

Soga Brothers

In the 12th century, the late Heian period, several families possessed their lands in the east part of Japan. Sometimes they tried to expand their territories. And that caused fighting and battles.

Between the two lords, Kudo and Ito in Izu area, there had been having territory trouble for many years.

One day Kudo tried to kill Ito during a hunt, and made his men shoot from distance. One of the arrows they shot almost caught Ito. But accidentally the arrow hit a man standing by Ito. The man who was killed was

Kawazu-Saburo. His wife and two sons heard the sad news. Soon Kawazu's body was sent to them. The wife cried and wept. She patted her two son's heads and said,

"Listen, your father was killed by Kudo. You both are too young to understand, but when you will grow up, I want you to get revenge for your father."

The younger son, who was only 3 years old, didn't understand what she said, but the elder, 5 years old, stared at his father's face lying in front of them and said, "I swear that some day I'll get revenge for him."

Later his wife remarried with Soga. So the brother's family name was Soga: the elder son's name was Soga-Juro-Sukenari, and the younger son's name Soga-Goro-Tokimune. Their stepfather loved the two boys. But Juro never forgot his mother's words.

Several years had passed. When they were playing in the yard, five wild geese were flying in the sky. Looking at the wild geese, Juro said to Goro, "Look at them. They were flying in a line. Maybe the two are parents'geese and the three are their children. I live with you and our mother. But Soga is our stepfather. Our real father was killed by Kudo. I've missed my biological father." His brother said, "When I meet Kudo, I'll shoot him and cut his head."

"Be quiet. Don't tell anyone about our plan. It's a secret between us,"

Juro reproved his brother for his careless loud voice.

Since then they had gone through a hard life, seeking Kudo's life in revenge. But they had no chance for a long time.

In 1192, after the Minamoto family completely defeated the Taira family, Minamoto-Yoritomo opened the Kamakura Shogunate, the first samurai government. Next year, Yoritomo had a hunt on a great scale at the foot of Mt. Fuji. When the brothers heard the news, they thought it was the last chance to



revenge their father's death.

When Shogun went hunting, he was accompanied with lots of followers. The brothers slipped into them and found the place where Kudo would stay that night. Actually they could spot him several times during the day when they were hunting, but he was always surrounded by people and no chance to approach him.

On the very day they hid themselves behind a big rock and talked about how to approach Kudo's place. But the waterfall nearby made a roaring sound, so they couldn't hear each other's voices. They prayed God and Buddha to stop the sounds for a while as they were doing a very important talk. They say that the sounds of waterfall really stopped a bit while they were talking.

They look around where people are staying. They guess that Kudo's place must be near Shogun's place. The moon shows up from the clouds for a while, so they can identify their enemy's place. Then the moon hides behind the clouds. Soon heavy rain falls. That can help them sneak into Kudo's room easily. It's almost midnight and Kudo is fast asleep.

"Wake up Kudo! I am Kawazu-Saburo's son, Juro."

"I am his younger son Goro. Now you pay your debt of revenge to our father!"

When Kudo's hand almost reaches to his sword, Juro slashes at Kudo from his left shoulder to right armpit. Jiro also cuts his waist and finishes by a stab. Soon after that they shout with loud voices,

"Ye who are afar, hear and tremble! Ye who are near, behold and wonder. We are Kawazu-Saburo's sons: Juro-Sukenari and Goro-Tokimune. We've just slain Kudo-Suketsune as he killed our father Kawazu-Saburo. We've attended the long cherished object."

Soon Kudo's men surrounded the two. Then other people came. The two fought bravely. But during the fight Juro was killed and Goro was at last captured. The next day Goro was dragged in front of Shogun Yoritomo, and got an investigation. Kudo was one of Shogun Yoritomo's favorite retainers. So Goro knew their successful vengeance led nothing but his death. He wasn't afraid to tell Shogun about Kudo who'd had his men kill their father. He also told him how they had spent their life for 18 years. As you know Yoritomo himself had a hard life as an exile when he was young. Not only Yoritomo but also people around them were moved with their filial duties. Yoritomo wanted to save his life. But he couldn't, because Kudo's son begged Shogun to give Goro a death, as he killed his father Kudo.

Goro said,

"Give me a death. I've been resolved to die. I want to meet my father and brother

in the next world as soon as possible."

At that time, Juro was 22 years old and Goro 20.

This is one of the famous revenge stories in Japan, 'Soga monogatari' or Soga Brother's tale written in late Kamakura period. Because people love this story, people have been enjoying the drama especially in kabuki world.

Things related to Soga Brothers are around there, such as Jozenji, the temple that houses the brother's graves, is in Odawara City. Otodome-no-Taki, or the Waterfall which the sounds was stopped, is in Fujnomiya. Kakure-Iwa, or the Rock where the brother hid, is near the waterfall.



○「曾我兄弟」は誰の仇討をしたのでしょうか。

曾我兄弟

12世紀、平安末期の頃、東国では、地方豪族が土地を領有していました。自らの領地拡大に懸命な豪族も多く、いざこざ、争いが絶えませんでした。

伊豆地方では、工藤祐経（すけつね）と伊東祐親（すけちか）両家の領土問題も長年にわたっていました。

ある日のこと、祐経は祐親の暗殺を企て、郎党に狩猟中の彼を遠方より弓で射させました。放たれた弓の一矢が祐親をかすめると、彼の脇に立っていた男に誤って命中しました。射殺されたのは祐親の息子河津三郎（かわづさぶろう）でありました。悲報は妻と二人の息子に伝わり、暫くして亡骸との対面となりました。



妻は泣き崩れましたが、二人の息子の頭に手を当てて、こう言いました、

「よくお聞き、お父さんは祐経に殺されたのですよ。お前たちはまだ幼くてわかりませんが、お前たちが大きくなったら、お母さんは、お前たちにお父さんの仇を取ってもらいたいです。」

三歳の弟にはまだ理解できないことでしたが、五歳の兄は、目の前に横たわる父の顔をじっと見つめ、こう言いました、

「いつか、必ず、お父さんの仇を取ります。」

その後、母は曾我氏と再婚し、兄弟も曾我姓となり、兄は曾我十郎祐成（すけなり）、弟は曾我五郎時致（ときむね）と名乗りました。義父に大事に育てられた二人でありましたが、兄十郎は、決して母の言葉を忘れることはありませんでした。

年月が流れたある日のこと、野で遊ぶ二人の上空を、五羽の雁（かり）が飛んでいました。空飛ぶ雁を見て、十郎は五郎に言いました。

「あれを見てごらん。雁が一列になって飛んでいるだろう。2羽は親で、3羽は子供だろう。私にもお母さんとお前がいる。でも今のお父さんは違うのだよ。本当のお父さんは祐経に殺された。血のつながったお父さんはもういない。」

「祐経に会ったら、弓で射て（いて）、首を刎ねてやる。」と五郎。

「おい、大声を出すな。このことは誰にも話してはいけないよ。二人だけの秘密だよ。」

兄は弟の不注意な大声を咎めました。

それ以来、祐経を仇と付けねらい、苦しい生活に耐えました。しかし、その機会は二人になかなか巡って来ませんでした。

源氏は平家を滅亡し、1192年、源頼朝は、最初の武家政権、鎌倉幕府を開きました。翌年、頼朝は富士の裾野で巻狩り（大掛かりな狩）をしました。この知らせを耳にした兄弟は、これこそ亡き父の仇を取る絶好の機会と思いました。

将軍は、巻狩りの際、沢山の家臣を伴っていました。兄弟はその一行にもぐりこみ、その晩の祐経の宿所を突き止めました。実は、昼間も、巻狩りの間、祐経の居所は確認できたものの、いつも大勢に囲まれており、近づくことは容易ではありませんでした。

決行の晩、兄弟は岩陰に身を隠し、祐経の宿所に如何に近づくか相談しました。しかし近くの滝

の轟音に打ち消され、お互いの声が聞きとれませんでした。大切な話をしている故、しばし音を止めてくれるよう、神様、仏様に祈る思いでした。実際、二人の密談中、滝の音がしばし止んだとも言われています。

兄弟は、宿所をあちこち調べます。祐経の宿所は將軍の近くと見当をつけます。月が雲間よりしばし顔を出したので、祐経の宿所がわかります。月が雲間に隠れるとたちまち豪雨、その雨音のおかげで、祐経の寝所への侵入が容易になったのです。子（ね）の刻、祐経は熟睡しています。

「起きろ、祐経！河津三郎の息子、十郎なり。」

「弟、五郎なり。亡き父の積年の怨みを晴らしに参上！」

祐経の手が刀に届こうとした時、十郎は祐経の左肩から右わきの下にかけて切りつけます。十郎も祐経の腰に刃（やいば）を入れ、とどめを刺します。兄弟は勝利の雄叫び（おたけび）をあげます。

「遠からん者は音にも聞け！ 近くば寄って目にも見よ！ 我こそは、河津三郎が子、十郎祐成、同じく五郎時致なり。たった今、父河津三郎の仇、祐経討ち取ったり。宿願果たし候。」

兄弟は、すぐに祐経の家来に取り囲まれ、加勢の者も加わります。兄弟は、勇猛果敢に戦いますが、十郎は斬り合いの最中殺され、五郎は囚われの身となりました。

翌日、五郎は將軍頼朝の前に引き出され、尋問を受けました。祐経は將軍頼朝の寵臣（ちょうしん）の一人であり、見事父の仇を討ったとは言え、死が待ち受けていることを五郎は重々承知していました。五郎は恐れ気もなく、工藤祐経の命（めい）を受けた郎党に、父が射殺されたことを將軍に告げました。自らの十八年に及ぶ艱難辛苦の日々についても語りました。頼朝自身、若かりし頃、流人（るにん）として辛い日々を過ごしたことはご存知のことと思います。頼朝のみならず同席の誰もが、親を思う子の気持ちに痛く感動しました。頼朝は寛大に処理しようとしたのですが、祐経の遺児犬吠丸（いぬぼうまる）の、父殺害の五郎に死罪を、という嘆願により、それはなりません。

五郎が言いました、

「本望なり、死は覚悟の上のこと。あの世とやらで亡き父や兄と、とく（早く）対面したし。

十郎二十二歳、五郎二十歳でありました。

日本における有名な仇討ち物語の一つ「曾我物語」は、この曾我兄弟の話で、鎌倉時代に書かれました。

人々はこの話を愛し、特に歌舞伎の世界で何度も取り上げられてきました。

小田原市には、曾我兄弟のお墓がある「城前寺」、また富士宮市には、音を止めた「音止めの滝」、兄弟が身を隠したという「隠れ岩」が、この滝の近くにあるなど、曾我兄弟にまつわる場所が多々あります。

