

Tale of Saigyō
English Translation
[Spring]

In 1127 (the second year of the Daiji period) the Emperor stayed with his court at the Imperial Villa Toba. Inspired by the painting drawn on the Byōbu folding screen, Norikiyo composed ten tanka poems. This made a great impression on the Emperor, and he bestowed Norikiyo a "Rising Sunlight" sword. That evening Norikiyo's family gathered to praise his achievement, but Norikiyo's heart felt empty. He could not share the joy of his family and wanted to part from worldly affairs.

Guarding the temple, Norikiyo feared falling into Hell. The world around him seemed meaningless, and he craved for Buddha to become stronger. Coming back to court, Norikiyo went to the Emperor and pleaded for his permission to become a monk. The Emperor was shocked and did not hear Norikiyo's plea.

Noriyasu suddenly passed away at the young age of 27. He was two years older than Norikiyo and a samurai who guarded the same Northern Side. His sudden departure made Norikiyo pensive about the impermanence of the world.

At the end of the year, Norikiyo's daughter, who soon would turn four years old, rushed to him and clung to a sleeve of his robe. Looking at his beloved daughter, Norikiyo felt he must cut himself off from worldly affairs, and he brushed the child off his sleeve. That night a full moon lit Norikiyo's crying face as he made his resolve. As dawn came, he talked with his wife and daughter and departed for Saga to meet a Buddhist priest he respected. Norikiyo's long awaited dream came true, and he became a Buddhist monk.