Tairas" and other ancient war chronicles to modern novels like "Fires on the Plain."

Yet in the very impermanence and poignancy of the human condition the Japanese have discovered a positive quality. Their recognition of the special beauty inherent in evanescence, worldly misfortune, and "the pathos of things" (mono no aware) in many ways replaces the blithe Western belief in the possibility of "happiness." This understanding of lacrimae rerum is reflected in an instinctive sympathy with the tragic fate of the failed hero, whose defeat by the forces of a hostile world exemplifies in a most dramatic form the confrontation of every living creature with adversity, suffering, and death. While we are all eventually doomed to go under, the pathos of worldly misfortune is especially evocative when the victim stands out as being young, pure, and sincere. His fall represents in human form that quintessential Japanese image, the scattering of the fragile cherry blossoms.

From Morris
Nobility of Failure
Ny: Hendan 1975

For Hist 484 Swr
Ravina
Warriors of Peace

The Deity of Failures

Japan's failed heroes ended their careers in many violent ways. Some stabbed themselves in the throat, others were burnt to death, garroted, beheaded, killed in battle by sword, spear, or bullet, or blown to pieces as human bombs or torpedoes; almost always their departure from the world was early and painful, and usually they were their own executioners. Sugawara no Michizane died safely in his bed (or rather, on the straw matting of his curtained dais) at the age of fifty-eight. Yet only a few decades later his heroic credentials were so firmly established that he was enshrined as a Shinto deity.

Officially he was venerated as the god of poetry and scholarship, the fields in which he had excelled during his lifetime; but his contributions to literature and learning could never of themselves have brought the fame and popular devotion that his name has enjoyed through the centuries. The real reason that people have so long paid him homage in his shrines and that even now in the 1970s every schoolchild in Japan is familiar with the name of Sugawara no Michizane is that his cultural achievements and moral sincerity were confounded by the manoeuvres of his political opponents.

In almost any other period of Japanese history—indeed in almost any other part of the world—a man who had unsuccessfully pitted himself against the ruling forces of his country would have had little chance of a peaceful demise like Michizane's. He was fortunate in his enemies. One of the virtues of the much-maligned Fujiwara family, which controlled Japan's government during most of the Heian period (late eighth to twelfth centu-
ries), was that they eschewed violence and physical cruelty. It was the established policy of the Fujiwara leaders to dispose of their enemies, not by imprisonment or execution, but by appointing them to distant provincial posts where they remained until they could safely be recalled to the capital or, as in Michizane's case, until death removed them permanently from the scene. This urban form of exile was the fate of nearly all the famous victims of the Heian period, including Prince Genji, the most illustrious of Japan's fictitious heroes, who was exiled to the Inland Sea by his Fujiwara rivals.

It was an age of civilians par excellence and the only time in Japanese history when the ruling class had no esteem for martial virtues; during this long, peaceful, slow-changing era when political power was centred in Heian Kyō ("The City of Peace and Tranquillity") militarism would have been totally incongruous with the prevalent cultural values. Such rivals as appeared from time to time presented a political not a military challenge and, though the Fujiwaras usually had the sanction of force in the background, their characteristic method was to avoid using it and to depend on peaceful means for eliminating outside threats. In this they were invariably successful; and the long rule of the "northern" branch of the Fujiwara clan attests to their remarkable political acumen through successive generations.

This relatively benign nature of confrontation during most of the Heian period was not conducive to the outrageous, desperate type of heroism engendered by the succeeding era, and it is hardly surprising that Michizane, the prime failed hero of these calm centuries, should appear somewhat bland, even colourless, in comparison with fiery characters like Yoshitsune and Masashige whose short lives exploded in a suicidal blaze. The cardinal heroic virtue of sincerity was manifested by Michizane in the cultural, aesthetic realm of the Heian gentleman and lacked the excitement and tension associated with the makoto of activist, militant heroes in later periods.

When Sugawara no Michizane suddenly rose to prominence late in the ninth century, the Fujiwaras were established as the central force in Japanese politics, and had already evolved the various methods for controlling the administration and dominating the imperial family that were to serve them so admirably in preserving and extending their influence. In the middle of the century Fujiwara no Yoshifusa, the clan leader at the time, had created an invaluable precedent by securing the accession of Emperor Seiwa, who in addition to being his grandson, was still only eight and required a Regent to govern in his name. In 898 this vital post, which until then had always been held by members of the imperial family, was acquired by Yoshifusa himself, who thus established the hereditary control of the Fujiwara clan over successive emperors. In subsequent generations, when the system had been fully developed, the ideal pattern was that the head of the "northern" branch of the Fujiwaras would rule as Regent during the minority of the child Emperor, who was usually his grandson or son-in-law, and would then continue ruling as Chancellor after the Emperor came of age. To forestall the danger that some recalcitrant sovereign might try to challenge the system, it was usually arranged that the Emperor should retire and take holy orders at an early age; the Throne and the religio-magic aura of emperorship would then pass to his young son, while political authority would devolve upon the new Regent, who would automatically be a close Fujiwara relation.

The full transfer of secular power to the Fujiwaras was not accomplished until about a hundred years later. In the ninth century there were still several non-Fujiwaras in high governmental posts and many families who, if the opportunity presented itself, might join in challenging the Fujiwara system before it was fully consolidated. An even greater danger was that a high official from some other clan might acquire the support of an adult, independent-minded emperor who wished to weaken Fujiwara control over the government.

And so, indeed, it happened. In 889 a learned and ambitious young man came to the Throne as Emperor Uda. In allowing this succession the Fujiwaras had departed from one of their cardinal rules; for the new Emperor did not have a Fujiwara mother and was virtually unrelated to the ruling Chancellor. Mototsune, the energetic and strong-minded politician who succeeded Yoshifusa, was to regret this lapse, since it soon became evident that Uda, unlike the five preceding emperors, was determined to rule as well as to reign. He wished to return to the system of a monarchicaly controlled bureaucracy that had existed in the early decades of the Heian period. Though prepared to retain members of the Fujiwara family as high civil servants and advisers, he was also determined to sabotage their monopoly of political power by enlisting the support of eminent men from outside
families. The ensuing contest between the imperial family and the “northern” branch involved the Fujiwaras in the greatest danger they had faced since the capital was first founded in Heian Kyo; and it was to be their last serious challenge for about two centuries. But, as befitted the era, the struggle was carried out peacefully, even decorously: not a single person lost his life though many, notably Sugawara no Michizane, were ruined.

From the beginning of his reign Emperor Uda tried to reassert the position of the imperial family by enlisting the support of eminent men from non-Fujiwara families. His first close adviser was Hiromi of the Tachibana clan, whom he had long respected for his scholarship and integrity. Though Hiromi was not appointed to any important post, Mototsune was alert to the danger and now resorted to a typical Fujiwara stratagem. At the start of each reign it was customary for the great officers of state to resign their posts and then to be automatically reappointed by the new sovereign. The object of this ritual was to preserve the semblance of imperial independence, and when Mototsune duly submitted his resignation after Emperor Uda’s accession no one at Court took the move seriously. The Imperial Reply on the following day, however, made no mention of the chancellorship and simply appointed Mototsune to be Akō. This term, which meant something like “He who rights the people’s wrongs,” had been used in remote Chinese antiquity to describe the chief minister at Court, and its precise significance in ninth-century Japan was moot.

Mototsune, realizing that the Emperor had deliberately chosen this ambiguous term on the advice of his scholarly friend, Tachibana no Hiromi, decided that the seemingly trivial departure from precedent could serve to create a useful crisis. Indignantly he argued that Akō described a rank rather than a specific post, that the appointment therefore demeaned his dignity, and that he could not possibly continue his governmental duties until the matter was clarified. Thus began the famous Akō controversy concerning the exact implications of the ancient Chinese word. The battle, which was waged with all the acerbity of the Swiftian dispute about how to crack a boiled egg, engaged the principal scholars of the day for the better part of a year. Owing to their jealousy of Hiromi and their awe of the Fujiwaras, the courtly savants tended to support Mototsune’s interpretation. The Chancellor himself refused to conduct affairs of state and, since Uda had not yet reached the point where he could dispense with the services of the ubiquitous Fujiwaras, he was finally obliged to submit the matter to an official tribunal which, predictably enough, decided that the use of the term Akō had been a culpable error. This outcome was a triumph for Mototsune, who now resumed full sway as Chancellor. Hiromi, whose scholarship had been confounded by astute politics, received no punishment except shame; but he was obliged to retire from public affairs, and he died about a year later. For Emperor Uda the Akō controversy resulted in the first real setback of his career.

Fortunately for the new Emperor, his autocratic Chancellor did not have long to enjoy the triumph. He died in 891, about half a year after his defeated rival; and, since Tokihira, his son and putative successor, was still only twenty, it was possible for Emperor Uda to keep the post open while he tried to fill the resultant power vacuum in his own way. The new situation at Court provided the young Emperor with a rare and unexpected opportunity to reassert imperial authority. In the first place he refused to name any successor to Mototsune and kept the post of Chancellor vacant. Precedent demanded that Fujiwara no Tokihira become a Privy Counsellor and this appointment was made a few months after Mototsune’s death; but to counter-balance Tokihira’s influence the Emperor selected successive members of the Minamoto clan to serve as Privy Counsellors in the Great Council of State. A couple of years later Uda dealt a rude blow at the “marriage politics” of the Fujiwara clan by choosing as Crown Prince his son, Atsuhito, whose mother did not belong to the main part of the “northern” branch. Tokihira, the new Fujiwara leader, was thus deprived of the important prerogative of being grandfather of the next Emperor. In the same year Emperor Uda promoted two important outsiders to the post of Privy Counsellor. The first of these was Yasunori, a vigorous, high-principled Governor who belonged to the unfashionable “southern” branch of the Fujiwaras; the second was the scholar-poet, Sugawara no Michizane.

These measures made a serious dent in the existing power system: two years after the imperial accession the Fujiwaras had so far lost their monopoly that less than half the seats in the Great Council of State were occupied by members of the “northern” branch of their clan. By balancing the distribution of families in the top echelons of the government Emperor Uda was in a better
position to assert his own influence and to direct the various administrative reforms that he considered essential for correcting local abuses and for restoring the old Chinese-style system of central control under the imperial family.

The most decisive of Emperor Uda’s appointments was his choice of Sugawara no Michizane to succeed the unfortunate Tachibana no Hiromi as chief adviser. By selecting yet another outsider as his mentor Uda made it convincingly clear that he was determined to exclude the Fujiwaras from his closest counsels and to prevent them from recovering the position they had enjoyed until Mototsune’s death. Michizane had been the only prominent scholar to support Hiromi in his interpretation of the word Akō. Here he was clearly espousing a lost cause, since from the outset the issue had been political rather than academic, and in politics the Fujiwaras held the strongest cards. By his readiness to risk their enmity in the cause of truth Michizane no doubt impressed the Emperor with his idealism and sincerity.

In character Michizane was strikingly different from tough Fujiwara politicians like Mototsune, and this too must have endeared him to the young Emperor. When examining the personality of a god-hero who died more than a millennium ago it is hard to separate truth from legend; but, even if we discount the encomium that has been lavished on Michizane by generations of idolaters, there is every reason to believe that he was a gentle, kindly, serious man, somewhat introspective perhaps, and genuinely devoted to poetry and learning.

In many of these traits Michizane was similar to Uda himself, who despite his strong opinions and ambitions appears to have had a retiring nature and was certainly a great admirer of literary pursuits. Uda had lost his father, the incompetent Emperor Kōkō, at an early age, and it seems plausible that a wise, elderly scholar like Michizane should have become something of a father figure. Their great common interest was classical studies, and over the years Michizane guided the Emperor in his study of the Chinese classics and his composition of Chinese verse. Uda for his part treated Michizane as a sort of Scholar Laureate, commissioning him to help edit “The True Record of Three Imperial Reigns,” the last of the Six National Histories, and also to compile “A Classified National History,” a major work in which the history of Japan was arranged according to topics.

These books, like all important works at the time, were composed in Chinese, the only respectable language for men of learning. Michizane’s family, though they traced their ancestry to a legendary strongman who is said to be the originator of sumô wrestling, had acquired a tradition of Confucian learning, going back at least to the eighth century when the head of the clan had been appointed tutor in Chinese classics to the Court. Early in the ninth century Michizane’s grandfather had founded a family academy for Confucian studies; and his father, Koreyoshi, was a famous classical scholar who became head of the University in the capital.

The future god-hero, Koreyoshi’s third son, is said to have been a prodigy who lapsed in verse from his infancy. Such attributions of precocious genius are too common in the biographies of heroes to be taken seriously; but there is no doubt that from his youth Michizane was devoted to Chinese literature (his first Chinese poems were written when he was ten) and that he established his reputation as writer, teacher, and savant at an early age.

The ninth century was an excellent period for anyone interested in such pursuits. A succession of Sinophile emperors had reinforced a tradition of respect for Chinese studies, and T'ang cultural influence remained strong in the Japanese Court throughout the century. Thus in the University the study of Confucian classics took precedence over all other forms of learning; in the Palace it was prescribed that gentlemen-in-waiting should wear T'ang dress; and the most respected poets of the day concentrated on producing anthologies of verse in Chinese, a language that few of them had ever heard spoken.

The young Michizane, with his brilliant knowledge of Chinese composition, prosody, and calligraphy, was in his element. After his coming-of-age ceremony at the age of fourteen he was taken into favour at Court and commissioned by various high officials as an elegant sort of ghost-writer to indite petitions and other documents in limpid Chinese prose. He purveyed to the Chancellor as a professional scholar and was consulted by Emperor Kōkō on such worthy matters as whether anything in Chinese history corresponded to the Japanese post of Daidō Daijin. In the University he became a popular and influential lecturer on Confucian texts, and at the remarkably early age of thirty-two he was accorded the rank of Doctor of Literature, which was the supreme academic degree in Japan and could be held by only two men at any given time. Proudly recognizing his
son's talents, Koreyoshi ordered him to write the introduction to "The True Record of the Reign of Emperor Montoku," the fifth of the Six National Histories, which he had compiled in collaboration with Fujiwara no Mototsune. When his father died in the following year, Michizane inherited many of his duties, including the direction of the Sugawara family academy.

His career in the capital was interrupted at the age of forty-one when he was given a provincial appointment as Governor of Sanuki in the island of Shikoku, and he remained there for the full term of four years. It is said that he became extremely popular among the local inhabitants and that, when he left for the capital, people stood by the roadside weeping. Like so many of the touching stories about Michizane this is probably apocryphal; in actual fact, he was remarkably unsuited to the duties of local government and appears to have taken little interest in the prosaic details of administration. He preferred to give his time to Chinese literature. Among the poetry that he wrote during these years was a series of elegant verses with titles like "On Meeting a White-Haired Old Man on the Road" in which he lamented the plight of the eserient peasantry; yet never (so far as we know) did he try to improve local conditions or to institute the type of reforms that Fujiwara no Yasunori had carried out in his province.

Shortly after Emperor Uda's accession Michizane was summoned back to the capital to give his opinion on the **Akō** controversy, and there he presented an impressive written opinion supporting Hiromi's position. Though this document had not the slightest practical effect on the outcome of the case, it was the beginning of the close link between Michizane and Uda. In 893 Emperor Uda named his nine-year-old son, Prince Atsuhito, as Crown Prince. In reaching this crucial decision, which ran directly counter to Fujiwara interests, the Emperor consulted no one but Michizane, and shortly afterwards he appointed him as official tutor to the young Prince. In the same year Michizane's daughter, Nobuko (Enshi) became one of Emperor Uda's consorts. This sealed the close relations between the Emperor and his adviser; but it was bound to exacerbate the Fujiwaras, who believed they had a monopoly in arranging marriages of this kind, and at the same time it provided them with a weapon that in due course they were to use most effectively against their rival.

In the following year Michizane was appointed to lead a mission to China as Ambassador to the T'ang. The circumstances of this appointment is one of the mysteries in his career. Perhaps it was a personal decision by Emperor Uda, who wished to honour his close friend and adviser by putting him in charge of this important embassy and who also considered that Michizane, the Scholar Laureate of the day, would be the most appropriate leader of a mission whose primary aims were cultural. It is possible, on the other hand, that the appointment was initiated by the Fujiwaras in order to get their rival out of the way. In any case it seems that Michizane himself, despite his lifelong love of things Chinese, had no more desire to see the actual country than did the eminent modern scholar, Arthur Waley, when he consistently turned down invitations to visit the Far East.

Diplomatic missions to China, which had been regularly despatched since the seventh century, became intermittent after the capital was established in Heian Kyō. Though traders and priests still risked the crossing to the continent in order to obtain their respective commodities, no official envoys were sent after 898. This was part of the national withdrawal from outside contacts, a semiconscious process of concentrating upon indigenous Japanese culture and upon the Japanization of previous cultural imports, as opposed to direct borrowings from abroad.

More concretely, the growth of Korean piracy and the many other dangers involved in the long sea journey had made gentlemen at the Heian Court increasingly reluctant to be included in the China missions. The Ambassador who had been appointed in 896 was driven back to Kyushu in a terrible storm and did not set out again until three years later. When the mission finally did leave, the deputy Ambassador, a famous composer of Chinese poems, skulking in Kyushu, pretending that he was ill and could not risk the hardships of the journey. In consequence he was stripped of his rank and sent into exile; but he received full pardon a year later and returned safely to the capital, no doubt congratulating himself on his manoeuvre. For over fifty years there was no talk of further missions.

The main motives of Emperor Uda's sudden decision to send a new embassy in 894 were to secure literary materials missing from the collections in the Japanese capital and to satisfy leaders of the two main Buddhist sects who had long been urging the government to send an official mission to obtain certain sacred writings and arrange an exchange of priests. Only a month after
the embassy had been appointed, however, it was cancelled on the advice of the Ambassador himself, Sugawara no Michizane, who wrote a memorial recommending that all further missions to the mainland be suspended. The ostensible reason was that conditions in China, where the T'ang dynasty was now reaching the end of its impressive span, were far too unsettled to justify a resumption of diplomatic relations and that it would be more politic to wait until the T'ang government reestablished its control or was succeeded by a new dynasty. This was a good argument; but in addition Michizane almost certainly had personal hesitations about proceeding to China.

Being the most eminent Sinologue of his day, Michizane may well have hesitated to expose himself to a situation in which his ignorance of spoken Chinese would be obvious both to his hosts and to the other members of the mission. A scholar who had been writing elegant Chinese poems since the age of ten might well find it embarrassing to depend on a common interpreter for his day-to-day communications. Besides, Michizane may have had a perfectly human fear of the practical dangers of the journey. For all his heroic reputation and posthumous ferocity he was not endowed with any unusual resources of physical courage, and the prospect of shipwreck, piracy, and attacks by armed bands in China itself, which would have been an exciting challenge to dynamic heroes of a later age like Saigō Takamori, were likely to daunt a Heian courtier who was acclimatized to the sheltered life of the capital and its environs. Most important of all, Michizane was now engaged in a decisive struggle with the Fujiwara family and any prolonged absence from Court (it often took several years before the envoys were able to return) could be disastrous.

Michizane's place in the government, and especially his relationship with the Emperor, were now so secure that he was able to abandon the mission without the slightest fear of reprimand. This turned out to be a milestone in Japanese history, for relations with the government of China were not resumed until many centuries later. During this long period Japanese culture moved steadily from Chinese tutelage and evolved on indigenous lines in almost every field. Thus from the tenth century most of the great poets wrote in Japanese, rather than Chinese, verse; prose fiction developed as a characteristically Japanese genre, culminating in *The Tale of Genji*, the world's first psychological novel, which has no affinity with anything in early Chinese literature; and the tenth century produced the first of the *emaki* picture scrolls, whose style is Japanese through and through. It is ironic (and typical of the failed-hero syndrome) that it should have been Sugawara no Michizane, one of the greatest Sinophiles in Japanese history, who took the step that symbolized his country's new independence from the continent.

So far as his political advancement was concerned, Michizane did well to stay in the capital. A few years after the China mission was abandoned the government announced a round of promotions. Tokihira and Michizane advanced in tandem, the young Fujiwara leader being named Major Counsellor and Michizane receiving the same post on a supernumerary basis. Since the chancellorship and all the top positions in the Great Council of State were vacant, this meant that the two rivals were now the foremost ministers in Emperor Uda's government. In addition Michizane was appointed to be Minister of Civil Affairs. In the Japanese Court, appointment to high rank and office had become the prerogative of a favoured circle of families, and it was impossible to rise to the top by scholarship or intellectual qualities alone. There was no strong body of literati such as flourished in China and, though the ruling Fujiwaras were generous patrons of art and learning, there was never any question of allowing mere scholars to acquire political power. Yet, as the closest associate of the Emperor and as tutor of the Crown Prince, Michizane now had the run of the Palace. He was regularly being summoned to the inner sanctum to provide not only academic instruction and advice on Chinese poetry but also his views on the affairs of the imperial family and important matters of state. For the Fujiwaras and their friends this represented an intolerable violation of the unwritten rules, and it became clear that sooner or later they would have to oust Michizane from the Court. In this objective Fujiwara no Tokihira could count on the support of most of the other nobles, since they were bound to resent the rapid rise in the hierarchy of someone who had only recently served in the humble post of Provincial Governor and who belonged to a family that had never enjoyed high rank. Michizane's unpopularity in high Court circles was compounded by a report that he had slapped Fujiwara no Sugane on the face; there is no telling whether the charge was true (from what we know of his personality, it seems unlikely), but we do know that Sugane was
one of the nobles who later joined in the accusations against the hero.

Their opportunity came sooner than could have been expected and, strangely enough, it was an action by Michizane's great supporter, Emperor Uda, that produced the situation in which his enemies could topple him. Uda had frequently discussed the possibility of abdicating in favour of his son, Prince Atsuhito. In the past, abdicated emperors and empresses had usually removed themselves from affairs of state, but Uda had no such intention and apparently believed that he could direct matters more effectively as Retired Emperor than while trammelled by the duties of sovereignty. Withdrawal from the endless round of palace ceremonies would also give him more time for poetry, calligraphy, and other cultural pursuits which (as for so many prominent men in Japanese history) were becoming increasingly important as he grew older. Michizane did his best to dissuade his friend from abdication, arguing that he should wait for a more propitious time; but Uda was adamant and at the age of thirty-one he hurriedly arranged a coming-of-age ceremony for the thirteen-year-old Prince Atsuhito and ceded the Throne to him forthwith. Shortly before abdicating, Uda prepared a written statement of advice for his young successor. This is the famous Kampyō Testament, which covers a variety of subjects ranging from government policy and choice of advisers to homely details such as how to guard against fires in the Palace buildings. There are comments on the leading political figures of the day, including Fujiwara no Tokihira, whose political acumen is duly noted. By far the greatest praise is reserved for Sugawara no Michizane, and probably the main object of the document was to commend his scholarly friend to the new Emperor and make sure that he would be retained as chief imperial adviser. Michizane's main virtue is represented as being loyalty to the Imperial House, and Uda implies that this far outweighs political skill and administrative efficiency.

With the accession of Emperor Daigo, relations between Michizane and Tokihira, still the two prime figures in the government, became more strained than ever, and it was clear that things must soon come to a crisis. Tokihira's suspicions were fanned by Michizane's visits to the residence of the former Emperor, who was forever consulting him on literary matters and inviting him to poetry parties, as well as getting his advice about how to guide the young Emperor Daigo and strengthen imperial authority. Finally in 899 Uda used his influence to secure Michizane's promotion to the post of Minister of the Right. This was a dangerously high position for an "outsider," and it is doubtful whether the former Emperor was doing his old friend any real favour. Michizane's situation in the Great Council of State was far from secure since he was sandwiched between his two chief opponents, Tokihira having received the top appointment as Minister of the Left, while Hikaru, who was the son of an imperial Prince and the leader of the warlike Minamoto clan, became Major Counsellor. In the same year Uda took the tonsure, thus further diminishing the practical support that he could give to Michizane in an emergency.

Towards the end of 899 Michizane received a written warning from Miyoshi no Kiyotsura, another eminent scholar, who reminded him that the following year was astrologically dangerous and advised him to give up his post and withdraw to a life of safe retirement in the capital while there was time. It is not clear whether this advice was inspired by jealousy (as is generally believed), or by Kiyotsura's genuine concern for the safety of a fellow scholar. Whatever the true motive may have been, Michizane chose to ignore the warning and continued to exercise his high functions as Minister of the Right and chief imperial adviser. During this time it is said that the young Emperor and his father were mooting the possibility of solving the current political impasse by combining the posts of Minister of Left and of Right and giving Michizane total control of the administration. Probably this was just a rumour, circulated by the Fujiwaras to drum up further resentment against Michizane. In any case his enemies struck early in the following year.

The coup against Michizane must have been planned carefully and in secret, for both he and Uda were taken by surprise. Since all the documents that detail the events were subsequently destroyed, we cannot tell precisely what accusations were made against Michizane. According to the most likely accounts, Tokihira clandestinely warned Emperor Daigo that Michizane, with the consent of the former Emperor, was planning to depose him in favour of his grandson, Prince Tokiyo, and that in order to forestall any such mischief it was essential to remove the old Minister from the capital without delay. In typical Heian fashion Tokihira buttresses his argument by referring to an eclipse of the
sun that had been observed a few weeks earlier. This, it is said to have told the young Emperor, was a harbinger of things to come: just as the moon (the female principle) had obscured the sun, so Michizane was going to use his daughter, Prince Tokiyo's mother, to displace the reigning sovereign.

The alleged plot was almost certainly a Fujiwara fiction. Michizane was a loyal servant of the Throne, and any notion of substituting his own son-in-law for the lawful Emperor, whom he had served faithfully as tutor and counsellor, would be totally out of character. A scheme of this sort might possibly be entertained by the Fujiwaras themselves if they found it essential for their position at Court, though even they preferred less blatant methods; that it should have been planned by a man with Michizane's temperament and beliefs makes no sense at all.

Yet the accusation worked. Somehow the Emperor, still an inexperienced youth of seventeen, was persuaded that the danger was imminent and, without even consulting his father, he agreed to Tokihira's proposal that Michizane be dismissed from the Great Council of State and appointed to the post of Supernumerary Governor-General in Kyushu, the standard sinecure for political exiles of the time. Tokihira had arranged with Minamoto no Hikaru that troops should be kept in readiness, and the Palace buildings were all carefully guarded. Since an elderly savant like Michizane hardly represented a military threat, the purpose of these steps was presumably to give verisimilitude to the "plot" by creating an atmosphere of emergency, and also to prevent communication with Uda and other potential supporters who might have rallied to his aid. In fact, several days elapsed before the former Emperor reacted to his friend's disgrace, and it was no doubt during this time that Michizane composed his poetic cri de coeur appealing for help:

Now that I have become
Mere scum that floats upon the water's face,
May you, my lord, become a weir
And stop me in my downward flow!

Michizane's banishment was announced on 16th February; it was not until the 21st that Uda proceeded to the Palace to remonstrate with his son, the young Emperor. On arrival he was refused admission by a high Fujiwara official, and after waiting all day on a straw mat by the gate of the Chamberlain's palace he returned disconsolately to his residence. The failure of Uda's intervention removed Michizane's last hope (a slim one at best), and he resigned himself to his lot. Though fully realizing that he was the victim of gross injustice, at no time did he make the slightest effort to resist the young Emperor's ukase.

Shortly after Uda's abortive visit, Michizane set off on his via dolorosa to the west, accompanied by an armed escort. At this point he was forced to part with most of his family. Michizane had twenty-three children (a large number for even the most devoted Confucian patriarch), and to prevent any danger from this quarter the Fujiwaras ordered that his wife and daughters be detained in the capital and his sons removed from their official posts and rusticated. Only the two younger children were allowed to accompany their father in his exile, and it was to them that he addressed the following poem on the precariousness of worldly success. Though the ostensible purpose was "to comfort my little son and daughter," he chose to write the poem in classical Chinese, which must have reduced some of its consoling effect on the children:

Your sisters must all stay at home,
Your brothers are sent away.
Just we three together, my children,
Shall chat as we go along.
Each day we have our meals before us,
At night we sleep all together.
We have lamps and tapers to peer in the dark
And warm clothes for the cold.
Last year you saw how the Chancellor's son
Fell out of favor in the capital.
Now people say he is a ragged gambler,
And call him names on the street.
You have seen the barefooted wandering musician
The townspeople call the Justice's Miss—
Her father, too, was a great official;
They were all in their day exceedingly rich.
Once their gold was like sand in the sea;
Now they have hardly enough to eat.
When you look, my children, at other people,
You can see how gracious Heaven has been.
In expelling Michizane from the capital the Fujiwaras proceeded with such despatch that he had no chance to take leave of his closest friend, the Retired Emperor. On arrival in his place of exile he wrote a wistful poem to Uda about his departure from the capital:

Ah, how I gazed back on those treetops in your garden
Which slowly disappeared from sight
As I continued on my way!

He was, however, able to say goodbye to his plum tree. One of the more affecting scenes in the thirteenth-century picture scroll that depicts Michizane's life shows the defeated hero seated on the verandah of his residence in the Fifth Ward and gazing for the last time at his beloved plum tree, which has just burst into white blossoms. It is this tree that he describes in his Chinese diary ("Notes from My Library") written during his palmy days as Privy Counsellor: "Near the gate [of the garden] grows a plum tree. Each time that it comes into bloom, each time that the wind wafts its fragrance towards me, its blossoms soothe and nurture my spirit..." Michizane apostrophized this same tree in the most famous of all the poems that he wrote after his fall from power:

If the east wind blows this way,
Oh blossoms on the plum tree,
Send your fragrance to me!
Always be mindful of the Spring,
Even though your master is no longer there!

According to tradition, the faithful plum tree not only sent Michizane its precious fragrance but actually uprooted itself and flew all the way to Kyushu to accompany its unfortunate master into banishment. Known as Tobiume ("The Flying Plum Tree"), it still grows proudly outside Dazaifu Shrine in Michizane's place of exile, surrounded by thousands of other plum trees that devotees have planted in his honour.

The Government Headquarters in Dazaifu, some five hundred miles west of the capital, was in a rough, backward part of the country, totally isolated from the cultural activity that was central in the lives of the Heian aristocracy. For a well-born scholar like Michizane it was a sort of Siberia, and it must have been bitter indeed to realize that his long years of service at Court had culminated in an appointment to such a place. The official residence, a dilapidated building with leaking roof and rotting floorboards, contrasted rudely with his patrician mansion in the Fifth Ward. The post itself entailed no official duties or powers whatsoever and, though the authorities maintained a polite pretence that the incumbent was still a high official (the dreaded governorship corresponded to the Third Rank in the Court hierarchy), he was in fact a virtual prisoner.

Little is known about Michizane's life during his last sad years in exile. He suffered from beriberi and stomach trouble, and his wife had to send him medicine from the capital, since nothing was available in the wilds of Kyushu. The death of his little son shortly after their arrival added to Michizane's woes. According to tradition, he found one of his fewconsolations in climbing up Tempaizan, a nearby hill, where he would face eastwards and offer prayers on behalf of the Emperor who had brought about his disgrace. The scroll shows the hero standing on top of the hill (which had turned into a steep, Chinese-style mountain) and gazing towards the capital. He is dressed in a black Court robe elegantly lined with crimson, and a peaked, lacquer cap perches above his plump, white, gourd-shaped face. He solemnly holds aloft a bamboo stick to which he has attached a document explaining his version of the charges that were used to banish him. A couple of dappled deer are grazing at the foot of the hill, and one of them looks up in surprise at the strange, solitary figure at the top.

Michizane took advantage of his enforced leisure to produce a final collection of Chinese poems, which includes a number of melancholy verses like the following:

Since I left home some three months have passed,
And a hundred thousand tears have fallen.
Everything is like a dream,
And time after time I gaze into the heavens.

On this same night one year ago
I attended the Emperor in his Palace
And poured out my heart in a poem called Autumn Thoughts.
Here lies the robe that Your Majesty bestowed upon me at that time.
Daily I lift it up and pay homage to its lingering scent.
It was not the wind—the oil is gone.
I hate the lamp that will not see me through the night.
How hard—to make ashes of the mind, to still the body!
I rise and move into the moonlight by the cold window.

The second of these poems inspired one of the paintings in the scroll. We see Michizane seated respectfully in front of a lacquered yellow box that is decorated with black chrysanthemum crests to show that it is an imperial gift; neatly folded inside the box lies the red Court costume that reminds him of happier days.

Michizane died exactly two years after his disgrace—of a broken heart, according to the legend. One of the great regrets during his years in exile was that his old friend Uda never sent a single word of consolation or replied to any of his poems. This seems a strange dereliction for a Heian gentleman, and it is possible that the former Emperor did in fact write to Kyushu but that his messages were intercepted by Fujiwara officials who were determined to forestall any possible effort to secure clemency for their rival.

The carriage transporting Michizane's remains is said to have stopped on the way to the burial grounds when the ox, in a sudden access of grief, lay down in the middle of the road. It was decided that the body should be buried at that very spot, and the scroll shows a group of rough villagers sorrowfully preparing his grave, while the beribboned ox, still harnessed to the vast carriage, lies nearby and casts a baleful eye towards the sky.

Meanwhile in the capital the Fujiwaras had successfully regained control over the government. Their chief, Tokihira, had betrothed his daughter to young Emperor Daigo; and when, with usual Fujiwara efficiency, she gave birth to a boy, Tokihira arranged that the baby be named Crown Prince, thus ensuring his family's control over the next emperor. Since Michizane's fall the Cloistered Emperor, Uda, had been effectively removed from the political scene and now he devoted himself almost entirely to literature and religion. His old hostility towards the Fujiwaras gradually diminished, and he even invited Tokihira to poetry parties and other entertainments where Michizane had once presided.

The Reform movement that had started under the aegis of Emperor Uda was now pursued far more vigorously and effectively by Tokihira, who was determined to implement the law of the land and to prevent the growth of independent, tax-free estates that were steadily sapping the strength of the central government. One of his first measures was to order a census and a new distribution of public rice land according to the old system of equal allotments. The so-called Engi Reform (named after the year-period that had started after Michizane's exile) was far more thorough than anything that had been attempted in the time of Uda and Michizane. Despite stubborn resistance in the provinces, Tokihira and his associates, with the encouragement of Emperor Daigo, started a concerted drive to correct abuses in regional administration and in particular to check the growing practice of commendation, which was encouraging the formation of illegal estates. Tokihira's death in 908, however, had a disastrous effect on the Reform movement; there followed a more or less steady decline in central control over the provinces, culminating eventually in a breakdown of the entire Heian system of government.

The man believed to be responsible for Tokihira's early demise was the former Minister of the Right, Sugawara no Michizane, now six years in his grave. Though they had effectively succeeded in ousting Michizane from the Court and restoring their own hegemony, the Fujiwaras were not allowed to forget their old rival. His posthumous career, in fact, was even more impressive than his live one. Though his actual death passed almost unnoticed in the capital, it was followed a few years later by a long series of mishaps—something like the collapse of the tower that is said to have recurred on the anniversary of Thomas à Becket's death but a great deal more damaging and frequent. First came the unexpected death of Fujiwara no Tokihira when he was only thirty-eight and at the apex of his career. A few years later Michizane's other great enemy, Minamoto no Hikaru, who had supplanted him as Minister of the Right, was killed in a hunting accident. The next to succumb was Tokihira's grandson, Crown Prince Yasuakira, and a couple of years later the new Crown Prince (another of Tokihira's grandsons) died while still a baby. According to prevalent superstitions, this bizarre series of deaths must be the work of some vindictive spirit who was wreaking his posthumous revenge; and, since the principal victims all had Fujiwara connexions, it did not take long to determine that the perpetrator was the famous scholar whom they had driven into exile. To prevent further mischief it was essential
that his furious spirit be appeased and, as the first step, Emperor Daigo's government decided in 933 that Michizane should be reappointed as Great Minister of the Right and given the Senior Second Rank. In the same year the Emperor ordered that the documents pertaining to Michizane's case should be burnt, thus permanently annihilating all evidence of his alleged plot.

These steps did not suffice to mollify the furious ghost. One day an ominous black cloud was seen approaching the capital from the west; it was accompanied by great peals of thunder, and shortly afterwards a thunderbolt fell directly on the Palace, killing a high Fujiwara Counsellor and badly scorching the face of a junior official. On this occasion Michizane's spirit appeared in the awesome form of the thunder god, putting Emperor Daigo and his courtiers into a state of abject terror. Of all the gentlemen present only Fujiwara no Tokihira rose to the occasion. With remarkable bravado he drew his sword and advanced on the ghost, addressing him as follows: "When you were alive your position in the state was lower than mine. Even now that you have become a spirit it is proper that you show me respect and keep your distance..." On hearing this challenge the thunder god retreated. Emperor Daigo is said to have fallen ill as a result of this terrifying incident, and three months later he abdicated the Throne.

After a series of fearful earthquakes and other natural disasters an oracle finally decreed that a shrine be erected in honour of the dead scholar. This order was duly carried out: in 947 the great Kitano ("Northern Fields") Shrine was built for Michizane north of the capital. Here his spirit is enshrined together with all his literary works. The shrine attracted frequent imperial visits, and later became a popular resort for the ordinary inhabitants of Heian Kyô.

Some forty years later, at the time of Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shônagon, the Emperor, acting on the advice of his Fujiwara Regent, bestowed the title of Heavenly Deity (Tenjin) on Michizane, thus making him the first subject in Japanese history to be officially recognized as a divinity. Through the centuries the Heavenly Deity of Kitano, as Michizane came to be called, has received offerings in the shrine as the patron deity of learning, literature, and calligraphy, and a famous Shinto festival is held there in his honour during the eighth month of each year. Heavenly Deity (Tenjin) shrines, usually surrounded by groves of plum trees, were subsequently built for Michizane throughout the country and attracted crowds of devotees and sightseers. There are more Shinto shrines consecrated to Tenjin than to any other deity in Japan except Hachiman, the god of war.

The dedication of Kitano Shrine laid the ghost to rest: the Fujiwaras had now salved their collective conscience and no longer attributed deaths and other disasters to Michizane's vengeful spirit. Ninety years after his demise they made a final gesture by having him raised to the Senior First Rank, an unprecedented distinction for all but royalty, and appointed to be Minister of the Left. As if this were not enough, he was promoted a few months later to be Prime Minister. This supreme post in the Chinese-style hierarchy was the terrestrial equivalent of his deification.

The Fujiwaras had good reason to honour their unfortunate rival; but the growing popularity and veneration that he received from the general public are less simply explained. Here the facts of Michizane's career must be distinguished from the legend that became entwined with them. In the legend he is a precocious genius, endowed with almost supernatural gifts, who developed as one of the supreme figures in the cultural history of Japan and became the god of learning, literature, and calligraphy. His meteoric public career was marked by unworldly idealism, selflessness, and steadfast loyalty to the Emperor, who used him to break the power of the arrogant Fujiwaras and restore authority to the Imperial House. By supporting Emperor Uda's policy Michizane bravely risked his career and even his personal safety, until finally he was outdone by Fujiwara machinations and died in lonely exile as a martyr to the cause.

In this legend the role of villain is naturally assigned to Michizane's chief adversary, Fujiwara no Tokihira. He is represented as an ambitious, unprincipled scoundrel who is jealous of his rival's brilliance and success and who schemes to ruin him in order to regain his own family's stranglehold over the government. In describing the events of got a famous twelfth-century historical work compares the two rivals as follows:

At this time, when Tokihira was about twenty-eight years old and Michizane about fifty-seven, they governed the country together. Michizane was a man of the most extraordinary talents, and his character too placed him above the common run. Tokihira was not only young but
also remarkably lacking in talent. In consequence Michizane had a magnificent reputation. This made Tokihira most uneasy and somehow he arranged that things would go badly for Michizane.

“The Secret of Sugawara’s Calligraphy,” one of the most popular plays in Japanese history, reinforces the legendary reputations of the godlike scholar and his devilish opponent. Tokihira, the ruthless villain, not only contrives the great man’s downfall but attempts to have him murdered by two secret retainers on his way to exile. In the end, however, it is Tokihira who is killed. After Michizane has died, lamenting that his enemy still controls the government, his sons avenge the old Minister by returning secretly to the capital and assassinating the fiend.

In fact, Tokihira was one of the outstanding products of a remarkably able family. Apart from his important scholarly activities, he was a vigorous, capable statesman whose talents were recognized by both Emperor Uda and his successor. During the fifteen years when he took the lead in the Kamyō-Engi movement to improve provincial and central government, he evidenced the highest administrative standards, and we know that his death had a disastrous effect on the Reform policy, which had largely depended on his guidance. It is true that he was relentless in destroying Michizane’s career; but here he was simply carrying out traditional Fujiwara policy, and he certainly gave no evidence of the gratuitous cruelty that is attributed to him in the play. The banishment of Michizane was an unjust act but hardly the heinous crime that the legend pretends. Like most of the Fujiwara leaders, Tokihira emerges from the chronicles more as a public figure than as a living personality; but we know that he was intelligent, brave, and conscientious in fulfilling his responsibilities as head of the government.

If Emperor Uda’s plan had worked and Michizane had permanently displaced Tokihira as his Chief Minister, it is doubtful whether there would have been any improvement in the administration of the country. Far from it—during the years when he enjoyed high office in the capital he gave no evidence of any particular administrative ability; during his periods of residence in Shikoku and Kyushu he appears to have been totally uninterested in the provinces except as a setting for his Chinese poems; and, when offered an opportunity to lead an important mission to China, he turned it down rather than risk his political position at home. Although he became Emperor Uda’s closest adviser, he took hardly any part in the Reform movement, and his removal from office had no perceptible effect on practical matters of government. While Tokihira’s death was a historical turning point, Michizane’s banishment, although represented in the legend as a national tragedy, was in fact no great loss to the state.

Michizane’s cultural reputation is far more soundly based, but even here legend outstrips reality. It is hard for modern Japanese readers, let alone for a modern Westerner, to judge his voluminous Chinese verse. However impressive this poetry may be, the fact is that hardly anyone, except a handful of scholars and specialists, would ever dream of reading it, and Michizane’s preeminence in this field is largely accepted on authority. His Japanese tanka, though respectfully included in anthology after anthology, are mostly occasional verse of a banal nature, in which the poet compares white chrysanthemums with sea spray and maple leaves with brocade; only in the final poems written after his banishment does any real emotion show through the surface elegance.

Michizane’s supreme gift as a calligrapher must again be accepted on authority, since not a single authentic example of his writing is extant. Calligraphy has been the art of arts in traditional Oriental culture, and it was almost automatic that a scholar-hero like Michizane would be credited with preternatural skill in this field and that a school of writing would be named after him. Whether or not his actual skill with the writing-brush deserved deification will always remain moot, except in the unlikely event that some verifiable examples of his work are discovered.

His major achievements are probably as a scholar and editor of official histories. Even here, however, the great man’s reputation has not been invulnerable to the probing of modern experts, and his authorship of some of the important works that were traditionally attributed to him is now in question.

Concerning Michizane’s much-vaunted loyalty, it is true that he served Uda faithfully, both when the latter was Emperor and after he abdicated; and there is little doubt that he would have continued working for Emperor Daigo had he been given the chance. This devotion, however, is surely not in the same sacrificial category as that of heroes like Kusunoki Masashige
who gave their lives to support their Emperor against fierce military enemies. Michizane risked none of the dangers incurred by the loyalists of a later period. And besides, his fealty to Uda was essential to his own advancement, since it was the Emperor's policy to elevate him to the position traditionally occupied by a Fujiwara leader. His connexion with the Palace was the key to his entire career and, if he wished to satisfy his political ambitions, there was no alternative to serving the Emperor loyally.

These ambitions brought about Michizane's downfall. If he had kept to his scholarship and left politics to the politicians, he could have continued safely in the capital, engaged in his literary pursuits, serving the Court as poetical adviser and Confucian tutor, enjoying his plum tree and his children and the other gentle delights of domestic life—and he might even have made the fascinating journey to China, the source of the culture that he valued so greatly. But then, of course, he would not have been enshrined as the Heavenly Deity of Kitano.

Why then did Michizane's legend become so fixed in the popular mind as to obscure the historical facts? Why, above all, did this scholarly gentleman, whose work is almost entirely in Chinese and hardly ever read, become so securely established in the pantheon of Japan's great heroes? He had none of the glamour and panache that attaches to the famous warriors in Japanese history, and he survived his normal lifespan without ever incurring real physical danger. It is true that he risked the wrath of the ruling family and suffered the pangs of exile. Yet this in itself would not have ensured him heroic stature; for Heian history is strewn with prominent men (including poets) who fell foul of the Fujiwaras and were banished. Michizane's great advantages were that he actually died in exile and, above all, that after the extraordinary success of his early career he was finally thwarted in the main purpose of his life and ended his days in the bitter knowledge that the Fujiwaras were back in power. The essence of Michizane's heroism, in other words, and the real basis for his lasting appeal are to be found in the nature of his ultimate failure. By virtue of his bitter exile and doleful demise in the wilds of Kyushu he became enshrined in the national pantheon.

Though Michizane was defeated in his lifetime, he enjoyed a posthumous victory by returning to high rank and office and even becoming a god. Michizane's vindication (whether or not he himself ever anticipated it) was impressive: having suffered un-

justly during his terrestrial life, he asserted himself after death by taking supernatural revenge on his enemies and receiving the adulation of posterity for over a thousand years.

The myth of the failed hero, as exemplified by Michizane during his lifetime and especially after his death, is the Japanese equivalent of the universal concept of a fallen god who is resurrected so that he may survive in a transcendent world—a world representing the perfection of those ideals for which he struggled on earth. While the Japanese hero is promised no paradise or elysium where he will receive compensation for his earthly travails, he does survive in the memory of his nation. The specific causes for which he suffered may not be those that his people have come to value historically; yet for that very reason he can personify the idea of unworlly, impractical selflessness. The failed heroes of Japan may thus be regarded as demigods. In the absence of any "official," central Christ-figure who dies to this world in order to realize his transcendence in the next, they express the human ideal of an unworlly perfection, one that by its uncompromising purity cannot under any circumstances survive the exigencies of this corrupt world.

The Japanese veneration of the hero as a demigod who is defeated by the world's impurity reinforces the emotional and aesthetic appeal of mono no aware ("the pathos of things"), and suggests that, if Michizane had succeeded in his practical enterprises by effectively supplanting the Fujiwaras at the centre of political power, he could not possibly have achieved his divine, heroic status.

In crass empirical terms it is clear that Michizane's rehabilitation was more apparent than real. For the Fujiwaras' appeasement of his spirit actually worked. Having thrown a sop to the old Minister's memory by according him honours that cost them nothing at all, their family flourished more than ever before, and Fujiwara politicians continued to dominate the Court for almost two more centuries, attaining their greatest glory about a hundred years after Michizane's death. When they fell from power in the end, it was not because of any loyalist movement inspired by men like Sugawara no Michizane but because the entire system of central government (of which both Michizane and Emperor Uda had been part) finally collapsed. At this stage it no longer mattered whether the central government was controlled by the Fujiwara family, or by some other family or individual,
or even by the Emperor himself; real power resided elsewhere.

Though Michizane’s style of life differed diametrically from
that of Japan’s military heroes, the pattern of his failure was
remarkably similar. By doggedly supporting a losing cause, he
proved his moral sincerity. Furthermore, the cause that he
espoused represented no political innovation or wave of the future;
for it was in order to turn things back to the period before the
Fujiwaras intruded on the scene—to that pristine period when
(or so it was believed) the emperors ruled as well as reigned—that
Emperor Uda had tried to use Michizane’s talents as a statesman.
It is significant, too, that Michizane’s best-known writing should
be, not the impressive tomes produced at the height of his career,
but poignant, simple verses, like the farewell poem to his plum
tree, that he composed during his last years in Kyushu when he
had been disgraced by the new Emperor and apparently aban-
donned by his old friend, Uda—poetry of a kind that almost invari-
ably confirms the sincerity and emotional appeal of the failed
hero. Finally, the turpitude of Fujiwara no Tokihira, as estab-
lished by the legend in utter disregard of the facts, belongs to the
stock characterization of the successful survivors who “have their
reward” in terms of worldly success but who traditionally serve
as foils in the Japanese heroic scheme.

Victory
Through Defeat

Minamoto no Yoshitsune, who after a series of brilliant military
victories spent his last years as a fugitive implacably hounded by
his elder brother until he was forced to commit harakiri at the
age of thirty, is the perfect exemplar of heroic failure. If he had
not actually existed, the Japa-
nese might have been obliged to invent him. Indeed, much of our
knowledge about this spectacular young man is invention, a rich
fabric of tales and legends woven during the course of the centu-
ries to embellish the sparse historical facts of his career and to
create Japan’s quintessential hero.

Though Yoshitsune made not the slightest contribution to
the advancement of society or culture, he is one of the most
illustrious and beloved personalities in Japanese history. Even in
the 1970s, when samurai ideals are in eclipse, his story is relished
by schoolchildren, and the peculiar poignancy of his downfall
evokes an immediate response from people of every age.

Yoshitsune’s historical fame is due mainly to his military
achievements; but the real reason for his lasting popularity as a
hero is that his brief career was shaped in a dramatic parabola of
the type that most appeals to the Japanese imagination: after
suddenly soaring to success he was undone at the very height of
his glory and plummeted to total disaster, a victim of his own
sincerity, outwitted by men more worldly and politic than him-
self and betrayed by those whom he had trusted. So faithfully
does Yoshitsune conform to the ideal of heroism through failure
that the term banzukib (which literally meant “sympathy with
the Lieutenant” and came from his rank in the Imperial Police)
has become fixed in the language to describe the traditional sym-