

## **Taira no Masakado    Ancient Bando Warrior**

The Japanese eastern part consisting of the prefectures, Ibaraki, Gunma, Tochigi, Chiba, Saitama, Kanagawa, and Tokyo is now called “Kanto”. But it was called “Bando” in former times. One famous hero, whose name was “*Taira no Masakado*”, lived and fought in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in this region. Masakado left a lot of traces in this area. His biography, “*Shomonki*”, was written after he died, by someone who knew him well. Today, his story is well known from the novel “Taira no Masakado” written by Chougoro Kaionji and it also was adapted for the TV history drama “*The Wind, The Cloud, and The Rainbow*”.

### **Summary**

Taira no Masakado was born and raised in Bando. He was the descendent of the Kanmu Tenno (Emperor). His father was Chinjyufu Shogun who was the general of the northern Japanese army. His childhood name was *Souma Kojoro*. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, called the Heian Period, Kyoto was the capital of Japan, so the Tenno and the nobility lived and governed the country from here. Bando was the isolated land in the east, far from Kyoto, but it was a very important place, that might be possible to develop in the future. Masakado went to Kyoto and served the powerful politician “*Fujiwara Tadahira*”. After many years in his service he went back to Bando when his father died. The lands of his father were given to his relatives. For that reason, he often fought with other Taira families, to take back the land of his father. In that period, it was said that local powerful land families suffered from the exploitation of *Zuryos* ( *local governors* ). Soon Masakado got actively involved in the problems between the Zuryo and the local powerful land families of Bando. He captured the Zuryo. He was going to build an independent country that had 8 districts in the Bando region, together with his powerful, strong army. He declared himself the new Tenno (Emperor), because of his connection to Kanmu Tenno. He warred against the government and the Tenno in Kyoto. But only two months later, his army lost the war, and he died and his county broke down for a short time. It was a very big event that shook the Heian noble society of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Though Masakado fought against the Tennou, he received much hope and sympathy because he thought about the situation of the people who lived in Bando. He had many shrines in Kanto (ancient Bando) and many legends surround him. Today, people still sympathize with Masakado and his cause.