

**Kikigaki 7 (831 to 883) Accounts of Saga *samurai***

**831) To win a battle you must control yourself and your comrades.**

Naridomi Hyo-go said, "To win a battle you need only win your comrades to your side. To win your comrades to your side means to control yourself. And to control yourself is to control your physical condition with your mind. You cannot expect to win a battle unless you are prepared to charge the enemy line by yourself, at the head of the troop."

\* Naridomi Hyo-go served Ryuzo-ji Takanobu, Nabeshima Naoshige and Katsushige. He was a brave warrior in the Warring States period and an excellent civil engineer in peacetime. He died in September 1634 aged 75.

**832) Naridomi Hyo-go makes an appearance before anyone else in the Korean battle.**

While he was fighting in Korea in 1598, an order was brought in to hijack the enemy ship at drumbeat on the following morning. He told his crew to be on constant alert all through the night so that they might set forth at any moment. As soon as drum-call was heard the next morning, the mooring was severed, and his boat was first to arrive at the enemy ship. Naridomi Hyo-go jumped onto it first of the whole party, making a name for himself with his exploit.

**833) Tazo Sei-zaemon follows his master to the grave.**

Tazoh Oh-sumi had promised to marry his son Goro-uemon to a daughter of Nakano Shikibu, so Nakano Shikibu adopted a daughter of his elder brother to make her Goro-zaemon's wife. They had a son and named him Sei-zaemon, but he was dismissed from his post for some reason. Nakano Takumi, his brother-in-law, took care of him by allowing him to live on his land and granting him 25 *koku*.

In the meantime, Nakano Takumi died. Sei-zaemon committed *seppuku* at his death, because his brother-in-law had been such a benefactor in his days of misfortune. Sei-zaemon's son Yosuke served Nakano Kazuma, the benefactor's son, and his grandson served Nabeshima Munashige, the fifth lord of Saga Clan.

Thanks to that lord, Sei-zaemon's grandson inherited the distinguished household and named himself Tazoh Suke-zaemon. He was a descendant of Tazoh Ohsumi. Suke-zaemon's sons Jin-zaemon and Hyo-uemon set up branch families. There were

other men related to the Tazo family. They named themselves Tazo, Tazawa, Takura and so on.

#### **834) Shigyo Echizen-no-kami dies on the battlefield.**

During the Battle of Shimabara in 1584, Shigyo Echizen-no-kami rushed into the enemy leaving his armor and helmet behind at the post. He fought desperately without them and was killed on the battlefield.

\* He was 53 years old. Together with were slain his son and over 30 attendants.

#### **835) A set of conspicuous armor**

In January, 1638, Tasaki Geki followed Nabeshima Katsushige, the first lord, to attack Hara Castle. When Katsushige saw his armor, it was so gaudy that he did not like it. Whenever he saw conspicuous armor after that, he would say, "Looks like Geki's armor!" A set of very noticeable armor is undignified and the man inside it is likely to be regarded as frivolous.

#### **836) The reason why Ezoe Kimbey hid himself**

On the death of Koh-koku-in, the son of Lord Katsushige, Ezoe Kimbey went up to Mount Koh-ya to dedicate his ashes to a temple there. He confined himself in a hut thereby and spent his days carving the late master's image in wood. He carved one of himself as well.

When the first anniversary of the death of Koh-koku-in drew near, he climbed down the mountain and returned to Saga. On that day he dedicated his carving of the image of the lord's son to the Koden-ji Temple, and there committed *seppuku* to follow his master.

\* Mount Koh-ya is a sacred mountain for ascetics in Wakayama Prefecture.

#### **837) Oh-ishi Kosuke keeps an all-night watch for Lord Mitsushige in the rain.**

Oh-ishi Kosuke served as a foot soldier and was later promoted to attendant of Lord Mitsushige. Whenever he accompanied his lord to Edo for biannual attendance, he

kept vigil all night outside the lord's room. He spread a straw mat wherever he judged it unsafe, and sat on it all night to guard against threats. When it rained, he would wear rainclothes. He never loafed on the job as long as he served.

**838) Oh-ishi Kosuke sits in the room next to the lord's, as a guard.**

In February, 1675, when Oh-ishi Kosuke was serving as general secretary to the lord, someone sneaked into the maids' room. The house was thrown into confusion but he did not appear. Senior ladies looked for him here and there, and finally found him sitting by himself in the room adjoining the lord's. With his sword at his side, he was just sitting there in silence. He said to them, "Since no one else is by the lord's side, I am on guard for danger."

They say that the focal point of a great servant is different from ordinary men. It turned out that the intruder was Naridomi Kichibey. He and his colleague Hamada Ichi-zaemon were found guilty of adultery and sentenced to death.

**839) Oh-ishi Kosuke accompanies Lord Mitsushige to the Hachiman Shrine.**

One day Oh-ishi Kosuke followed Lord Mitsushige on a visit to the Hachiman Shrine. When the lord was proceeding to the main building, several priests rushed toward him with a charm. When he noticed this as he sat on the ground, he rushed to them bare-foot and said loudly, "Calm down. Please offer your charms to the lord one by one."

- \* It was a custom for priests to pray for a safe journey of the lord when he went up to Edo for biannual attendance. They wished for his safe journey holding a piece of paper or a charm. They wanted to hand their charms to the lord.

**840) Soejima Zen-no-jo jumps down into the gorge to retrieve the lord's sword.**

When Lord Katsushige was hunting in Nishime, he was offended at one of his servants by the name of Soejima Zen-no-jo. The moment he hit the servant with his sword, it fell down into the gorge. Immediately Zen-no-jo climbed down the cliff to the bottom. Retrieving it he secured it in his coat and climbed up to hand it to the lord. His behavior was excellent for an attendant, was it not?

- \* He followed Lord Katsushige to the grave at his death.

**841) Ishiguma Goro-zaemon refuses to leave the lord's horse in a fire.**

On February 2, 1668 a great fire broke out in Edo, when Lord Mitsushige and his son Tsunashige were staying at the Edo residence. When a violent wind spread the fire there, it was difficult to get out of the gate, but the lord and the prince were able to escape on horseback, because the retainers and attendants got together to tear down part of the wall.

During the whole time, Ishiguma Goro-zaemon remained standing by the horse with his hand on a stirrup, doing nothing else. After the fire went out, everyone was praised by the lord. The man to be praised first was Ishiguma Goro-zaemon. He praised him for his faithful behavior and attributed it to his father, known for his bravery in the Battle of Arima in 1638. Later he was presented with a gift by the lord. The lord told him that he saw things with a different eye from the others.

This story was told by Ezoe Hiko-jiro, who was acquainted with his conduct at the time.

**842) Sano Ukyo-dayu, a man of enormous strength**

One day Sano Ukyo-dayu was passing by the village of Takao. People were rebuilding a bridge over the river, but one of the stakes could not be pulled out. Seeing this, he got off his horse, grasped the big timber between his arms and pulled it up with a shout. The stake was pulled up as high as his head, but dropped down again when he let go his hands.

After he got back to his house, he took to his bed and died soon after. When his coffin was being carried to the Shufuku-ji Temple in Jo-baru Village for the funeral service, an unbelievable thing happened. When they came to the bridge, his body jumped out and plunged into the water!

A young monk aged 16 from the temple jumped into the river and clung to the body, and everyone pulled it up. The head priest was impressed with the young monk's behavior, and promised to let him perform the last rites for the deceased. Later in his life he became a prominent priest.

**843) Shimauchi Shin-zaemon would not bow to the lord.**

On Lord Katsushige's regular interview day, all of the retainers waited in the main

hall and bowed down to the *tatami* floor, but Shimauchi Shin-zaemon did not do so. He remained sitting up by himself. The lord entered the room and said, "How nice to see you, Shin-zaemon!" Only then did he bow to his lord. He used to behave like that. It was probably due to the times.

#### **844) It is cowardly to abhor decapitation.**

At the order of his father, Yamamoto Kichi-zaemon killed a dog with a sword when he was 5 years old, and did the same with a prisoner at 15. In the past all young men were forced to behead a human when they were about 15 years old. Lord Katsushige also cut off a man's head in his youth, at his father's command. He is said to have killed as many as ten people one after another.

Even the sons of a lord used to do so in their youth, but now ordinary *samurai* will not make their sons do it. That is very thoughtless of them. "We can do without that," they say. "It is no great thing to kill a prisoner." "It is sinful behavior!" What pitiful excuses they make!

Modern people are only interested in making themselves look good by manicuring their nails and so on, and lazy at learning how to train themselves in bravery. It seems that most modern parents do not make their sons practice decapitation because they think it disgusting. They do not understand that Lord Naoshige told his son to do it because he thought it necessary. A couple of years ago I cut off a criminal's head in the bed of the Kase River, and felt really invigorated. To regard it as disgusting is quite cowardly.

\* Yamamoto Kichi-zaemon is Jocho's elder brother.

#### **845) Tomoda Sho-zaemon commits *seppuku*.**

Tomoda Sho-zaemon was an attendant of Lord Mitsushige. He fell in love with an actor named Tamon Sho-zaemon. He was so madly in love with him that he changed not only his name but also his family crest to those of the actor. In order to patronize him he sold his clothes and other belongings, ending up stealing a sword belonging to Mawatari Rokubey, his colleague, and making his servant pawn it for money. When his attendant reported it to the superintendent, Sho-zaemon was sentenced to death together with his servant.

Yamamoto Goro-zaemon, in charge of the proceedings, met with Lord Mitsushige and

said in a loud voice, "His servant reported Tomoda Sho-zaemon's conduct to us." The lord said, "Kill him!"

Goro-zaemon turned to Tomoda Sho-zaemon and said, "You have lost all honor except to meet your end in a manner befitting a *samurai*." "I appreciate that," he said. "Let me go to the other world calmly."

When he was taken to the site, he sat on the mat and recognized his second sitting across from him. Sho-zaemon bowed his head politely to the second, when Naotsuka Roku-zaemon drew out his sword. "Who are you?" said Sho-zaemon, rising to his feet. "You shall not kill me!" He caused a great scene, but soon was subdued and had his head taken off.

Unfortunately for him, a wicked plot had been made to tell Sho-zaemon the name of his second, but then to have Naotsuka Roku-zaemon carry out the decapitation. Later Goro-zaemon said, "If he had not been deceived like that, he would have committed *seppuku* splendidly."

#### **846) How to assist a man in committing *seppuku***

According to Noda Ki-zaemon, you are likely to fail in assisting a man to do *seppuku* if the man writhes in panic. In such a case you should counsel him and wait till he calms down and sits straight on the ground. The next moment, you can assist him as his second, by beheading him.

#### **847) Oh-ki Gon-zaemon pushes two men off a horse.**

On January 11 Oh-ki Gon-zaemon went to the residence of Nabeshima Naohiro, the lord of the Shiraishi branch clan, with New Year greetings. The lord was playing a game on horseback with his attendants, armed with a bamboo sword. The lord said to Oh-ki Gon-zaemon, "Come on, you cannot beat me!" "All right, let me play with you," he said and pushed the lord off his horse headfirst. Getting up, the lord challenged him again, "Another game!"

Then Kumashiro Sakyō, the lord's brother, said, "OK. Come on, Gon-zaemon!" He pushed down the brother too, and said, "What good luck! I have got two heads on horseback in the New Year!" Such were the customs in the good old days. Those of high rank and low rank used to pass delightful times together.

#### **848) Uhsijima Kyuji-bey prevails over a gang of commoners by persuasion.**

When a troupe of actors were performing in the village of Sho-zu, Ushijima Kyuji-bey happened to pass by and stumbled, falling facedown among the audiences. By chance one of his sandals flew against the bamboo fence and bounced back on to a man's head. "I am so sorry," he said, getting to his feet. "Please pardon me. I also got my clothes dirty. Sorry, sorry."

As he picked up his sandal, a gang who were watching tried to pick a fight, saying "Hey, you *samurai* with your sword! Your sandal bashes his head, and you think you can get away with just a word of apology?" Kyuji-bey turned and said as he took off his sedge hat, "What nonsense! I did not do it on purpose, or I would not have apologized to him like that. And you insult me in public. All right, come outside. Let me cut the heads off the lot of you!" The gang hesitated at his threatening attitude.

"Please understand what I mean," he said a bit more softly. "Otherwise all of you will lose your heads and so will I. If you do not want to lose your lives, watch the play without making a fuss." Then he left the place with his hat back on. He was a man with nerves of steel whose behavior ought to be praised as splendid.

\* Shozu Village is about 18km east of Saga.

#### **849) Ushijima Kyuji-bey is cut down by Matsu-ura Kaza-emon.**

One day several attendants were playing *go* at the entrance room of Saga Castle. Ushijima Kyuji-bey was watching the game. Matsu-ura Kazaemon, who was having a match with his fellow attendant, happened to see Ushijima. When their eyes met, Ushijima seemed to be making a face at him. Irritated by his disadvantageous position, he drew his sword and slashed at him. He probably thought Ushijima had looked at him scornfully. Arita Gon-no-jo, another *samurai*, took away his sword immediately.

"If only we were not inside the castle!" said Ushijima just before breathing his last. His last word became popular and everyone said, "How like Ushijima!" Matsu-ura Kaza-emon was sentenced to death and Arita Gon-no-jo was awarded a sword by the lord.

Actually Ushijima Kyuji-bey suffered from chronic facial neuralgia, and it made his muscles tremble once in a while. Matsu-ura Kazaemon mistook it for an insulting expression.

#### **850) Nabeshima Naoshige decides to adopt Mondo Shigesato.**

Lord Naoshige had not been blessed with a son for a long time, so he welcomed Shigesato to live with him. The boy was about 12 years old. One day the lord invited a troupe of actors from Chikugo, and all the Nabeshima families enjoyed watching the play. It was a drama entitled "*Rajo-mon*," in which they performed a scene where a demon's hand is cut off by the hero but the demon replaces it later. When the first act ended, everyone was very impressed by their performance. Looking round at Shigesato, the lord said, "What do you think of it?" "Everyone seemed to like it a lot, but I was not very moved. There was something I would not be able to do, though." "Tell me about it," said the lord.

The boy said, "The hero cut off the devil's hand and put up a notice board. I think I could do that. If you tell me to, I can do it right now. But it is stupid to be thought of as a filial by a demon, and it is also stupid to open the door to a demon who pretends to be his mother, just one day before the period of religious exclusion is up."

"What a precocious child! You talk like a grown-up," said Lord Naoshige. At the same time, however, he made up his mind to adopt the boy as his son.

- \* Chikugo belongs to Fukuoka Clan and is about 40 km east of Saga.
- \* Lord Naoshige was 40 years old at the time.
- \* In the famous story on which the drama was based, the hero cuts the hand off a female demon, but is later duped up by her into letting her in to retrieve it, by pretending to be his mother, even on the last day but one of the hero's period of religious abstinence from all human contact.

#### **851) Shiwa Ki-zaemon counts the nails clipped by Lord Katsushige.**

During the reign of Lord Katsushige all sons of retainers were employed as attendants while quite young. When Ki-zaemon was serving Lord Katsushige as a boy attendant, the lord clipped his nails and said, "Throw these away." The boy put the clippings on his palm, but he would not leave. The lord said, "What is the matter?"

"There is one missing, sir," said the boy. With that, the lord gave him the last one, which he had kept in his hand.

#### **852) Nakano Kazuma shows signs of bravery in childhood.**

When Nakano Kazuma was serving as a boy attendant of Lord Katsushige, he fol-

lowed his lord to Nishime to hunt cranes with a hawk. A crane was seized by the hawk. Since it was his favorite hawk, the lord finished off the crane with his short sword, holding the hawk in his other hand. Kazuma was holding the crane in his hands, so the blade of his lord's sword cut his fingers as well. They were bleeding, but he made no complaint, saying to the lord, "Stab it here, and here too." Later Lord Katsushige said that he was a boy with nerves of steel.

Another day Lord Katsushige fell asleep while having his waist massaged by Kazuma. So the boy withdrew quietly, went to the storeroom and said, "Give me a hook and line for the lord," which the man in charge gave him. When he threw the line into the pond, a big carp latched onto the bait. Surprisingly, it came off the line, hopped into the lord's bedroom and dropped onto his face!

Awakening, the lord looked at the jumping fish and said, "It is Kazuma again!" He called his name repeatedly but the boy never appeared. Lord Katsushige stepped down to the garden and began to look for him, when he came out from under the verandah. He ran off barking like a dog.

He was very naughty as a boy, and he grew up to be a wild and arrogant youth of 20. He would visit the execution ground and ask for body-parts like the head or trunks. Back home he practiced slashing and stabbing them with his sword and spear.

### **853) Kanamaru Gun-uemon is pardoned and released.**

Having been ill for several years, Nabeshima Yukie could not serve the lord as well as he expected to. His wife hoped that their son Samon would be employed in his place, and asked several retainers if he could be taken on. Thanks to her efforts, Samon was instructed to accompany Lord Tsunashige to Edo, though he was quite young.

In 1706, while the lord was away in Nagasaki on business, Samon invited senior counselor Ishi-i Den-uemon to his house and entertained him with his mother in his own room. Seemingly, they passed the time in obscene conversation in Samon's room. When it was reported to Lord Tsunashige, Den-uemon was dismissed from his post and Yukie, his father, was confined to his own house, while Samon had his land reduced by half. The lady was left for Yukie, the husband, to deal with.

There was a rumor that Kanamaru Gun-uemon had secretly leaked the lord's orders to Nabeshima Yukie. As a result Gun-uemon was placed in the custody of his group master Nabeshima Yahei-zaemon under guard. He was examined by the magistrates several times, but each time he asserted that he was not involved in it.

Meanwhile, Lord Tsunashige fell ill so seriously that Gun-uemon was released under

an amnesty. He went to the castle and said to the senior retainers, "I was not involved in the incident, but was charged with communicating secrets. Each time I was examined I told them that I was innocent. Now I am told that I am released on pardon, together with the notorious burglar Takuzo. I do not regard that as a benefit. However, I was told about the lord's illness during my confinement, and thought it would be disloyal not to visit him. I am very glad to have been able to see him today face to face."

My teacher said, "I heard this directly from Gun-uemon. Several people told about his incident, but you can appreciate his innocence from his own confession."

#### **854) Sawabe Hei-zaemon is assisted by Yamamoto Jocho in *seppuku*.**

On the evening of November 10, 1682, Sawabe Hei-zaemon was sentenced to death by *seppuku*. He had a letter sent to Yamamoto Jocho, in which he asked for his assistance as second. Jocho was 24 years old at the time. This is a copy of his letter to Sawabe.

"I have had great esteem for your personality, and am very glad to acknowledge your refreshing mental attitude. I am told you require me to take the part of second at your *seppuku*. I once thought it would be courteous to decline, but I must accept the role, having been asked so suddenly only tonight. I feel very honored that you have chosen me as your second from among your many comrades. Spend your last night in peace and prepare for tomorrow. It is very late, but I will visit you and speak in more detail soon."

Reading the letter, Hei-zaemon said in admiration, "Splendid!" Nothing is more worth the trouble than the role of second at *seppuku*. You will gain no repute even if you perform it well. But if you fail, your name will be mud."

Yamamoto Jocho, my teacher, has kept a copy of his letter.

#### **855) Oh-no Sembey is praised for assisting his brother in a duel.**

Oh-no Sembey's big brother had made a pledge of brotherhood with a blacksmith in Hasu-ike but it was on the verge of collapse. A quarrel had arisen over their homosexual liaison, though their comrades and friends tried hard to reconcile them. Finally both of them appealed to the lord. Since Lord Katsushige was away in Edo, the lord of the Hasu-ike branch clan heard their appeal. Nabeshima Naozumi, the lord, said, "They should solve their problems with a duel. Nobody must assist them. Anyone

who does so will be sentenced to death.”

Soon a bamboo enclosure was built at a place named Takao Nawate, where they were to fight each other. On the day of their battle a lot of people came to the site. Soon after the blacksmith entered, Oh-no Sembey's big brother arrived and said, “I am sorry to have kept you waiting. I was delayed in visiting my acquaintances to take leave. Come, let us fight it out.”

They went on slashing against each other with their sparking blades. As the crowd of spectators watched with bated breath, Oh-no fell down, his leg severed at the thigh. The next moment someone broke into the scene crying “You will not get away!” He cut the blacksmith down with a single stroke. It was Oh-no Sembey, the younger brother. His elder brother breathed his last there. When a full account of the incident was reported to Lord Naozumi, he said, “Sembey neglected my order by breaking into the enclosure. Put him to death right away.”

While they were discussing the incident, Lord Katsushige returned to Saga and was told about it. He said, “Sembey is a real man. He did well. Who would steal away after watching his brother getting killed with his own eyes?” Thanks to the lord's remarks, Sembey's life was spared.

The lord of the Hasu-ike branch clan was severely scolded by Lord Katsushige for setting up the duel in a busy street. Sembey was promoted to master of falconry. Because of this favor, he followed Katsushige to his grave when the lord passed away in March, 1657. Sembey Jr. married Chiji-iwa Cho-uemon's sister, whose mother remembered the incident.

In later years Oh-ki Doh-kan related the incident in a different way. His father Oh-ki Hyobu told him about it as a childhood memory. He had watched it from top of a servant's shoulders. At Takao Nawate to the east of the castle, a bamboo enclosure was built for the battle. Sembey's brother had already arrived and lots of spectators were waiting around, but by evening his opponent had failed to appear. By and by the spectators were going back thinking that the blacksmith would not come. Then the man came in shouting “Here I am!” and the spectators also turned back to the enclosure. The moment he went in, he threw off his hat and extended his left hand.

“Stand up!” he said to his opponent, who was sitting on the ground stripped to the waist. When he stood up, he drew his sword and slashed at the blacksmith. He also drew his sword and stopped the opponent's blade above his head. Then he attacked Sembey's brother on the shoulder and back. He made two attacks, but it appeared only to have wounded the other by the skin. Suddenly, Sembey rushed in and killed his brother's opponent with a single stroke. This was reported to the lord and Sembey's

brother was sentenced to death. Sembey was not punished at all and later was employed as falconry master. Sembey's opponent was a knife sharpener from another clan. The rumor was that he had been late in arriving for the duel because he did not have a sword and had been looking for one. Later Oh-ki Hyobu obtained the sword and tried it out, only to find that it was blunt. The duel arose from homosexual affair. Sembey followed Lord Katsushige to the grave at his death.

**856) A *samurai* has his braided cord broken.**

According to Yoko-o, a man was up in Edo as an attendant, and was dispatched to Kyoto for fund-raising. One evening he went to a commoner's house and left his sword there. On leaving he received his sword from the landlord. He found that it had been drawn out a bit, but said his farewell and departed. Arriving at his inn, he examined his sword and found that the braided cord was broken from being pulled hard.

When he returned to the Edo residence, he told his close friend about it. He said, "I made a fool of myself by leaving it at the man's house. To tell the truth, it was gold-plated cord, because a real gold one was too expensive. So they left it as it was, without bothering to steal it. Oh, I put my clan to shame! If I had gotten a real gold cord, I could have impressed them!"

**857) Tanaka Yahei slashes an intruder to death.**

While Yahei was serving in the Edo residence, a servant committed a major error, so he scolded him severely. In the middle of that night he heard someone climbing the stairs of his apartment. Thinking it strange, he sat up and assumed a defensive posture as he drew his sword. Then appeared, sword in hand, the servant he had scolded that day. Yahei cut him to death on the spot. His friends said he was a very lucky man.

**858) Takagi Kin-zaemon cuts a man to death at night.**

When Takagi Kin-zaemon was up in Edo as an attendant, he met Sagara Ichi-zaemon, a retainer of Nabeshima Mondo. As they were on good terms with each other, they promised to visit Mitani for amusement together. Ichi-zaemon went earlier, but Kin-zaemon did not set off till evening, on account of a previous appointment. When he was halfway there, on the bank of a river, he saw a stranger. The man started to follow

him, but Kin-zaeon carried on till there were no other people. Then he cut him down. Nakano Kazuma heard about this directly from him.

**859) A man who cannot retaliate for an insult is stupid.**

A man named Tokuhisa looked like a half-wit by nature. One day he gave a party and invited several guests. He served them river fish like eels and catfish. He was given the nickname “Mr. Eel and Catfish.” One day at the castle a servant laughed at him, referring to the party. Instantly Tokuhisa cut the man to death. When the matter was examined, a retainer said, “Tokuhisa disgraced the castle by killing a fellow servant. He should be put to death.” Lord Naoshige said, “A man who cannot retort when he is insulted is stupid. It does not matter whether it happens at the castle or somewhere else. A man who insults another is in the wrong and must take what he gets.”

**860) Kawazoe Koh-zaemon kills himself with a dagger.**

Nabeshima Naoshige went to see Kumashiro Katsutoshi, as a messenger from General Ryuzo-ji Takanobu. They met at the Sumiyoshi Shrine in Chifu Village. When a ripe melon was served by the head priest, Naoshige said to Koh-zaemon, his attendant, “Peel it.” He rinsed it in water and realized that he had no knife. Seeing this, Kumashiro Katsutoshi handed his knife to him. When he finished peeling the melon, Kumashiro said, “You can keep the knife.” The attendant thanked him and withdrew.

Returning to the castle, Naoshige reported to Ryuzo-ji Takanobu about his interview, and the following day he called the attendant and said, “Break the hilt.” Koh-zaemon looked perplexed, and Naoshige repeated angrily, “Break it.” When he did so, it was clear that the surface was sheathed with copper but the inside was gold. “I expected to see this,” he said and turned to the attendant. “You have served me since your childhood, so I am sorry to have to tell you to commit *seppuku*.” The attendant killed himself right away.

- \* Koh-zaemon might have been paid to spy by Kumashiro.
- \* Chifu Village is about 10 km north of Saga.

**861) Nakano Moku-no-suke cuts down a ruffian on a boat.**

When Moku-no-suke was enjoying the cool evening breeze on a boat on the Sumida River in Edo, a stranger got on and insisted on picking a quarrel with him. So he cut the man's head off when the ruffian was washing his hands at the side of the boat. It dropped into the water. He covered the body with a sheet of cloth so that it would not be discovered. He said to the boatman, "Tell no one about this. Go and bury the body on the bank. You will be paid handsomely." When the boatman had buried the body, Moku-no-suke killed him and made off swiftly. He was never charged with it. Actually a young servant accompanying Moku-no-suke was told by him, "Show you are a man and use your sword on the body." He did as he was told, and so could not talk about it.

#### **862) Senju Zen-uemon fights against his fellow retainers in Edo.**

Of the attendants who served Prince Tsunashige in Edo, Nishi Ni-uemon, Fukae Roku-zaemon, Noh-domi Kuro-zaemon, Ishi-i Gen-zaemon were young men of ability.

Ni-uemon was a riding master, well-known for his excellent skill. Every morning he looked at himself in the mirror, riding on the wooden horse to check his attire and posture. He also paid attention to his coat, and became popular in Edo. The so-called "horse-riding coat" became fashionable, after his way of dressing. In those days some attendants of the Shogunate were well-known for their peculiar costume, and the nuisance they caused to citizens. Ni-uemon was, as it were, a hooligan at the Edo residence of Saga Clan. He often behaved like a highwayman, too. His father had been a high ranking official, and so were Roku-zaemon's, but they had not inherited their households, and had only a couple of attendants. Ni-uemon and Roku-zaemon resented not being allowed to attend the lord on horseback.

One day in late January, 1673, Senju Zen-uemon came up to Edo from Saga on horseback as an attendant to Prince Tsunashige. That meant that he was treated as their superior, though they had been serving the prince before the young man appeared. So all the young men vented their anger by annoying and humiliating him in various ways, and not teaching him anything about the old customs. Consequently, he was not able to serve the lord properly, but he could not use that as an excuse not to perform his duty. He could understand it to some extent, but could not forgive those who bullied him.

At last Zen-uemon decided to avenge himself on them for their cruel treatment. On February 1, 1673, after meeting the prince he asked the four servants to come to his house. Not knowing anything about his grudge against them, Ni-uemon, Roku-zaemon,

Kuro-zaemon, and Gen-zaemon accepted the invitation. Zen-uemon told his men to prepare food and went upstairs to write his notes, when a man named Mawatari Chu-bey happened to visit him. He said, "It looks like you have visitors. Who is coming?" When he told him the four men's names, he said, "Let me talk with them, too." Zen-uemon said, "Please do so. Excuse me but I have something to write," and hurried upstairs to finish his notes at the corner of the room. (This turned out to be mistake.)

Later Ishi-i Dembey, a magistrate, also came by, but Zen-uemon employed some excuse to bid him return. He probably did so because he was a good friend of his elder brother Nabeshima Mondo, and did not want to involve him in their fight.

Ni-uemon, Roku-zaemon, and Kuro-zaemon appeared on time, though Gen-zaemon was prevented from coming for other business. The party went on all night till dawn. Then they said they would return to their houses. "Let me serve you a bowl of porridge, so please wait a minute," he said but they said, "Nothing more, thank you." When Roku-zaemon and Kuro-zaemon stood up, Ni-uemon also rose up. "Damn you!" said Zen-uemon and cut the head off Ni-uemon at a stroke.

Chu-bey put his hand on Zen-uemon's sword but he pushed him away, saying, "It's none of your business!" Chu-bey got injured on the temple and fell downstairs, unconscious. Zen-uemon slashed at Kuro-zaemon and had a brutal fight with him. Roku-zaemon remained standing as he watched their duel. Since both of them were colleagues of his, he did not want to take sides, and was at a loss what to do, though he drew his sword. Soon Zen-uemon's two attendants came upstairs and slashed at Roku-zaemon's back, but were forced to descend when he counterattacked. As he watched the fight, the two servants came upstairs again, so he forced them back down again. This was repeated a couple of times. At last Kuro-zaemon was beaten to the floor. "What is the meaning of this, Zen-uemon?" said Roku-zaemon. "You will not get away either!" said Zen-uemon and struck at him.

Both of them got several injuries in their fight. Kuro-zaemon had been watching their duel as he lay on the floor for some time and slashed at Zen-uemon's thigh, shouting, "Damn it!" Zen-uemon fell to the floor, and Roku-zaemon sat astride him. When he was as about to plunge his sword into his throat, it occurred to him that he had no grudge against him. "If I plunge my sword into his throat, I will be thought to have avenged myself on him. No, it has to be that I killed him after he took his sword to me," he said to himself.

Since Kuro-zaemon and Zen-uemon were still breathing, Roku-zaemon thought he would need a witness to the incident. If all three of the others lost their lives and he alone survived, who would give evidence later? It seemed best to report to the

magistrate's office, but he was too badly wounded and felt too sick to do so. Clenching his teeth, he went downstairs. He thought the servants would be waiting for him there, but boldly stepped down to the first floor, and saw nobody there.

He managed to reach Ishi-i Dembey's house and told him about what had happened. After listening to him, the magistrate said, "It is not enough for you to report only to me. Please go to my colleague, too." (He felt a strong grudge against him, Roku-zaemon said later.) Departing, he managed to reach the house of Fukuchi Ichiro-bey on will-power alone. When he told him about the fight, the old man said smiling, "Young men have so much energy! Let me go and confirm the deaths." (Roku-zaemon remembered this as a delightful memory as long as he lived.)

Pulling up his skirt the old man stepped into the bloody room and spoke to Zen-uemon and Kuro-zaemon but they could hardly be heard. He read the note written by Zen-uemon but it was not to the point. "That is all," said the old man, and left the place. Soon after, Zen-uemon breathed his last. Kuro-zaemon recovered from his injury after some time, though.

Kuro-zaemon and Roku-zaemon were not charged at all, simply because neither had plunged their swords into Zen-uemon's throat. It was very lucky for Roku-zaemon. Actually, his sword had been so dull he would have been better off with a wooden sword, he said.

Jocho, my teacher, told me at his cottage that he had heard it directly from Roku-zaemon, though his recollection was not completely correct.

After wounds had healed, Kuro-zaemon worked as a gatekeeper, and died of illness soon after he retired. Ni-uemon had been the only son of Godayu, so he adopted Ogawa Toneri. At the time he said to Toneri, "Ni-uemon was killed before he drew his sword. Fortune was against him. We will never hold a funeral ceremony for him. If you do so for such an unlucky man, you will lose divine protection. I never held a service for him after he was killed. Do not forget that."

It was rumored that Mawatari Chubey had agreed with Muto Zembey that their children should be engaged to each other, but the Muto side cancelled the agreement.

### **863) Hideshima Ni-uemon stabs Takagi Yo-uemon after losing an argument.**

Ni-ueon and Yo-uemon were both attendants to Lord Mitsushige. On March 28, 1695, Ni-uemon went to see Yo-uemon at his apartment. "You seem to be busy, do you not?" he said. "Yes, I have just started moxibustion," said Yo-uemon. "In that case I will leave you to it," said Ni-uemon, and departed.

Soon he returned, and when Yo-uemon came out, Ni-uemon suddenly killed him with his sword. Greatly surprised at the incident, Yo-uemon's wife appeared and took his body in her arms. Ni-uemon was running out into the garden. "Stop him! He has killed my husband!" she said to the servants. When they caught up with him, however, Ni-uemon had just killed himself. They found a letter in his clothes, in which he had written that he killed Yo-uemon because of a rumor that he had been bettered by Yo-uemon in an argument. Actually there was no such rumor, and he was held to have killed his colleague through insanity. As a result, both of their households were abolished, and Yo-uemon's residence was granted to his wife. She was an elder sister of Hara Gombey, and related this story about her family.

#### **864) Tsuru Goro-uemon kills Fukuoka Yasu-uemon for an insult.**

Goro-uemon was in charge of Noh plays in the clan. One evening when he was about to go home, he noticed that his sword was missing somewhere in the castle. While he was looking for it, Fukuoka Yasu-uemon, his fellow worker, said insultingly, "What ineptitude to lose a sword!" Before long, however, the sword was discovered. He had probably put it somewhere and then forgotten. Having found it, he could go home.

But he felt angry with his colleague. Early next morning he went to Yasu-uemon's house and killed him in revenge, but Goro-uemon himself was killed by Yasu-uemon's two sons.

Goro-uemon had not yet inherited his household but Yasu-uemon was master of his. It was decided that his household should be abolished. Soon the officials came to announce the decision to his children. The husband of Yasu-uemon's sister, who was at the same house at that time, said, "I was away getting water and could not assist my brothers-in-law. When I came back, everything was over." So he avoided being accused of anything. He was an attendant of Aoki Hachiro-bey and was a member of the Oh-ki Sasuke group.

When Oh-ki Sasuke was told about his conduct, he said, "He must have been afraid of getting involved in it. Since it happened early in the morning, he could not have been away. He could have hurried in to help his brothers-in-law. I do not think it good to have such a coward in our group. I will examine him right away."

Oh-ki Sasuke called him to the inner room in secret and asked about the incident. He replied, "I am very sorry for my behavior. To tell the truth, when I rushed to the scene, his sons were having a hard time and Goro-uemon seemed quite formidable. So I wiped his sword away with a stick so that they were able to kill him. If I had told the

truth, the sons might have been disgraced. So I credited it them.” He was secretly rewarded. Goro-uemon’s attendants were sentenced to death because they fled home without assisting their master.

**865) Nagayama Rokuro-zaemon tells his servants about going into a battle.**

When Nakayama Roku-zaemon entertained the attendants in his group, he said, “Does anyone know what ‘Akitsu-shima’ is? Nobody knew what it was. “It refers to Japan,” he said. “Do you think our country is large or small?” “It is huge,” said all of them. “Do you think you would hit it with a pole about 2 meters long, or miss it?” he asked. “Of course, we could hit it,” they said in chorus.

“You have given a good answer,” he said. “You understand well. Do not forget what we have discussed. Things seem peaceful, but who knows if confusion breaks out at any moment? If an emergency arises, I will go with all thirty of you to the front with the resolve to sacrifice our lives. I really mean it. I will not let any of you rush in before I do. Understand?” “Yes, we do!” they said. “Very good! Now drink a cup of *sake*,” he said as he filled their cups to the brim.

\* Akitsu-shima is one of the old names referring to Japan.

**866) Matsu-ura Doh-un talks about behavior at the front.**

Doh-un said, “When I was young I took part in the Battle of Arima in October, 1638. As I look back, whether you can distinguish yourself in a battle depends on your stance. What is important is your attitude at the front. The closer you sit to the enemy front, the braver you appear. When there is a discussion at the front in the evening, if you take a place at it as near as possible to the enemy post, you will be regarded as courageous. If you position yourself farther from the front, you will be thought timid. Remember what I said, young men.”

**867) A *samurai's* ambition is fulfilled in losing his life for the cause of justice.**

On the day of a regular meeting some of the attendants were at the entrance room. A man said to Ushijima Shin-suke, “You have a beautiful bamboo grove at the back of your house. Yours is the best in Saga. Can I have some of the bamboo to use for rebuilding my house?” “I have a bamboo grove but it is not for sale, unlike your wife,” he

said ironically. “And here is another thing. If you divorce her, I do not think you will be able to have your son inherit your household. I mean the son she bore. What do you think?” The man could not respond, and left the scene flushed.

A man followed the lord to Edo as an attendant. Before he returned to Saga, he said to Nakano Kin-uemon, his colleague, “I bought a summer *kimono* for my wife.” “For your present wife or your last wife?” said Kin-uemon spitefully. The man could not utter a word. Kin-uemon said again, “You had better buy some present for your last wife, too.” His remarks cast a chill over the whole room.

One day Kanamaru told me something. He said, “A *samurai’s* ambition is fulfilled in losing his life for justice. You cannot help shedding tears when you hear of the exploits of those great people in the past. Once you fail to do right, you will make a fool of yourself wherever you go. If you do not feel disgrace at that, you might be thought no better than an animal.”

#### **868) Ushijima Shin-goro would not divorce his wife for any reason.**

Ushijima Shin-goro had been employed by Lord Tsunashige for his diligent attitude. However, in 1697, his brother-in-law Gondo Shichibey was sentenced to death in Edo for visiting a prostitutes’ house. Lord Tsunashige punished all his family members as a warning for the future.

Shin-goro was sent back to Saga for his brother-in-law’s misdeed. He was confined to his house. When three years had passed, his family suggested that he should divorce his wife. “Then you will be called back,” they said. “Your allowance is only five *koku*. How can you live on that?” However often they urged him, he would not accept their advice. He said, “My refusal to divorce is not because I am madly in love with her. It would be inhuman to exile my innocent wife just because I want to be saved myself. I do not mind starving to death for my behavior. Please do not bother about me.”

#### **869) Nabeshima Sadayu would not divorce his son’s wife.**

Sadayu’s son Kura-no-suke was married to a daughter of Ogawa Toneri, but Toneri was dismissed from his post. When Lord Tsunashige inherited the lordship, a man said to Sadayu, “Why do you not divorce your son’s wife? The new lord does not think

well of him.” “No, I will not do so,” said Sadayu. “She has committed no offence. I do not mind even if we are treated unfavorably.” The wife died soon and his son married a daughter of Ishi-i Nui. Many people said he should not have permitted it, because her family was closely related to Toneri, but Sadayu said it was necessary to select someone from among his relatives, and so had his son marry her.

#### **870) Oh-ki Munekiyo's teachings**

One day Oh-ki Munekiyo had a discussion with his attendants. After it was over, he said to them, “Young men should cultivate courage. It is possible if you only make endeavors to do so. If your sword is snapped in two, use your hands to fight. If these are cut off, use your shoulders. When you lose these, you still have your mouth with which you can bite through scores of enemy's heads.” That was his favorite saying.

\* Oh-ki Munekiyo was a prominent attendant of Lord Naoshige. He died in 1651 aged 84.

#### **871) Ishida Ittei sizes up the new *Shogun*.**

When Shogun Iemitsu died in 1651, his son Tsunayoshi inherited the throne. When he heard the news, Ishida Ittei paid a visit to Okabe Kenri and asked, “What do you think of the new Shogun?” Okabe Kenri said, “What do you think?” Ishida said, “If he does not employ anyone from Tatebayashi, his old territory, he should be judged a great leader. That is all I can think of. That is the point on which he will be judged a trustworthy *Shogun* or not.” “I also have the same idea,” said Okabe. “I have sent my attendant to Edo to check what happens, but have not heard back from him yet.”

#### **872) Koyama says all the twenty men took off their armor at the same time.**

One day during the Korean campaign Lord Naoshige was watching his men from high on a hill. He was surprised to see them relaxing and taking off their back protectors and helmets. “What an attitude to take off their back protectors at the front!” he said. “Go and check who took off his protector first. I will punish him!” A man was sent to the place right away. When he told them what the lord had said, everyone was perplexed, but Koyama Hei-zaemon said, “Oh, all of us took our guards off at the same time. Please report that to the lord.” The messenger came back and reported to Lord

Naoshige. “Well said! Only Koyama would say such a thing!” said Naoshige. He was a really brave person.

### **873) Why does Fukuchi Kichi-zaemon play drunk?**

When Lord Katsushige entertained his guests with crane meat, they said, “We heard you can tell white cranes from black ones by the taste. Is that right?” “Yes, I can,” said the lord. “Then which was the one we ate right now?” they said. “They were white, of course,” he said. “We doubt it. Would you call your cooks here? We would like to make sure,” they said.

The lord told his attendant to fetch Fukuchi Kichi-zaemon. Actually he had been watching their conversation from behind the screen. He gulped down a bowl of rice wine before he went in. He was summoned by the lord a couple of times but would not appear. Finally he came in to the guests, who asked him if the crane was white or black.

“It was white, black, white, black, not black, no,” he slurred. Lord Katsushige shouted at him, “You drunkard. Get out at once!”

Lord Katsushige used to say, “There are four types of men. Very witty, witty, ordinary, and stupid. Few men are very witty but Fukuchi Kichi-zaemon is almost in the very witty group. Nakano Kazuma is a witty person. That group is also small. Most people are just ordinary.”

### **874) How a guest's article is found**

One day some of the direct retainers were invited to the house of a very high-ranking person. One of them lost his article to be attached to the sword but returned home after the party without it. The host's attendant mentioned this to his master.

The host said, “Close the north and south gates. Lock all the doors, too.” Calling all the servants, he said, “Understand we could lose our household tonight. It is a terrible disgrace for us that our guest lost his article. We will not be able to face anyone tomorrow. Even if we examined all of you now, nobody would confess any misconduct. I am sure one of you stole it, but there is nothing I can do. I am now going to kill all of you. My head retainer will be first. Then I will kill all you other servants and confine myself to my house. I admit it is wrong to kill those of you who are not guilty, but we will lose our good name forever unless I do so. We are all destined to die sooner or later.

Why not save all the other servants by frankly confessing your sin?"

One of them said, "I stole it." He was sentenced to death at once. It was a very swift resolution. Someone said it could be compared to Takeda Shingen's quickness of judgment.

- \* It was customary to insert an item like a comb in the scabbard.
- \* Takeda Shingen, a well-known general and lord during the Warring States period, was from present-day Yamanashi Prefecture. He died in 1573 aged 52.

#### **875) Kura-no-suke meets his end.**

Iwamura Kura-no-suke was awarded not only a certificate of martial arts of the Sangoku school but also a certificate in the concepts of Buddhism by Suzuki Sho-san. Usually he was in good health, but one day while walking round his garden he felt sick and took to his bed. Greatly surprised, his wife helped him to sit up, when he opened his eyes wide, ground his teeth, and breathed his last just as his teacher had done at his own final moment. No student of Sho-san ever practiced as hard as he did. This is worth remembering.

Kura-no-suke was the son of the chief of Anegawa Village. In the reign of Lord Katsushige he was appointed attendant for falconry. Later he was employed as an attendant of Tadanao, the lord's son. When his master died, he was transferred to the service of Prince Mitsushige by Lord Katsushige. He was appointed for that post together with Hyakutake Iori and Ikuno Oribe.

- \* Iwamura Kura-no-suke died in 1679 aged 63.
- \* Suzuki Sho-san ( 1579 – 1655 ) was a prominent Zen Buddhist.

#### **876) An attendant must not feel discouraged even if he is asked to do manual work.**

One evening Yamamoto Jocho, my teacher, was talking with Ikuno Oribe over a cup of wine at the castle. Ikuno said, "The other day Nakano Shogen asked me what I think of the mental attitude of an attendant. I expressed myself frankly because we are on good terms with each other. This is what I said. Anyone serves willingly when he is treated well by his master. But if he is demoted to a minor post, he will feel disappointed. But that is no good. Even if you are asked to do lowly job like scooping up water or cooking rice, you should do it willingly. Jocho, you are still young and appear

unyielding. Be careful.”

**877) Ikuno Oribe is an honest person.**

When Oribe and Ogawa Toneri were at table, an attendant came and said to Oribe, “You are wanted by the lord, sir.” So Oribe stood up and washed his hands right away. Seeing him do so, Ogawa Toneri said, “That does not become a man of your advanced age. Why not finish your meal and then go?” “That is what a clever person would do, but I do not feel like eating when I am summoned by the lord,” he said and went out. He was such an honest person, and his posterity are numerous today, probably thanks to his fidelity.

**878) Kichi-no-suke says that he wants to accept his end peacefully.**

Shida Kichi-no-suke said, “It is very hard to run at top speed. However, I feel good when I finish my run. I feel better when I sit down. To lie on the ground is much better. If I lie in bed on the pillow, it must be the best. A man’s life is like this. When you are young you should experience hardships. As you grow old, you can take things easier. I would like to leave this world peacefully in my room. To live in idleness in youth is not good, though. If you do so, you will be sure to meet hardships later. It would be regrettable to spend your life in torture, would it not?” My teacher heard this from Shimomura Roku-uemon.

Kichi-no-suke once said that the more hardships you experience as a youth, the better it will be for you. That is a similar notion.

**879) A man who drinks too much to stand up is stupid.**

Ueno Rihei was serving in Edo as the head official in financial affairs. On the evening of July 31, he had a drink with his colleague Hashimoto Ta-uemon, in charge of foot soldiers, and drunk himself into a stupor. He told his favorite maid servant to accompany him to his house. As he walked along with the young man, Rihei forgot himself and made unreasonable demands of him. When they came to his house he even slashed at him. The young man fought back with his sword and they grappled with each other. The servant threw his master into a ditch and held him down.

Then Rihei’s attendant came out and said, “Which is Rihei, top or bottom?” “Bottom is me!” cried Rihei. The maid was cut, but not injured seriously. He got up and ran

off.

When this incident was examined, Rihei was put into a jail at Naeki-yama and later decapitated. He had once been praised for his behavior when he cut down a man who attacked him at a commoner's house in Edo. However, this time he lost everything because of his bad habit. It was truly stupid of him to drink till he lost control. The male servant was from Taku. Hashimoto Ta-uemon, Rihey's colleague, committed suicide before his examination was over.

**880) Kumashiro San-zaemon, a seinor retainer, admonishes the lord's son.**

Nabeshima Yoshi-shige, the fourth lord of Saga, was quite rough-mannered in his youth. Since he was not fond of one of his attendants, he listed the defects of the man's wife on his fan and told another attendant to show it to the attendant. The moment the man looked at the fan, he broke it and threw it away, not knowing who had written the list. When Yoshi-shige heard it, he said, "What an uncivil person he is to break my fan! Have him commit *seppuku* at once."

San-zaemon, an old retainer, tried to reason with him but the young prince would not listen. "If this was the first time I would tell him to follow your order," he said. "You do not seem to mend your ways at all. I am afraid you will go on with your caprices long after this. I can bear it no longer. My dear prince, I have been in this world very long, and do not mind when I go to the other world. Kill me with your sword right now. I have no desire to live on if it means I have to watch your inhuman treatment of others. If you kill me with your own sword, perhaps it will make you think about what you have done. Please kill me now."

Listening to San-zaemon, the young prince, was deeply moved and said. "Now I understand what you mean. I was in the wrong. Tell him my decision. Let me not put anyone to death again." San-zaemon asked him again to be sure that he really meant it. Having confirmed that this was the prince's true mind, he left the scene. After that the prince became a merciful man.

**881) Nothing is so gracious as to lose your life for your lord.**

There is an interesting episode in the twelfth chapter of the book "Ro-an-kyo." A man from Taku was about to go to the fighting in Shimabara in the winter of 1638, though he had not fully recovered from smallpox. His relatives were concerned about it and said, "You are suffering from your disease. If you go there in such a condition,

how can you serve the lord?" "I am quite happy to go," he said. "I will be content even if I lose my life on the way. I am deeply indebted to the lord. How can I not repay his great kindness in such an emergency?" He went off to the front with his comrades.

Although it was wintertime, he would not wear anything over his clothes. Nor did he take care of his health with any special remedy. Surprisingly, however, he recovered from his illness on the battlefield and served his lord well. In such an urgent situation an abominable disease like smallpox seems to be overlooked by the gods.

When Sho-san, his teacher, was told about his exploits, he said, "Nothing is so pure as to give up your life for justice. All the gods and guardian deities will surely help you in the attempt." Nakano Matabey had a similar miraculous experience.

\* The book "Ro-an-kyo" was published in 1660 by the priest Kei-chu.

#### **882) 15 year-old Harada Shiro-zaemon kills a large snake.**

Harada Shiro-zaemon aged 15 was passing through a field with a hawk on his arm, when a large snake lunged at the bird and wound itself around him three times on the breast. Holding the hawk, he drew his sword and sliced off the snake's head. Its body uncoiled and dropped to the ground. It was about six meters long. He got severe pains, and had to take medicine for a long time after that. He still complains of his pain occasionally in the cold season. My teacher heard this from him directly.

Another person in Takeo went hunting and had something jump at him with its mouth wide open. He killed it by thrusting his sword into its open mouth as far as his own elbow. It was a snake about two meters long. It had a face like a lion and a belly like a cat measuring about one meter around the abdomen. Its scales were like coins and it had white hair from its jaw to belly. It had eight legs like those of a rat and it grew thinner towards the tail. He salted it and took it to Saga. After that incident, there were severe tremors in the mountains where the snake lived, and people could not pass through some time, because the paths were cut off here and there.

If you are attacked by a snake, step aside as soon as possible. It will move straight on. A snake jumps at you with his head raised high, so you should strike it with your sword to cut it off. It comes up to you with half of its body upright. If you sever the upright part, it will cut in two, but can still flee into the bushes. If you cut it at the neck, it will disappear before you know. Cut the snake around its tail, and it will make

a stop about five or six meters away. A snake is said to stab at you with his head. It can bite right through your body. If you miss the neck when you go to cut the head off the poisonous snake called *mamushi*, it will get revenge on you without failure.

**883) Aida Kichi-zaemon commits *seppuku* after killing a highwayman.**

When Aida Kichi-zaemon, an attendant of Nakano Takumi, was walking through a grove near Kanzaki one night, his way was blocked by a big man. Aida protested, but the man grabbed him and said, "You can go through naked." The man's grip was so tight he could not move at all. Then Aida thought of an idea and said to him, "All right. Let me undress. Please spare my life." He stripped completely and gave his two swords to the man. When he was about to leave, he turned round, seized one of his swords, which the highwayman was carrying on his shoulder, and cut him to death from the back. He reported the incident to the magistrate when he got back to Kanzaki.

Meanwhile, Nabeshima Motoshige, the lord of the Ogi branch clan, appeared at Saga Castle and said, "I have had my leg broken." When Lord Katsushige asked about it, he explained that his powerful servant had been killed by Nakano Takumi's attendant. "Please put him to death," he said to Lord Katsushige. It turned out to be Aida Kichi-zaemon and he was sentenced to death at once. It was very unfortunate for him.

All the Nakano family came to the *seppuku* ground, and he said to them, "I really appreciate your kindness. Let me perform a dance for you before we part. Watch me." He called his children to him and had them beat the drum. He danced his last dance to its rhythm. Then he had his head cut off. His nephew Aida Gombey served as his second.