

## The Tragedy of Princess Matsu

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), the first of the Tokugawa shoguns, had a problem: he could not find anyone willing to marry his half-sister Princess Matsu (1563–1587). The princess was terribly ugly, and even the prospect of having the shogun for a brother-in-law was not enough to tempt any suitors. Desperate to help, Ieyasu called an assembly of daimyos from around Japan and announced, “To the man who takes my sister as his wife and produces a son, I will award 100,000 *koku* of land.”

Even for a wealthy daimyo, 100,000 *koku* of land was an appealing incentive, but none of the daimyos hurried to accept the proposal. Only Toda Yasunaga (1562–1633), one of Ieyasu’s most trusted daimyos, gave Princess Matsu a shy grin. Seeing this, Ieyasu immediately declared their engagement. Toda Yasunaga was later made the fifth lord of Matsumoto Castle.

This account highlights Princess Matsu’s ugliness, but in fact, the entire story is a fanciful rumor invented long after her death. Princess Matsu was only five when she became engaged to six-year-old Yasunaga. Records state that she grew to be a very beautiful woman, and the couple produced a son, Nagakane (1580–1619).

Tragically, Princess Matsu died young, and her son was weak and sickly for most of his life. Yasunaga’s consorts later bore him two more sons: Tadamitsu (1598–1629) and Yasunao (1617–1634). In 1617, the family moved from Ueno (in what is now Gunma Prefecture) to Matsumoto, and Yasunaga assumed control of Matsumoto Castle. Nagakane died soon afterward. When Tadamitsu also died young, in 1629, Yasunao became the family’s official heir.

After Tadamitsu’s death, the Toda family encountered many misfortunes. Yasunao suspected this unluckiness (and the death of Tadamitsu) were the work of Nagakane’s vengeful spirit, who resented being supplanted as heir. Others whispered that the cause was the sorrowful ghost of Princess Matsu. Cruel stories were told about her, claiming that she had drowned herself, or that she had been an ugly woman in an unhappy marriage. Ultimately, the spirits of Matsu and Nagakane were enshrined at Matsumoto Jinja Shrine.