rose unhindered in rank and office: everything went just as he wished. He was granted senior second rank on the 27th of the second month in the first year of Kempō [1213], in reward, it was said, for having rebuilt the Kan-in Palace. In the sixth year of the same era [1218], he became a provisional major counselor, with the additional title of major captain of the bodyguards of the left. They even gave him a third appointment, head of the stables of the left. And in the very same year, he became palace minister, still retaining his captaincy in the bodyguards. It was an impressive rise, elevating him to an even higher level than his father had achieved. Also, because of his pleasant disposition, courage, refinement, and generally excellent personal qualities, he enjoyed unprecedented support from the warriors—even more than might have been expected. At some point, he composed this poem [SCSS 1204]:

yama wa sake  
umi wa asenan  
yo naritomo  
kimi ni futagokoro  
ware araba ya wa

Though a day were to come  
when mountains would crumble  
and seas go dry,  
never could this heart of mine  
betray our sovereign lord.

Tokimasa died in the third year of Kempō [1215], leaving Yoshitoki to succeed him.

Yoriie had another son, a monk named Kugyō. Embittered by his father's assassination, this monk was obsessed with the idea of revenge. Meanwhile, Sanetomo rose to the office of minister of the right, a promotion calling for a formal banquet of a kind that was a great novelty in the east.<sup>6</sup> The guest of honor came from the capital, as did many other senior nobles and courtiers. Now it happened that Sanetomo planned to offer thanks at the Hachiman Shrine (the one that had been moved to Kamakura). Everyone knew it would



be a magnificent event; there were even people from the capital in the procession, to say nothing of warriors from the various provinces. Under cover of the uproar created by shouting voices and throngs of spectators, Kugyō slipped in among the others with a thin white robe draped over his head in feminine style, as though seeking a glimpse of the new minister leaving his carriage. Then, with a clean, well-aimed stroke, he cut off Sanetomo's head. You may imagine the ensuing tumult. It was the 27th day of the first month in the first year of Jōkyū [1219].

The great crowd assembled at the scene was stunned, and everyone in the capital was aghast when the news arrived there. It was like the extinction of a flame. The guests from the capital went home in tears, wringing their sleeves.

Sanetomo had left no children, so there was nobody to succeed him. As a temporary measure until things quieted down, the shōgunal responsibilities were delegated to his mother, Lady Masako—she who had had no time even to dry her tears, and who spent every day despairing over the loss of both her sons.

Because it would hardly have done to leave matters in such a state, a messenger was dispatched to Minister of State Kintsune, asking him to send one of his sons to Kamakura to serve as shōgun. Kintsune was about to acquiesce when his son-in-law, Kujō Minister of the Right Michiie, suggested his own two-year-old son, Yoritsune, instead. Kintsune thought that it would be just as desirable to have a grandson in the office as a son, so he agreed.

The party set out eastward in the sixth month of that year [1219] and arrived in Kamakura on the nineteenth day of the seventh month. The child in his swaddling clothes was exactly like one of the surrogate deities people worship at festivals; it was Yoshitoki, the provisional master of the capital office of the right, who determined how all matters of government were handled. Still, this was the first time a regent's son had become shōgun. It was to this little lord that the Kasuga divinity had referred when he said, not long before the fall of the Heike, "After Yoritomo's death, it will be proper for me to take charge of the sword."<sup>7</sup>

The whole realm had fallen under the sway of Yoshitoki, a man whose power all but surpassed that of Yoritomo in the old days. Naturally enough, his shocking excesses inspired secret thoughts of opposition in Retired Emperor Go-Toba's mind. The senior nobles and courtiers close to the ruler, the junior north guards, the west guards, and all the other private sympathizers with the imperial plans engaged in military pursuits day and night. I don't know how he might have learned, but His Majesty excelled even the experts in the art of appraising swords, and he passed personal judgment on the quality of his men's blades.

The third year of Jōkyū [1221] began amidst this activity. On the twentieth day of the fourth month, Emperor Juntoku abdicated in favor of the crown prince, who had just turned four. All recent sovereigns had ascended

the throne at that age, so the new emperor, Chūkyō, could be expected to have a bright future. On the 23rd of the same month, there was an imperial proclamation regarding titles. Emperor Juntoku, who had just abdicated, was given the title new retired emperor, and his older brother, Tsuchimikado, was to be called middle retired emperor. Their father, Go-Toba, retained the title of senior retired emperor. Minister of State Iezane, who had been regent, was replaced after the abdication by Minister of the Right Michiie, the father of the young shōgun in Kamakura.

Meanwhile, news of Retired Emperor Go-Toba's plans leaked out in spite of every effort at secrecy, and the authorities in Kamakura probably adopted countermeasures.

As an initial step, His Majesty ordered an attack on the shōgunal deputy in the capital, Iga no Hangan Mitsusue. The imperial forces bore down on the deputy's residence, and Mitsusue disemboved himself when he saw that escape was impossible. The retired emperor considered it a good beginning.

There was great agitation in Kamakura. At first, Yoshitoki thought, "It's my karma to perish." But then he reconsidered. "If a punitive force attacks, I don't intend to die like a coward and suffer the humiliation of having my corpse put on display. They may call it an imperial army, but it's not as though the retired emperor will lead it himself. Besides, I'll just be testing my fate if I resist." He ordered a mighty host, a veritable cloud of warriors, to march against the capital under the command of his younger brother, Tokifusa, and his oldest son, Yasutoki.

When the army was ready to leave, Yoshitoki seated Yasutoki in front of him. "I have a number of reasons for sending you on this campaign. If you die, let it be like a true warrior. If you show your back to anyone, don't look on my face again. Think of this as our last parting. I may not amount to much, but I'm a loyal subject; I have done nothing to deserve a miserable end. Show what you're made of! You'll recross the Ashigara and Hakone mountains if you win." He shed tears as he spoke.

"He's right. I may never see my father's face again." The thought made Yasutoki weep into his shoulder guard. It was heartrending for both of them to feel that this might be their final farewell.

On the day after the army's departure, Yasutoki suddenly came galloping back, whipping his horse. "What's the meaning of this?" Yoshitoki asked, his heart beating faster.

"I'm clear in my mind about the tactics and the general strategy you told us to use," Yasutoki said, "But what shall we do if we meet a solemn imperial expedition on the way, a force flying battle banners and led by His Majesty's own palanquin? I galloped back to ask about this."

Yoshitoki considered briefly. "Well put, son. A good point! It would never do to draw your bow against an imperial conveyance. If you meet any such expedition, take off your helmet, cut your bowstring, and place yourself re-

spectfully in His Majesty's hands. But if the retired emperor stays in the capital while he deploys troops against you, then fight at the risk of your life, until only one man in a thousand is left." Yasutoki dashed off before he finished.

In the capital, the shogunate's actions had been anticipated. Retired Emperor Go-Toba had mobilized warriors, destroyed the bridges at Uji and Seto, and taken other extraordinary precautions against the approach of enemy forces. The only person who failed to answer his call was Kintsune, a man who held the shogunate in high esteem because his grandson was the shogun, and also because his wife was a daughter of Ichijō Major Counselor Yoshiyasu and because his wife's mother, Yoshiyasu's wife, was Yoritomo's sister. Kintsune considered the imperial plans ill-advised and dangerous.

Among those who were said to have joined His Majesty's forces were Shichijō-in's kinsmen (Bōmon Major Counselor Tadanobu, Owari Middle Captain Kiyotsune, and Nakamikado Major Counselor Muneie), Shumeimon-in's brother (Kai Consultant-Middle Captain Norishige), and others too numerous to mention. The army also included many senior nobles and courtiers less closely connected to the retired emperor.

Countless esoteric rituals were performed. The support of holy prelates from the exoteric and esoteric sects is a great comfort at such critical junctures. All the officials prayed with fervor, and the retired emperor himself offered heartfelt petitions.

His Majesty made a secret pilgrimage to Hiroyoshi to offer nightlong prayers and solemn private vows before the god of Ōmiya. As the night wore on, an eerie hush pervaded the dimly lit shrine precincts. A young page rose trembling from his resting place, ran straight to the retired emperor, and delivered a divine message in a ringing voice.

It is difficult to ignore your pleas when you pay a gracious visit to my shrine. But you showed no mercy when my sacred palanquin was brought to you a few years ago. Because of your men's resistance, the soldier-monks lost faith in me and abandoned the palanquin beside the guard headquarters, where it was exposed to the hooves of horses and oxen. I can hardly take your part while I harbor a grievance against you. I would reject your petitions even if you promised to rebuild the halls of the seven shrines in gold and silver.

The boy lapsed into silence and lay scarcely breathing.

The retired emperor burst into tears of dismay. If only he might have relived the past! Over and over, he begged forgiveness. The decision to repel the sacred palanquin had not necessarily been his, but no such thought could lessen his misery. As the saying goes, "The sovereign bears all the blame."

Although he had never spoken of it, Retired Emperor Tsuchimikado still resented the way in which he had been forced off the throne. He doesn't seem to have become particularly involved in the senior retired emperor's activities. Retired Emperor Juntoku shared his father's views, directing military and other operations.

Unusually persistent summer rains had caused extreme flooding and turbulence in the Fuji and Tenryū rivers, and the advancing eastern army was greatly hampered by the waters, which were all but impassable for even the best horses. But news came at last that the shogunal forces were approaching the capital, and the imperial warriors rode out to meet them. I believe I have heard that His Majesty's army amounted to over 60,000 horsemen. They were divided into two groups, one sent to Uji and the other to Seto.

Words cannot describe the turmoil in the city. Some people fled deep into the mountains, others traveled far into outlying areas, and all were anxious and distraught. Retired Emperor Go-Toba himself felt apprehensive and uneasy.

When confronted with a crisis, men who have seemed strong and brave may lose their composure, blanch, and turn out to be unreliable. I believe it was just past the twentieth of the sixth month when the imperial army went down to defeat after a poor show of resistance. Yasutoki and Tokifusa burst into the capital like a tidal wave on a rocky shore, causing indescribable dismay and confusion among people of all ranks.

As one of the measures adopted on orders from the east, the two commanders announced their intention of sending Retired Emperor Go-Toba away from the capital—a decision that may have been influenced by the precedent set in the Hōgen era. Needless to say, the imperial ladies, princes, and princesses were frantic with grief.

It was decided that His Majesty would live in Ōki Province. On the sixth of the seventh month, by way of preliminary, he traveled to the Toba Mansion in a crude wickerwork carriage, a sad final outing from the city. Dearly as he would have loved to return things to their former state, it was not to be; he cut off his hair and pronounced religious vows on that very day. He must have been only a year or two past forty, pitifully young for such a step. He summoned Nobuzane to paint his portrait as a gift for his mother, Shichijō-in.

The retired emperor embarked on the thirteenth. Journeying over the interminable waves, he found it hard to believe that he was still the same person. He engaged in bitter speculation about the misdeeds of a previous existence for which he was suffering retribution now.

Retired Emperor Juntoku was banished to Sado Province. Furthermore, Emperor Chūkyō himself was deposed on the ninth of the seventh month. His splendid accession in the fourth month seemed a dream. He must have been the first emperor to step down after a mere 70 days in office. But I think I recall having been told by a scholar about a Chinese monarch who held the throne for only 49 days.<sup>8</sup> Might there have been a similar disturbance then?

Retired Emperor Tsuchimikado escaped the shogunate's censure because he had never had anything to do with the affair, but he departed of his own will for Hata in Tosa Province on the tenth day of the intercalary tenth month, holding that it would be very wrong to lead a peaceful life in the capital while his father languished in distant exile. I think it was around the second month



of the previous year that he had become the father of a young prince, the offspring of a daughter of Shōmeimon-in's prematurely deceased older brother, Consultant-Middle Captain Michimune. He left the child at the house of Michimune's younger brother, Michikata, and set out, all alone except for some servants and a junior north guard who was a close attendant. His conveyance was a crude hand-held palanquin. A fierce snowstorm blew up on the way, darkening the sky and obscuring the road in both directions. He expressed his despair in verse, his sleeves icy with frozen tears [shokukus 1845]:

ukiyo ni wa                    I was doubtless born  
kakare tore koso            fated to suffer like this  
   in the fleeting world.  
munarekeme                Can it be that my tears  
kotowari shiranu           have failed to grasp the truth?  
waga namida kana

He moved to Awa Province later, after a suggestion from Kamakura that he at least live nearer the capital.

The country was in a lamentable state. We are told that the Buddha spoke of 18,000 sovereigns who actually killed their own fathers for the throne.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, there have been countless struggles for hegemony in Japan and China ever since the world entered the age of degeneracy. No doubt there has been a cause for each one: sometimes ministers of a different lineage or even persons of royal blood have been denied influence by some small unexpected development, and the consequent resentment has led to strife. But very, very seldom in our country have subjects of no status crushed an emperor, as happened in this case. Masakado in Shōhei [931-937], Sumitomo in Tengiō [938-946], and Yoshichika in Kōwa [1099-1103] were all courageous men, but not one of them was able to prevail against an imperial edict. Furthermore, when Retired Emperor Sutoku attempted a coup in the Hōgen era, the reigning emperor, Go-Shirakawa, brought him down to defeat, for which reason the men of old said that even though a rebel might belong to the imperial family, the sun goddess would apparently protect the occupant of the throne. Although Gate Guards Commander Nobuyori presumed to threaten Emperor Nijō, his lifeless corpse lay abandoned by the roadside in the end. With those incidents in mind, people considered it out of the question that anyone might destroy a court consisting of three retired emperors and a reigning sovereign. We must look beyond this world for an explanation of what happened—a truth incomprehensible to those too ignorant to understand karmic law.

Retired Emperor Go-Toba ascended the throne at the age of four and reigned for fifteen years. Even after his abdication, he continued to rule during the twelve-year reign of Emperor Tsuchimikado and the eleven-year reign of Emperor Juntoku. As master of the realm for thirty-eight years, he governed just as he pleased, controlling all officialdom and exercising a dominion more powerful than a gale bending trees and grasses to its will. With compassion more abundant than showering raindrops, he pitied the distant folk and cher-

ished those near at hand; though affairs of state permitted him spare moments no more frequent than gaps in the well-thatched roof of a cottage in Settsu, he remained ever alert to prevent the nation from becoming as disordered as tangled reeds at Naniwa. The pines on the peak at his lofty dwelling ought to have added branch to branch and flourished through 1,000 and 8,000 years; he ought to have resided in his immortal's grotto through countless springs, enjoying peace and tranquillity as endless as the rising and setting of the sun and moon. But now, because of a single trifling incident, he and his kin were forced to leave the brilliant capital and scatter, each to his own place of exile, condemned to dwell under eaves jostled by the crude thatches of fishing shacks on rocky shores. Visited only by small boats coming to fish the waters of the bays, they spent their time gazing at smoke plumes from salt-refiners' fires, wondering if the drifting columns pointed the way toward home. Even had there been fixed terms to their sentences, they would still have suffered from the uncertainty of life in this world. But what words can describe the wretchedness of men doomed to spend their lives on distant isles, separated from home by misty leagues of waves, with no inkling of when they might meet again in the capital, their lonely exile finally at an end?

Retired Emperor Go-Toba settled into an isolated island dwelling, a place far from human habitations. The house stood against a towering rock in the shadow of the mountains, somewhat inland from the coast. It was of very simple construction, with pinewood pillars and thatched galleries—a residence in form only, although not without a certain elegance and taste, despite its resemblance to Saigyō's "temporary brushwood hut."<sup>11</sup> The memory of the Minase villa was like a dream. The vast panorama of the sea, which seemed to stretch on forever, brought home again the meaning of Bo Juyi's line, "two thousand leagues away."

The former sovereign composed these verses with the inshore gale loud in his ears.

ware koso wa	The new island guard
niishimamori yo	is none other than myself.
oki no umi no	Ye wild winds raising waves
araki namikaze	on the seas around Ōki:
kokoro shite fuke	be forewarned and blow with care!
onaji yo ni	Will I return
mata suminoe no	to see again in this world
tsuki ya min	the moon at Suminoe?
kyō koso yoso ni	Today I am cast aside,
oki no shimamori	the keeper of the Ōki Islands.

The new year [1222] began. The imperial exiles spent their days in grief on their separate islands. At Sado, Retired Emperor Juntoku devoted himself to Buddhist discipline day and night, hoping against hope for a change in his fortunes. At Ōki, Retired Emperor Go-Toba fixed his gaze on the hazy skies