

1) One evening Jocho talks to Tashiro Tsuramoto, with deep feeling.

All retainers of our clan should learn about our own clan. I feel quite sorry that most of them neglect to do so. It is most important to learn the history of the clan, because our domain has been preserved till today, thanks to our forefathers' endeavor and compassion.

Thanks to the deep sympathy and bravery of Go-chu, the warm-heartedness and piety of Riso, and other great leaders like Takanobu and Naoshige, our clan has long continued in matchless strength. To my great regret, most folk in our clan hardly think of those pioneers, while they esteem the reputation of other clans.

Neither Sakyamuni nor Confucius has ever served our clan. Kusunoki and Shingen have never done so, either. So they should not be made objects of our faith. In peace and in turbulence, we could survive by depending on our ancestors' teachings alone. We do not have to learn anything about other clans. After having learned about Saga Clan, you might as well learn about other clans for pleasure or whatever. For a retainer of Saga Clan, it is enough to learn his lessons from the history of our own clan.

When you are asked by members of other clans about the origin of the Ryuzoji or Nabeshima families, can you give them a satisfactory answer? You might be asked the reason why the land of the Ryuzoji family was taken over by the Nabeshima. Others might ask, "The Ryuzoji and Nabeshima families are known for their bravery in Kyushu but what kind of exploits have they performed?" Unless you know the history of our clan, you could not give them a suitable answer at all.

Every retainer ought to work hard at his duty, but many are seen to make serious mistakes by neglecting their own work and envying that of others'. Nippo and Taisei-in are matchless models for you to follow. In their days, all the retainers worked diligently at their duties. Those two lords wished to have faithful retainers and the retainers tried their best to meet their expectations. As a result, our clan was extremely vigorous.

Nippo had such hardships in his reign that on several occasions he even determined to do away with himself, but thanks to his strenuous efforts and fortune, our clan did not collapse. Taisei-in, his son, also had a very hard life and experienced situations in which he also thought of killing himself. However, not only did he play an active part in battles, but also governed the clan as first lord, both in politics and in financial administration. He was pious, and always said, "I should do my utmost not to destroy the clan established by my father. It is my duty to keep our clan prosperous for as long as

it exists. We are now in a time of peace, and people want to live at ease, forgetting the hardships of past wars. I am afraid people will sink into luxury and forget the code of life as a *samurai*, wasting their money on useless things in luxury. As a result they will be compelled to live in poverty, bringing disgrace to their families and ending in decline. Now most of the worthy senior members have passed away, and the young people follow only the modern fashion. If I compose a list of lessons for them to learn, I hope those who come after me will be encouraged to live up to them.” Confining himself to his chamber, Taisei-in spent his days in writing his lessons to posterity.

I do not know very much, but according to the senior clansmen, each lord of our clan transmits to his successor a set of secret martial tactics called “Kachi-kuchi” when he inherits his seat. I was told that the lord transmits it by word of mouth, and that he also hands two books to the new lord.

Taisei-in compiled a book entitled “Torinoko-cho,” in which he wrote down every regulation, arrangements and procedure concerning the government of the clan and the rituals to be followed with the Shogunate government. He must have taken great pains to complete this book. It is really thanks to his efforts that our clan enjoys its current prosperity.

I respectfully suggest that our new lords should gain an understanding of the painstaking endeavors of Nippo and Taisei-in by reading the books handed to them. Right from birth they have been pampered, and have acquired a rather selfish personality. They have not learned the clan’s history nor have they ever had to confront serious hardship. But those around them have been too reserved to issue warnings. As a result, they have announced new policies one after another without any knowledge of the traditions of the clan. It seems to me that governance of the clan has been hindered to some extent.

It is unfortunate that officials around him, who think they are clever, offer counsels to their lord to employ new policies, without knowing how they would work. These officials are simply trying to gain the favor of the lord, ending up worsening our clan’s good traditions. For example, we have seen that the three branch families demoted. The system of Chakuza was set up to control the clan’s administration. Strangers have been scouted from other clans. Reserve *samurai* were appointed as group leaders. Personnel were reshuffled quite often. The lords’ residences were newly built. Administrative retainers were increased. The Koyo-ken residence was demolished. Several regulations were revised. A new status was established. A tremendous amount of money was spent to build a villa called “Nishi-yashiki.” The foot-soldiers were made to fall into a great confusion. Most of the late lord’s belongings were

divided among his important retainers. The old villa was demolished for an enormous amount of money.

All these incidents should be taken for failures caused by new lords eager for fame. Fortunately for us, however, the clan has remained stable due to the backbreaking efforts of previous lords. If all of us follow the teachings of Nippo and Taisei-in, our clan will remain stable for ever.

Looking back at our past lords, we can say that all of them were wise and good-natured. Quite naturally they were considered among the superb lords in Japan. Our clan has been blessed by these great and pious ancestors.

It was our tradition that retainers were not transferred to other clans. No strangers were employed from other clans, either. Some people were sentenced to confinement, but no one was driven away. Even the descendants of *samurai* who had been ordered to kill themselves were not exiled. Everyone living in the domain was deeply attached to our lords, while they were so compassionate toward us. Not only *samurai* but also commoners like farmers and townsfolk felt gratitude to the lord. Considering such profound benevolence, we cannot avoid feeling that we would do anything for him in return. Even the order to kill ourselves could be accepted as another repayment to the lord.

Living in such a remote place in the mountains, I have kept a deep-seated resolution to support the clan and the lords, though I know it is actually impossible to realize as a hermit. I am living as a monk but will never ask Buddha for eternal salvation. My wish is only to support our clan by reincarnation as many as seven times, after leaving this world. No force of will or talent is needed. What I have with me is a firm resolution to bear the clan on my shoulders. To whom am I inferior as a man to serve the lord? Unless you have such a conceit, you cannot really become a worthy retainer. Make a resolution to bear the whole clan on your two shoulders, and you can make your dream a reality.

However, your resolution may weaken in the course of your training. Let me tell you a secret to prevent that. I strongly advise you to chant the following four oaths every morning.

- a) I will not hesitate to be killed in action.
- b) I shall be willing to serve my lord.
- c) Let me be dutiful to my parents.
- d) I will work for the good of others.

If you chant these oaths every morning in front of the Shinto and Buddhist altars, your mental strength will double. By repeating the practice, you will not fail to make

progress, because the Shinto gods and Lord Buddha must think of favoring you with their patronage.

- * The first person “I” refers to Yamamoto Jocho. He gave a talk to Tashiro Tsura-moto, who took his dictation.
- * Go-chu is the posthumous name of Ryuzo-ji Iekane, who laid the foundation of the Ryuzo-ji family. He was very brave and cunning in battle, and compassionate at heart. He died aged 93 on March 19, 1546.
- * Riso is the posthumous name of Nabeshima Kiyohisa, who supported Ryuzo-ji Iekane in action, and also a compassionate person, as was his wife. He died aged 85 on March 8, 1552.
- * Takanobu was Ryuzo-ji Iekane’s great-grandson, who inherited the Ryuzo-ji family aged 18 in 1548. Brave and decisive, he conquered most of the northern domains of Kyushu and was nicknamed Tycoon, in control of five domains and two islands. He was killed in battle aged 54 in 1584.
- * Nabeshima Naoshige laid the foundation of Saga Clan. He died aged 81 on June 3, 1618.
- * Sakyamuni was the founder of Buddhism.
- * Kusunoki was a general, active in the 14th century.
- * Shingen was a general of the 16th century.
- * Kyushu is the south-westernmost of the main islands of Japan. Saga is located in the northwest of Kyushu.
- * Nippo is a posthumous name of Nabeshima Naoshige.
- * Taisei-in is a posthumous name of Nabeshima Katsushige, who was the first son of Naoshige and became the first lord of Saga Clan. He died aged 78 on March 24, 1657.
- * Kachi-kuchi is the name given to the secret tactics of Nabeshima Clan. It literally means “How to win in combat.”
- * Torinoko-cho was a book of laws and ordinances of Saga Clan compiled by Nabeshima Katsushige, its first lord.
- * Chakuza is an official name given to the backbone retainers of Saga Clan.
- * Koyo-ken was a residence built by Nabeshima Katsushige, where he lived in his later years.
- * Nishi-yashiki literally means the “west residence.” Tsunashige, the third lord, used it as his villa.