

[YURA]: Do you have any doubts now?

CHANTER: Her face is livid. Hikokurō picks up the sleeves and examines them.

[HIKOKURŌ]: I've never seen this man's sleeve before, but I remember the woman's sleeve very well. Yura, I promise you I shall lose no time in vindicating your honor. Come with me.

CHANTER: He leads her into the sitting room. Everyone in the house has heard their conversation, and a breathless silence has fallen. Hikokurō speaks quite calmly.

[HIKOKURŌ]: Otane, you and the other women come here. Bunroku, I want you too.

CHANTER: They all know that so curt a summons indicates some disaster. They slowly come before Hikokurō and bow their heads. Their bodies are chilled, their spirits faint, they can scarcely breathe. Among them, wretched creature, is Otane, fated on account of an evil deed, not of her intent or desire, yet blamable only on herself, to be impaled on a blade wielded by her husband, as she fully expects. All her long, patient waiting for her husband's return has been in vain. Never, until this very moment when she is about to be killed, did she imagine that the pillow she shared with her husband on the night before his departure in the previous year would be their last together. At this thought, she wants to look once more at her husband's face, but her eyes are too blinded with tears to see him. She weeps, her head hanging. Her husband throws the sleeves in front of her.

[HIKOKURŌ]: I'm sure you've all heard Yura's accusations. Well, woman, do you have an excuse? No? I didn't think so—you can't answer. Ofuji, I presume you know who brought them together. In crimes of immorality, the go-between shares the lovers' guilt.

[OFUJI]: You foolish man, Hikokurō! Had I known what was going on, do you suppose such a disgraceful thing would have happened?

CHANTER: She weeps bitterly again.

[HIKOKURŌ]: The servant must have been the go-between. Send for the wench.

CHANTER: At his summons the girl appears, trembling all over.

[ORIN]: Begging your pardon, sir, but I don't know anything about it. The other day Madam Otane asked me to buy some abortion medicine. She told me not to let anybody know. I bought three

doses at seven *fun* each, which made two *monme*, one *fun*, all together. That's all I ever did. Even so, I was afraid, master, if you heard about it you might scold me for buying such expensive medicine. So I paid for it with bad coins.⁴⁷

CHANTER: She prattles on in this inane fashion. Hikokurō is flabbergasted.

[HIKOKURŌ]: You say she's pregnant? Bunroku, I know you're still a boy, but why, when the whole fief's bursting with the scandal, didn't you kill Gen'emon and get rid of him long ago?

[BUNROKU]: I heard about it only this morning. I informed the household retainers, and they sent some men to Gen'emon's lodgings to kill him. But they discovered that he had gone back to Kyoto a couple of days ago.

[HIKOKURŌ]: It can't be helped, then. Somebody light a fire in front of the Buddhist altar. Stand up, woman. Come here before the altar.

CHANTER: His wife wipes away her tears.

[OTANE]: I expected you to hate me until the end of time. But I know now, when you tell me to stand before the Buddha, that something still remains of your old affection. How shall I forget it, even after death? My dear husband, I did not betray you intentionally, after knowing your goodness all those many months and years. My crime took place in a kind of nightmare. While I dreamed, a horrible man—but if I go on, it will only make my death mean and shameful. It may be wrong of me, I know, to kill myself before my husband's sword can strike, but let me vindicate myself in this way. Forgive me, please. This is my atonement.

CHANTER: She pulls open the front of her kimono and plunges the dagger to the hilt into her breast, a moving display of her resolve. Ofuji and Bunroku cry out in horror. The tears well in their hearts, but taken aback by Hikokuro's impassive expression, they clench their teeth in silent grief. Hikokurō unsheathes his sword and, jerking up Otane's body, deals her the death blow with a final thrust. He pushes away her body, wipes his sword, and deliberately sheathes it. He rises to his feet: this is the stern behavior expected of a samurai. Hikokurō picks up the traveling costume he had taken off only this morning—his wicker hat, straw sandals, and sword.

[HIKOKURŌ]: Bunroku, I'm going now to report to my superiors what

has happened. I shall ask for leave, even though I can't wait until it is granted. I intend to go as quickly as possible to Kyoto. While I am busy disposing of my wife's lover, I want you to escort these women to a safe place with our relatives.



Hikokurō dealing Otane the death blow. (Photograph courtesy of Barbara Curtis Adachi Collection, C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University)

CHANTER: He starts to leave after these parting words. Ofuji, Bunroku, and Yura, all wishing to follow, vie in their eagerness to join him. Fury blazes in Hikokuro's dilated eyes.

[HIKOKURŌ]: Do you expect me to take along the lot of you just to kill one man, like some shopkeeper's vengeance? Are you trying to bring even more disgrace on me? If even one of you follows me, I'll never speak to you again.

CHANTER: He is outraged. The others burst into tears.

[OFUJI]: You are being too unkind. The man, as far as I am concerned, is my sister's enemy.

[BUNROKU]: For me, he's my mother's enemy.

[YURA]: And for me, my sister-in-law's enemy.

[ALL THREE]: Can we allow this villain to go unpunished? Please let us go with you.

CHANTER: The three together join their hands in supplication, weeping aloud. Hikokurō is unable to hide his grief any longer. His resolute expression gives way to despair.

[HIKOKURŌ]: If you think so much of your mother, sister, or sister-in-law, why didn't you beg me to spare her life? Why didn't you suggest that she put on Buddhist robes and become a nun?

CHANTER: Lifting the lifeless body in his arms, he shouts his grief, and the others are carried away by tears of sympathy. The misery of it! This is the heartbreaking conduct demanded of those born to be samurai.

[*Chikamatsu jōruri shū jō*, NKBT 49: 39–57, translated by Donald Keene]

***THE BATTLES OF COXINGA* (KOKUSENYA KASSEN, 1715)**

Although now the contemporary-life (*sewamono*) puppet plays are the main focus of critical attention and the more frequently performed, the history plays (*jidaimono*) were the more important in Chikamatsu's time. Chikamatsu himself wrote three times as many *jidaimono* as *sewamono*, and *The Battles of Coxinga*, which was first performed in 1715, was his greatest success in this genre. This was the first play that Chikamatsu wrote after the death in 1714 of Takemoto Gidayū, the chief chanter of the Takemoto Theater with whom he had first established himself as a playwright. Chikamatsu wrote *The Battles of Coxinga* to maintain the life of the theater and ensure the success of Gidayū's successor, Masatayū. The play became a long-running hit and was quickly adapted by the kabuki theater. Indeed, until well into the nineteenth century, *The Battles of Coxinga* was performed more often than any other Chikamatsu play. The exoticism of the drama, the setting in China, and the incorporation of a number of foreign details contributed to its popularity, as did the many special puppet effects. Even so, the play was not performed in its entirety for long. The tendency toward fragmentation has left only the second half of act 2 (Bamboo Forest of a Thousand Leagues) and the two scenes of act 3, translated here, in regular production on the puppet and kabuki stages.

The Battles of Coxinga follows the five-act structure that Gidayū had advocated for *jidaimono*: the first act (love), second act (warriors and battle), third act (tragedy), fourth act (*michiyuki*/poetic journey), and fifth act (celebratory speech). In act 1, the Ming emperor is duped by Ri Tōten, one of his ministers, who gouges out one of his own eyes in what appears to be a show of loyalty but turns out to be a sign that he has joined the Tartars (Manchus), who are plotting to overthrow the Ming court. Go Sankei, a minister loyal to the Ming emperor, points out Ri Tōten's deception as well as the plight of Ikkan (Tei Shiryū), who was banished from the court and fled to Japan nineteen years earlier for similarly warning the emperor of treacherous courtiers. But the emperor refuses to believe Go Sankei. The emperor

and the court are then attacked by the Tartar army, led by Bairoku, a Tartar prince. Bairoku also is intent on capturing Lady Kasei, the Ming emperor's consort, who is pregnant with the future crown prince. When the emperor and the pregnant empress are killed, Go Sankei takes the baby out of the womb and replaces it with his own child, whom he kills so that the Tartars will think that the imperial line has died. In the meantime, Go Sankei's wife manages to escape with Princess Sendan, the younger sister of the dead emperor, and the two set sail for Japan.

Act 2 opens in Japan some six months later and centers on Ikkan, now married to a lowly Japanese fisherwoman, and their grown son, Watōnai (*wa* stands for Japan and *tō* for Tang, his father's home), the future Coxinga. Watōnai and his wife discover the boat carrying Princess Sendan, who tells them that Rī Tōten has killed the emperor, allied with the Tartars, and taken over the empire. Watōnai and his parents then decide to sail for China to restore the Ming dynasty. Upon their arrival in China, Ikkan resolves to find Kinshōjo, his daughter by his previous wife. Kinshōjo's mother died giving birth, and Kinshōjo, who was only two years old when Ikkan fled to Japan, is now married to Gojōgun Kanki, an illustrious prince whose aid Ikkan hopes to enlist by appealing to Kinshōjo. Ikkan parts company with Watōnai and his mother, who enter the Bamboo Forest of a Thousand Leagues. In a scene long popular with audiences, they are attacked by a tiger, but Watōnai subdues it using a Japanese charm given to him by his mother.

In act 3, which is translated here, Watōnai and his mother rejoin Ikkan at Red Cliff Mountain and proceed to Kanki's castle only to learn that Kanki is away. With Kinshōjo's help, Ikkan and Watōnai manage to get the mother into the castle, as a hostage, to await Kanki's return. Upon his arrival home, the mother asks Kanki if he will join Watōnai to defeat the Tartars, whom Kanki has been serving. Although not related by blood, Kinshōjo acts as a filial daughter to Watōnai's mother, but she becomes an obstacle for Kanki, who wants to join Watōnai's cause but cannot because he would be seen as a leader influenced by his wife and therefore a disgrace. Kinshōjo kills herself ostensibly out of shame over her inability to help Ikkan, Watōnai, and her stepmother, to whom she feels duty bound (*giri*); but implicitly, her reason is to free Kanki to join their cause. Watōnai's mother then joins Kinshōjo in death, taking her own life out of a sense of duty to Kinshōjo so that she will not be viewed as a "shame to Japan"—that is, as a cruel stepmother who forced her foreign stepdaughter to kill herself. Beneath the surface, however, the mother's suicide also reveals the purity and justice of their cause. The sacrifice of the two women allows Watōnai and Kanki—who play masculine *aragoto* (rough-style) roles and are about to fight each other to the death—to become allies. For both women, private and public conflicts are resolved through death. Their sacrifice is followed by a lament and praise for the dead, which function as a kind of catharsis.

The tragic third act of a *jidaimono* was considered especially important and thus was always performed by the chief chanter. By the early eighteenth century, it had become customary for the tragedy to involve the substitution of one person for

another (*migawari*). This ill-fated substitute was usually a secondary figure, such as a retainer to the main character or a relative, who was faced with the task of overcoming severe obstacles in order to help restore the social order. In the third act of *Coxinga*, Kinshōjo and Watōnai's mother, two relatively powerless women, are faced with just such a task, and it is their sacrificial death that finally resolves the major conflict between the two male figures, Watōnai and Kanki. Chikamatsu's humanism implies that such lesser people can, through self-sacrifice, make a major impact on the course of history, which, in Chikamatsu's *jidaimono*, means the return and triumph of the forces of good over evil.

While for the *chōnin* audience the history plays were a form of escape from the everyday world in which they lived, the *jidaimono* were also indirect commentary on the contemporary situation. As Uchiyama Michiko has pointed out, the danger in which the Ming court finds itself—particularly the corruption that comes from within in the form of Ri Tōten, the evil adviser—reflects the chaos that Japan found itself in following the corrupt administration of Shōgun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646–1709). Much like Tsunayoshi, the Ming emperor cannot discern between good (Go Sankei) and evil (Ri Toten), thereby causing a crisis that requires the sacrifice of the innocent and weak to restore peace and stability.

CHARACTERS

WATŌNAI, later called Coxinga, son of a Chinese father (Ikkan) and a Japanese mother

[GOJŌGUN] IKKAN, Watōnai's father, also called Tei Shiryū, a former Chinese minister loyal to the Ming emperor, father of Kinshōjo by a previous Chinese wife, now married to a Japanese woman

[RŌ] KANKI, an illustrious Chinese prince, Ikkan's son-in-law

KINSHŌJO, wife of Kanki and daughter of Ikkan by his previous Chinese wife, the half sister of Coxinga

MOTHER, Japanese mother of Watōnai (Coxinga) and stepmother of Kinshōjo

Act 3

Scene 1: Outside the castle of Gojōgun Kanki.

CHANTER:

The most benevolent ruler cannot keep a worthless minister,
Nor can the kindest father love a shiftless son.⁴⁸

Thus with China and Japan: though their paths diverged by
custom and tradition,

They stray not from the Way of Sincerity.

At the foot of Red Cliff Mountain, Ikkan joins his wife and son, and the three hurry on until they reach Lion's Keep, the stronghold of Gojōgun Kanki, knowing only that he is Ikkan's son-in-law. The castle looks more formidable than they had heard: far above the high stone walls, in the darkness of a spring night still bitterly cold, decorative dolphins arch their tails to the sky atop roof tiles glistening with frost. The waters of the moat, dark as indigo, uncoil like a long thick rope and flow toward the distant Yellow River. The tower gate is tightly bolted; a sentry's gong clangs noisily within. The loopholes in the castle wall bristle with crossbows, and cannons stand here and there ready to be fired: no fortress in Japan looked so mighty as this. Shocked by what he sees, Ikkan whispers to Watōnai.

[IKKAN]: I heard the country was at war, but such an imposing gate—it's enormous! If I knock on it in the middle of the night and tell them that I, Kanki's father-in-law, have arrived from Japan, no one will believe me—they've never even heard of me! If I could just speak to my daughter, I could offer all kinds of proof that I am the father who left her when she was two and went to Japan, but getting into that castle won't be easy. What'll we do now?

[WATŌNAI]: We shouldn't be surprised now. Ever since leaving Japan, I knew we wouldn't find any allies here. Sentimental appeals like "I am the father-in-law you never knew!" or "My son-in-law!" may fall on deaf ears. Better to ask him directly: "Can we count on you or not?" "No" means he is our enemy. The daughter you left here is also my half sister, but if she had cared for you at all, she would have wanted news from Japan and sent letters. Her feelings can't be trusted. If I made those brutes I defeated in the Bamboo Forest the core of an army and used them to win over others, then fifty or a hundred thousand men would join us in no time. But I don't need any help to kick down that gate, twist off the head of an unfilial sister, and fight it out with Kanki.

CHANTER: He leaps up to charge the gate, but his mother holds him back.

[MOTHER]: I don't know what her feelings are, but a woman's place is to obey her husband, not to do as she likes. Ikkan is her father, and you, Watōnai, are from the same seed. I am the outsider

here, and although I've been separated from her by a thousand leagues of oceans and mountains, I cannot escape the title of stepmother. I am sure that her heart is filled with love for her family. If you fought your way in and then people blamed it on her Japanese stepmother's envy, it would bring shame not only to me but to Japan as well. Humble though your station may be, you are committed to a noble cause—to destroy the Tartars, a mighty foe, and restore the Ming dynasty. Don't think of my shame! Swallow your resentment!

The first rule of military strategy, they say, is to win over others to your side, even if it is just one from the lowest ranks. Far better still would be having Kanki on our side, the lord of a castle who controls the whole region! Do you think that is an easy task? Calm down and ask them to let you in!

CHANTER: Ikkan and Watōnai approach the gate, and Watōnai calls out.

[WATŌNAI]: We have something to discuss with Lord Kanki! Open the gate! Open the gate!

CHANTER: He pounds on the gate, but the sound only echoes back from within the walls. Then the sentries shout down, one by one: "Lord Kanki left yesterday by order of the Tartar king." "We don't know when he'll return." "Coming in the middle of the night while he's away is bad enough, whoever you are, but demanding to speak with him personally—what nerve! If you have something to say, then say it—we'll tell him when he returns!" Ikkan answers in a low voice.

[IKKAN]: A messenger won't do. If Lord Kanki is away, I would like to speak directly to his wife. Once you tell her that I've come from Japan, I'm sure she'll consent.

CHANTER: His words spark an outcry behind the wall even before he finishes speaking.

[SENTRY]: We've never even seen the lady's face, and you want to meet with her in private? Bold talk indeed—and from a Japanese! Keep your eyes on him, men!

CHANTER: In the light of the pole lanterns, the sentries bang their gongs and cymbals while a swarm of soldiers appear on top of the wall and take aim with their muskets. "Fire the cannons! Crush them!! Fuses! Bullets!" they shout, jostling against each other in

alarm. Hearing the commotion from her rooms, Kinshōjo runs out and climbs the gate tower.

[KINSHŌJO]: Calm down! Calm down! I will listen to everything they have to say. Don't shoot until I give the order myself. Stand at ease!

You there, outside the gate! I am Kinshōjo, Lord Kanki's wife. The whole realm bows before the Tartar king. My husband, mindful of the times, also serves that king and has been entrusted with this castle. Why do you want to meet with me at a time like this, when he is away and the castle is under heavy guard? It makes no sense. And yet you mention Japan—tell me about those who are dear to me. How I long to hear news of them!

CHANTER: Even as she speaks, she wonders: "Could it be my father? Why would he have come here?" Though fearful of the danger, her yearning increases.

[KINSHŌJO]: You soldiers—Be careful! Do not fire your muskets by accident!

CHANTER: Her fears are understandable. Ikkan sees his daughter's face for the first time, like the hazy spring moon, and tears cloud his voice.

[IKKAN]: Pardon me for addressing you in this abrupt manner, but your father was Tei Shiryū of the Ming. Your mother died giving birth to you, and your father incurred the emperor's wrath. When he fled to Japan, you were only two years old, too young to understand his sorrow at leaving you behind, but you must have heard something about this, even from your nursemaid. I am your father, Tei Shiryū. I've passed the years at Hirado Bay in Hizen, a province in Japan, and my name now is Ikkan. This man is your brother, born in Japan, and this woman is your new mother. I come to you now, without hiding my shameful state, because I have something to ask of you, in private. Please have them open the gate.

CHANTER: His appeal, spoken so earnestly, stirs her memories. Thinking it might be her father, she wants to fly to him, cling to him, gaze into his face. Her heart is torn in a thousand pieces, but as the wife of Kanki, lord of the castle, she holds back her tears before the soldiers.

[KINSHŌJO]: I remember it all, but without some proof how can I be

certain? If you have proof that you are my father, I would like to hear it.

CHANTER: Immediately the soldiers start shouting one after the other:

“Prove it!” “Show us proof!” “He’s just saying he’s her father.

““He’s a liar!” They all fix their gun sights on Ikkan. Watōnai runs up and stands in front of Ikkan, facing the soldiers.

[WATŌNAI]: If I hear so much as a pop from your silly guns, I’ll cut you all down!

[SOLDIER]: Don’t let that bastard escape!

CHANTER: They cock their muskets, covering them from all sides.

“Proof!” “Proof!” they chant with growing menace, until they appear about to shoot. Ikkan raises his hands.

[IKKAN]: Wait!—You, my lady, have the proof yourself, I’m sure of it.

The year before I fled from China, I had my portrait painted as a memento for you. I left it with your nursemaid. I’ve grown old, but my face must still bear some traces of the past. Compare it with the portrait—that should clear away any doubts!

[KINSHŌJO]: Your words are already proof.

CHANTER: She takes out the portrait that she has kept next to her heart over the years, and unfolds it on the railing. Then she takes out her mirror, holds it up so that she can see her father’s face reflected by the moonlight, and carefully compares the two images. In the portrait, she sees the burnished skin and glossy sidelocks of youth; in the mirror, a face now ravaged by age. His hair has turned white as snow, but the eyes and mouth remain unchanged, closely resembling her own. The mole on her forehead, inherited from her father, is undeniable proof.

[KINSHŌJO]: Are you really my father? How I’ve longed to see you—my dear father! I was told only that my mother had died and that my father was in Japan. I knew no one who might have news. I knew that Japan lay to the east, at the edge of the world, so each dawn I bowed to the rising sun, and at dusk I spread out a map of the world and said to myself: “Here is China, there is Japan, where my father is!” Japan seemed so near on the map, but you were three thousand leagues away or more. I gave up all hope of seeing you in this life and looked forward to the next, hoping I might meet you in the underworld. For twenty years I’ve filled my days and nights with sighs and tears. It was so hard for me to

bear, but you have stayed alive! Now I can bow to my father. I'm so grateful!

CHANTER: Her voice dissolves in sobs of joy as she loses all restraint. Ikkan, choking with emotion, clings to the gate tower and looks up as she looks down, their hearts too full to speak, their tears unending. Even the valiant Watōnai and his mother are overcome, and the tears of the brutish soldiers dampen their musket fuses. After a while Ikkan speaks.

[IKKAN]: We have come here on a very important matter. I wish to make a request of Kanki in secret. But I need to discuss this with you first, so please have the soldiers open the castle gate.

[KINSHŌJO]: I should, of course, invite you to enter without your even asking, but the country is still at war, and by order of the Tartar king, foreigners, even close relatives, are strictly forbidden from entering. But this is a special case. Soldiers! What do you say?



Kinshōjo, in Kanki's castle, holding up a portrait of Ikkan. (Photograph courtesy of Barbara Curtis Adachi Collection, C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University)

CHANTER: The thickheaded Chinese cry out: "No! Impossible! Never!

Go back to Japan! *Bin kan ta satsu bu on bu on!*"⁴⁹ The visitors are shocked, then dismayed as the soldiers again take aim with their muskets, but Watōnai's mother steps forward.

[MOTHER]: You are quite right, of course, quite right. Since it is the king's command, we are in no position to object. But you need not be concerned about an aged mother. I want only a few words with the lady. If you let me pass, it would truly be the greatest kindness I have ever known.

CHANTER: She presses her hands together in supplication, but they refuse to listen.

[SOLDIERS]: No! No! Nothing was said about allowing a woman to enter. If we let her in, she must be tied up with a rope. That way, even if the king hears of it, Lord Kanki will have an excuse and we would have done our duty. Quickly now—tie her up! If she doesn't like it, send her back to Japan! *Bin kan ta satsu Bu on bu on. . . .*

CHANTER: They glare down at the mother, and Watōnai's eyes suddenly widen with rage.

[WATŌNAI]: You dirty Chinese! Didn't you hear? She's the wife of Tei Shiryū Ikkan and my mother. That makes her your lady's mother as well. To lead her in on a rope like a dog or a cat—no Japanese would tolerate such an insult. So what if we can't get into your damned castle—let's go!

CHANTER: He starts to lead his mother away, but she shakes him off.

[MOTHER]: Listen—have you forgotten what I just said? A person making a big request of another will suffer every kind of humiliation and bitterness. Even if I am bound hand and foot by shackles, much less ropes, as long as our request is granted, it will be like exchanging roof tiles for gold. Japan may be a small country, but its men and women do not forget their duty. Ikkan—please tie me up.

CHANTER: Watōnai feels ashamed, but he has no choice. Taking the rope he keeps at his waist for emergencies, he binds her arms to her torso and ties her wrists together. Mother and son acknowledge each other with a smile—a reflection of the bravery instilled in the Japanese. Although in almost unbearable anguish, Kinshōjo struggles to keep her composure.

[KINSHŌJO]: The times govern all things, and the law of the land must be obeyed. You need not worry so long as your mother is in my

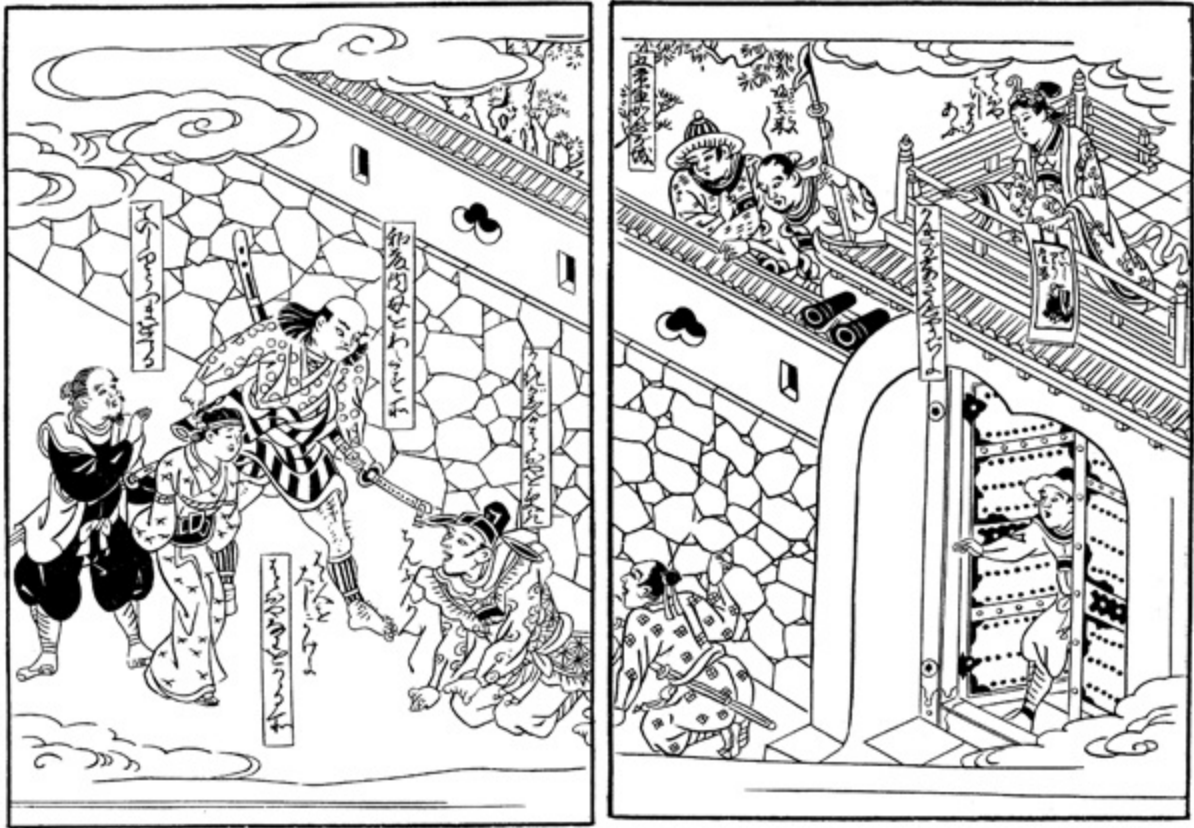
care. I don't know what she has to say, but I will listen to her request, convey her words to my husband Kanki, and beg him to grant her wishes. Now then, the waters of the moat surrounding this castle come through a conduit from a spring in the garden next to my dressing room and flow all the way to the Yellow River. If my husband grants your request, I will drop white makeup powder in the spring. So if you see the water in the moat turn white, it will be a sign of success, and you may enter the castle in high spirits. But if he does not grant your request, I will drop rouge powder into the water as a sign he has refused. Then you must come to the gate to take back your mother and be on your way. Success or failure will appear in the waters, pure white or deep red—keep your eyes on the moat! Farewell!

CHANTER: In the moonlight the doors of the gate swing open, and the mother is led through, across the threshold between life and death. This is not the Gateway to Enlightenment but the Gateway to the Darkness of Worldly Delusions. The doors close, and the heavy crossbar drops with a resounding boom. Kinshojo's eyes cloud with tears, revealing the weakness of a Chinese woman. Neither Watōnai nor Ikkan sheds a tear—the way of the Japanese warrior. In the fashion of the Tartars, a cannon fires as the gates open and close. Crossbar and cannon boom together, the only sound heard as it fills the air and the distant reaches beyond.

Scene 2: Kinshojo's rooms in the castle.

CHANTER:

Far-distant China, beyond the reach even of her dreams.
Having journeyed to a land she'd only heard about,
The mother finds the bonds of love between parent and child
As strong as the ropes that tightly bind her like a criminal.
Their meeting is as rare as plum blossoms in the snow,
but like two nightingales from different lands,
their songs harmonize and require no interpreter.



This woodblock illustration of *The Battles of Coxinga* is from a mid-eighteenth-century book entitled *Zashiki ayatsuri otogi gunki*. At the gate to Kanki's residence, Kinshōjo, on top of the tower, unrolls the portrait of her father, Tei Shiryū (Ikkan), over the railing and extends her hand toward him. Ikkan (*left*) stands next to his wife, now bound by rope. Two of Kanki's retainers (*center*) are speaking in Chinese and gesturing toward the gate to let in Ikkan's wife. Watōnai, with the shaved crown, stands vigilantly, grasping a long sword.

Kinshōjo brings the mother to her private rooms. With a deep sense of filial devotion, she comforts and honors her with heavenly splendor, providing her with layers of cushions and quilts, with fine wine and the best delicacies from the mountains and seas. But the ropes around the mother's wrists and arms make her look like a criminal guilty of the Ten Evils and the Five Sins,⁵⁰ a painful sight. Yet Kinshōjo attends to her in various ways with admirable concern, treating her as if she were her real mother. Her maidservants gather around.

[MAID 1]: Have you ever seen a Japanese woman before? Her eyes and nose are like ours, but the way she ties up her hair is odd!

[MAID 2]: And her clothing are sewn so differently! I suppose the young women dress the same way, too. A gust of wind would

raise the edges of that divided skirt and expose her thighs!

[MAID 1]: That would be embarrassing!

[MAID 3]: But if I'm reborn a woman, I'd rather be a Japanese. They say Japan is called Yamato, which means "land of great gentleness." For a woman, a country of great gentleness would be wonderful!

[MAID 1]: Yes, it must be a wonderful country!

CHANTER: They all narrow their eyes and nod in agreement. Kinshōjo approaches.

[KINSHŌJO]: What are you all chattering about so intently? This lady is not the mother who gave me life; yet for me, filial devotion and duty mean even more with her. But the law must be obeyed. It breaks my heart to see her bound like a common criminal, but what if the Tartar king heard about this and blamed my husband? I can't untie her, and that's my burden to bear.

Now then, I need your help. They say that Japanese food is different from our own; ask her what she would like and prepare something for her.

[MAIDSERVANT]: If I may speak, my lady, we have carefully prepared a meal that has everything—rice cooked with sweet longans, soup with duck and fried bean curd, pork in sweet sauce, steamed lamb, and beef-paste cakes. But when we served it, she said she couldn't possibly eat such things. She said that couldn't eat anyway with her arms and wrists tied up. So she asked us to make a simple *musubi*.⁵¹ I haven't the faintest idea what sort of food a *musubi* might be, so we all gathered around to discuss it. One said that in Japan, a sumo wrestler is called a *musubi*. We asked around, but sumo must be out of season because we couldn't find any that she might like.

CHANTER: Just then a horse-drawn carriage thunders to a halt outside the castle wall to shouts of "Lord Kanki has returned!" One large chest after another is carried into the courtyard, followed by Kanki himself, walking beneath a stately silk parasol—an imposing procession befitting his noble name. Kinshōjo goes out to greet him.

[KINSHŌJO]: You've returned sooner than I expected. How do matters rest with you, my lord?

[KANKI]: Well, the Tartar king is deeply gratified with my efforts and

has promoted me to a rank far greater than I deserve. I've been appointed a general with one hundred thousand cavalry, granted the hat and robes of a prince, and directed to carry out important functions. There is no greater honor for our house.



Kanki, a Chinese prince and lord of the castle. (Photograph courtesy of Barbara Curtis Adachi Collection, C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University)

[KINSHŌJO]: What a marvelous achievement—Congratulations! Our family's good fortune keeps growing. I have always told you how much I loved my father and longed to see him. He, the wife he married in Japan, and their son arrived at the gate today with a request, but I told them you were away. My father and his son, in deference to the strict laws of this country, have taken their leave, but I have kept the mother here. I feared the Tartar king might hear of this, so I had her bound with ropes. She is resting in one of my rooms. She may not be the mother who bore me, but imagine how she must feel being tied up like that—it's heartbreaking!

[KANKI]: Tying her with ropes was prudent—if word should reach those higher up, I will have an excuse. Treat her with the greatest courtesy, but first I will meet with her. Show me the way.

CHANTER: The mother must have overheard, for she calls out from behind the double doors.

[MOTHER]: Kinshōjo—has Lord Kanki returned? He is too exalted a person; I will go to him.

CHANTER: She emerges through the doorway and struggles, moving slowly toward them like an ancient pine tree tightly entwined by a wisteria vine. The painful sight fills Kanki with pity.

[KANKI]: It is true enough: a mother will do anything for her child, even journey ten thousand leagues over mountains and rivers to find her. To be rewarded with binding ropes—that I cannot change; it is the times we live in. Wife—be careful that the ropes aren't hurting her. We must see to every need of our precious guest. Whatever you may require, madam, I will provide it if I can. Do not hesitate to ask.

CHANTER: The mother's face brightens at the warmth of his reception.

[MOTHER]: I feel I can trust you; I am most grateful. After listening to you, how can I stand on ceremony? I wish to speak to you privately about an important request. Come closer, come closer.

CHANTER: She lowers her voice.

[MOTHER]: We did not come to China just because we longed to see our daughter. At the beginning of last winter, Princess Sendan, the younger sister of the Ming emperor, was blown ashore in a small boat at Matsura Beach in Hizen Province. She told us that China had been seized by the Tartars. Kinshōjo's father, as you know, was once a minister at the Ming court. Our son, Watōnai, though only a lowly fisherman, has studied the military writings of China and Japan. Once my husband and son heard her story, they resolved to destroy the Tartar king, to restore China to the Ming, and to put the princess on the throne. We left the princess in Japan and came to China, but we were shocked to find that everyone, even the plants and trees, bows to the Tartars. No one wishes to side with the Ming. The only person whom we can trust to be Watōnai's right arm is you, Lord Kanki. I beg you—please join us.

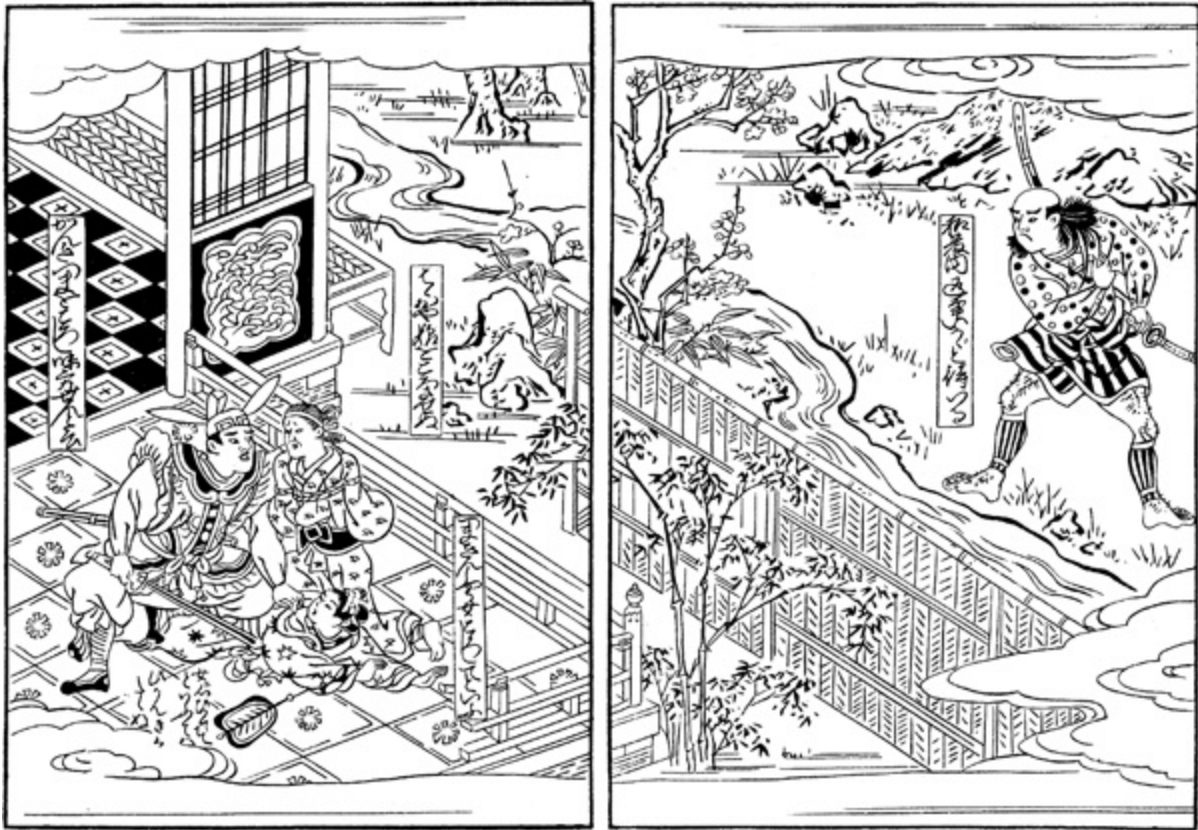
CHANTER: She struggles to bow at the waist, bringing her head to her knees. Her single-minded resolve is obvious to all, and Kanki is greatly surprised.

[KANKI]: I see . . . this Watōnai of Japan I've been hearing about must be Kinshōjo's brother and Ikkan's son! His bravery is no secret, even in China. I'm sure that he has a promising plan, one that we should follow. My forefathers were also ministers under the Ming. But after the death of the Ming emperor, I had nowhere to turn, so I've passed the months and days accepting favors from the Tartars. Now as fate would have it, your request coincides with my hopes. I would like to say I am your ally right now, but I need to give the matter some thought.

[MOTHER]: Coward! That's not what you said before! Once such an important matter is broached, the whole world knows about it. If word of this leaked out while you were mulling this over and we were defeated, there would be no going back no matter how much you regretted it. We won't bear a grudge. Yes or no, answer me—now!

[KANKI]: Well then, if you want an answer right away, that's easy enough: I, Kanki, will be Watōnai's ally.

CHANTER: In a flash, he grabs Kinshōjo by the front of her robe, pulls her toward him, draws his sword, and presses it to her throat. The old mother throws herself between them, kicking free Kanki's grip. With her back she pushes Kinshōjo down and lies on top of her, facing Kanki.



Drawing a sword, Kanki pins down Kinshōjo, causing her oval Chinese fan to fall to the floor. Although bound, the mother tries to intervene, coming between them. The checkered floor tiles symbolize Chinese architecture. Watōnai stands anxiously outside the gate, waiting for the water to change color. Bamboo and plum, also signifying China, adorn the garden.

[MOTHER]: You fiend! What are you doing? Is stabbing your wife when asked a favor a Chinese custom? Are you angry you had to listen to an offensive request from your wife's relative? Are you crazy? Are you so wicked that you'd kill your wife in front of her mother at their first meeting? If you don't want to side with us, then don't. (*To Kinshōjo*) My precious daughter, you have a mother now—don't be afraid. Hold me tight!

CHANTER: She covers Kinshōjo with her body like a protective wall. Kinshōjo does not understand her husband's intent but is grateful for her stepmother's love. "Don't hurt yourself!" she cries, her voice choking with tears. Kanki leaps back.

[KANKI]: Your suspicions are quite natural, but I am neither angry nor insane. Yesterday the Tartar king summoned me, saying, "Some no-account called Watōnai crossed over from Japan recently,

intending to overthrow the king and restore the Ming. He is very resourceful, a born strategist, despite his humble origins. Who will lead a force against him?" He chose me from among all the nobles and gave me the rank of a general with command of ten thousand cavalry. Until this moment, I never dreamed that this Watōnai was my wife's brother. I told the king: "Watōnai may be endowed with the nerves of that Kusunoki what's-his-name, with the backbone of Asahina and Benkei's muscles, but I have probed the guts of Zhuge Liang. I'll borrow the bones of Fan Kuai and the marrow of Xiang Yu.⁵² I'll hunt him down, defeat him in a single battle, and come back with his shaven head in my hands."⁵³ The Tartars know that I, Gojōgun Kanki, am not one to shrink in fear at tales of Japanese bravery. If I, having boasted in this way, become your ally without batting an eye, without once crossing swords, without firing even a single arrow, I am sure to be slandered: the Tartars will say that I lost my nerve and forgot that I was soldier because I was tied to a woman and influenced by her relatives. Then my sons and grandsons, and their sons after them, will be forever disgraced. I will stab my dear wife and sever all ties to her family so that I can join your side cleanly and with honor. Kinshōjo, your mother's words were filled with love, and the tip of your husband's sword is filled with his duty: give up your life for her love and for my duty!

CHANTER: These are the words of a brave warrior who does not varnish the truth.

[KINSHŌJO]: I understand. I can carry out such duty. Out of filial devotion, I will sacrifice this body that I received from my parents, and with no regrets.

CHANTER: Kinshōjo pushes aside her mother and approaches her husband. She opens the front of her robe and draws the icy blade to her chest as her mother looks on in horror.

[MOTHER]: No!!

CHANTER: The mother hurls herself between them, trying to separate the two, but it is hopeless: she cannot move her hands enough to drive them apart. She grabs her daughter's sleeve with her teeth and pulls her back, but Kanki closes in. Then she grabs Kanki's sleeve with her teeth and tries to drag him away, but Kinshōjo is set on death. The mother struggles, like a cat trying to move her

kittens, until her strength dwindles, her eyes grow dim, and she collapses with a cry. Kinshōjo clings to her.

[KINSHŌJO]: All my life I've never known a parent. How can I repay my gratitude without ever once showing my filial devotion? Let me die in your place, Mother!

CHANTER: Kinshōjo bursts into tears.

[MOTHER]: What a sad thing to say! Especially when in this world and in that of the dead you have three parents. You owe a great debt to the father and mother who gave you life. Of your three parents, I alone have never had a chance to show you sympathy or even kindness. How cruel that I can never be rid of the title "stepmother"! If I let you die here and now, people will say that your Japanese stepmother let you be killed before her eyes out of hatred for her Chinese stepdaughter. And the shame would not be mine alone but Japan's as well: people would say that the Japanese are a heartless people and point to me as an example. The sun that shines on China and the sun that shines on Japan are one and the same, but the Land of the Rising Sun is where the day begins. It is home to the Five Constant Virtues—and, above all, to sympathy.⁵⁴ How could I, born in the Land of the Gods where sympathy is everything, go on living after I watched my daughter be killed? Better that these ropes turn into the sacred ropes of the Japanese gods and strangle me. Then these ropes might lead my soul back to Japan even if my body remains in a foreign land!

CHANTER: Love, sympathy, and a sense of duty fill her tearful pleading. Kinshōjo clings to her mother's sleeves, now wet with both their tears. Even Kanki is moved to tears by the truth of her words. Pausing a while, he strikes his chair.

[KANKI]: Very well then, it is out of my hands. Since your mother insists on an answer now, Watōnai is my enemy from this day forth. But I do not intend to have people think I'm keeping your mother here as a hostage. Bring the carriage, ask her where she wants to go, and send her on her way.

[KINSHŌJO]: No, there is no need to send her away. I promised my father and brother that if I had good news I would drop white powder in the garden spring, and rouge if you refused. I shall put rouge into the water, and they will come and get her.

CHANTER: Kinshōjo goes into her sitting room as her mother sinks into dark despair at this unexpected turn of events. Worried about what she will have to tell her husband and son, the mother's tears of helplessness run red, like a Chinese brocade. Meanwhile, Kinshōjo prepares the rouge in an azure stone bowl.

[KINSHŌJO]: Father and daughter will never meet. The brocade will be cut in two; I will say my farewells—now!⁵⁵

CHANTER: The rouge slides into the moonlit waters of the spring and floats away, swirling like autumn leaves in a rapid stream. The red-stained bubbles carry the sad tidings along, through the conduit to the moat and beyond, toward the Yellow River. Downstream, Watōnai sits on the bank, his straw raincoat pulled over his shoulders, as he watches the water to see if it turns red or white.

[WATŌNAI]: Good Heavens—the water has turned red! Kanki has refused my request to join our cause. I can't leave my mother in the hands of that coward!

CHANTER: His feet churn through the rapids as he rushes to the moat and leaps across. He scales the wall, tramples down the garden fences, and arrives at the spring in the garden of Kanki's castle.

[WATŌNAI]: Well, thank goodness Mother is safe!

CHANTER: He leaps into the room, slashes through her ropes, and plants himself in front of Kanki.

[WATŌNAI]: So, you're that bearded Chinaman, Gojōgun Kanki, eh! I tied up my own mother—the only one I'll ever have in heaven or on earth—out of respect for who I thought you were. I wanted you to join our cause. And yet, when I treat you with respect it goes to your head.

You don't want to join us because I don't measure up as a general? I thought you would follow, above all, because your wife is my half sister. Now I, Watōnai, the greatest warrior in Japan, ask you man to man—answer me!

CHANTER: He grips the handle of his sword and stands ready to strike.

[KANKI]: Mentioning your relationship to my wife only makes your request more difficult. You may be the greatest warrior in Japan, but I am the one and only Kanki of China. I am not the sort who joins sides because of his wife, but I have no reason to divorce

her, nor can I wait for her to die. Leave quickly now while you still can, or would you rather leave me your head as a memento?

[WATŌNAI]: Oh? I shall take yours back to Japan as a memento!

CHANTER: Both are about to draw their swords when Kinshōjo cries out. . . .

[KINSHŌJO]: No! No! You won't have to wait for me to die. Look! Here is the rouge I put in the water!

CHANTER: She opens her robe to reveal that she has slashed herself with her dagger diagonally from under her breast to her liver. At the sight of the bloody wound, the mother cries out and falls senseless. Watōnai is stunned, and even Kanki, although he had been ready to kill her, can only stare in disbelief. Kinshōjo's words come painfully.

[KINSHŌJO]: Mother would not let you kill me for fear of the shame it would bring to Japan, but if I cling to my life and don't help my parents and my brother, it will bring shame to China. Now that I have stabbed myself, no one will slander you, saying that your heart was moved by a woman. Kanki, please join my father and brother and lend your strength, and tell my father about this, too. Please, say no more—the pain!

CHANTER: With these words she collapses in a faint. Holding back his tears, Kanki speaks.

[KANKI]: How noble of you! Your sacrifice will not be in vain.

CHANTER: He bows his head before Watōnai.

[KANKI]: My ancestors served as ministers under the Ming. I was more than willing to join you, but I hesitated for fear that people would speak ill of me saying that I had been led astray by my wife's relatives. Now, by taking her own life, she has advanced the cause of justice, and I can join you with a clear conscience. I bow to you as my commanding general and confer upon you a princely name: Coxinga, lord of Enpei. Please honor me by putting on these robes.