

### ***Junshi*: Following One's Lord in Death**

Nagai Motofusa (?–1625) killed himself upon the death of his lord, the daimyo Mōri Terumoto (1553–1625). This expression of loyalty through ritualized suicide is known as *junshi*. Samurai would often commit *junshi* in cases when their lord was assassinated or killed on the battlefield in recognition of their failure to protect him. However, after peace was established in 1603 under the Tokugawa shogunate, samurai rarely had the opportunity to demonstrate their courage and fidelity on the battlefield. During the long peace of the Edo period (1603–1867), samurai sometimes performed *junshi* when their lords died of natural causes, as was the case when Nagai Motofusa killed himself.

Initially, those who followed their lords in death were honored, and their survivors were rewarded. Motofusa was rewarded with a stone marker placed near his lord's grave. As the Pax Tokugawa continued, however, the loss of such high-caliber retainers came to be regarded as damaging to effective governance. Gradually, daimyo began to forbid the practice of *junshi*, and the Tokugawa shogunate banned it entirely in 1668. To discourage the practice, the surviving family members of those who committed *junshi* were often harshly punished rather than rewarded. With the promulgation of the “Laws for the Military Houses” (*Buke shohatto*) by the shogunate in 1683, the prohibition was further strengthened, and the practice met its end.

Legend has it that Motofusa had a beloved cat that, distraught by the demise of its master, followed in his footsteps and ended its days by biting out its own tongue. From this display of loyalty, the area where Motofusa lived came to be known as Neko no Machi, or “Cat Town.” The cat has no memorial stone.