

Katsuren: Momoto Fumiagari

Momoto Fumiagari was a royal princess of the early fifteenth century whose turbulent fortunes mirrored the era in which she lived. Like most historical figures of this time, the years of her birth and death are not known precisely. She was the daughter of Sho Taikyu, king of the Ryukyu Kingdom, whose seat was at Shuri Castle. Like all prominent female members of the royal family, she was a priestess and was believed to possess strong spiritual powers. As Amawari, lord of Katsuren Castle, gained power and influence, King Sho Taikyu saw him as a potential threat. He offered Momoto to Amawari in marriage, in hopes that the bond and increased status would lessen the possibility of a direct challenge to the throne. When Momoto moved from Shuri Castle to Katsuren, she was accompanied by her attendant and protector Uni Ufugusuku (“Ufugusuku the Ogre”).

The year 1458 proved tragic and eventful. Momoto fled to Shuri Castle with Ufugusuku to warn her father that Amawari planned to attack him and seize the throne. In rapid succession, Amawari attacked and defeated his rival, Gosamaru, at Nakagusuku Castle, but was defeated at Katsuren by Ryukyu Kingdom forces led by Ufugusuku. Momoto had saved her father’s kingdom for the moment but betrayed her own husband and widowed herself in the process. She then married her heroic protector, Uni Ufugusuku, who rose to the rank of lord. Within a few years, however, the dynasty of King Sho Taikyu fell, and Ufugusuku was killed. Twice widowed therefore by political whirlwinds, the tragically heroic queen lived out the remainder of her life in quiet exile in Tamagusuku Village (present-day Tamagusuku, in Nanjo City), where her grave now stands.