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Introduction

As the twelfth century waned, no thoughtful Japanese could have failed to recognize that the long Heian interlude of peace, economic security, and cultural florescence was nearing its end, and that a new political force was threatening the imperial court's hegemony. The signs were unmistakable.

In the countryside, there had been a steady evolution away from the institutions established by the seventh-century Taika Reform, which had brought all rice lands under state control and had created organs of local government to collect taxes and maintain order. At the time of the reforms, some powerful families had stayed on the land, where they had typically occupied subordinate government offices; others had moved to the capital and, as members of a new aristocracy, had helped create the brilliant civilization depicted in the eleventh-century Tale of Genji. Over the years, the court's preoccupation with the immediate concerns of aristocratic life had led to the discontinuance of the periodic land allotments on which the Taika economic system was based; to the widespread growth of private landholdings, known as shōen; and to the rise of a provincial armed élite, brought into existence by the government's military impotence.

Many among the new warrior class traced their roots to pre-Taika forebears who had remained in the provinces; others were aristocrats who had come from the capital as shōen managers and provincial officials, or were the descendants of such men. The court had become accustomed to calling upon them in case of need, and during the tenth century, in particular, had used some of their prominent leaders to quell two protracted civil disturbances in eastern and western Japan, the rebellions of Taira no Masakado and Fujiwara no Sumitomo, respectively. The result had been a great in-
In the capital, the fief of Chiba province, served as the power base for the Mongoliad, the event that saw the rise of the Mongol Empire. The Mongoliad was a period characterized by widespread competition and conflict for power and prestige among the various regional powers. The Mongoliad saw the rise of several powerful warlords, each vying for dominance in their respective territories. However, it is the military campaign that was led by the future Emperor Go-Shirakawa that stands out as a significant event in the history of Japan.

In 1156, the future Emperor Go-Shirakawa, under whose auspices the court of the Heian period conducted its military campaigns, was faced with a significant challenge. The Mongoliad, a period of widespread conflict and competition for power among the various regional powers, had seen the rise of several powerful warlords, each vying for dominance in their respective territories. However, it was the military campaign that was led by the future Emperor Go-Shirakawa that stands out as a significant event in the history of Japan.

The campaign was led by the future Emperor Go-Shirakawa, under whose auspices the court of the Heian period conducted its military campaigns. The campaign was aimed at consolidating the power of the court and establishing its dominance over the region. The campaign was a success, and it helped to establish the power of the court over the region. However, the success of the campaign was not without its challenges. The Mongoliad, a period characterized by widespread competition and conflict for power and prestige among the various regional powers, saw the rise of several powerful warlords, each vying for dominance in their respective territories. The future Emperor Go-Shirakawa, under whose auspices the campaign was led, faced significant challenges in consolidating the power of the court and establishing its dominance over the region.

In conclusion, the campaign led by the future Emperor Go-Shirakawa was a significant event in the history of Japan. The campaign helped to establish the power of the court over the region, consolidating the power of the court and establishing its dominance over the region. However, the success of the campaign was not without its challenges. The Mongoliad, a period characterized by widespread competition and conflict for power and prestige among the various regional powers, saw the rise of several powerful warlords, each vying for dominance in their respective territories. The future Emperor Go-Shirakawa, under whose auspices the campaign was led, faced significant challenges in consolidating the power of the court and establishing its dominance over the region.
emperor, Nijō, were at odds, but throughout his public career, which ended in 1168, when he took Buddhist vows in consequence of an illness.

But Kiyomori's circumstances disguised the fact that his clan had become a potentially dangerous power center. By the mid-1170s, dozens of its members had acquired coveted offices, profitable provincial governorships, and extensive shiite holdings; the retired emperor found himself competing with Emperor Takakura's Taira kinmen for his son's ear, and Kiyomori's daughter was an imperial consort, the potential mother of a future sovereign. Members of the clan had begun to display an arrogance that was profoundly offensive to the established aristocracy, many of whose members remained unconvinced of the presence of military upstarts in their midst. Keshi-nin's brother, Taira no Tokitsa, had been heard to remark, "All who do not belong to this clan must rank as less than men," and one of Kiyomori's young grandsons, Sukemori, had created a scandal in 1170 by insulting the regent—an incident particularly galling because the boy's conduct had been defended by his father, Shigemori, Kiyomori's successor as head of the clan.

In 1177, Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa attempted to neutralize the Taira threat. With his encouragement, a group of his kinsmen planned a military coup against the clan, relying on the assistance of Yuki-tsuba, a minor Genji warrior from nearby Settsu Province. The plot collapsed when Yuki-tsuba betrayed his associates, and the kinsmen were arrested and punished as Kiyomori saw fit.

No issue was made of Go-Shirakawa's involvement, but the affair left an irreparable breach between the retired emperor and Kiyomori. There was a period of uneasy truce, during which the two came together in a show of amity for the birth of their mutual grandson, the future Emperor Antoku, in 1178. Then, in 1179, the Taira suffered a devastating blow: Shigemori, their forceful, able leader, died at the age of forty-one and was succeeded as chiefetain by his brother Munemori, whose cowardice and poor judgment were to be among the causes of the clan's ruin. Go-Shirakawa seized the opportunity to deprive the clan of tax rights and properties to which Kiyomori felt entitled, and to decide against Kiyomori's candidate for an important court office. Kiyomori promptly took an army to the capital from his villa at Hokusara [in modern Kobe], terminated the official appointments of more than three dozen of the retired emperor's kinsmen and other supporters, and confined the former sovereign to the Toba Mansion, an imperial villa outside the city.

Kiyomori made his demarche toward the end of 1179. A few months later, he completed the sweep of actual and potential rivals by installing his infant grandson on the throne, which Emperor Takakura was forced to vacate. But the Taira clan had become a vulnerable target for anyone who chose to identify himself as a defender of the imperial house and the traditional order. At the instigation of Minamoto no Yorimasa, a respected el-

...clearly Buddhist novice (nyūdō) who lived in the capital area, one of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa's sons, Prince Mochihito, summoned the provincial Genji (Minamoto) to arms within two months of the young Emperor Antoku's accession.

Before the year was out, two ambitious Genji, the now grown Yoritomo and his cousin, Kiso no Yoshihiko, were fighting Heike armies in the provinces. Yoritomo won an important psychological victory at the Fuji River in late 1180. He then retired to his headquarters in eastern Japan, where, as the "Kamakura Lord," he concentrated on establishing feudal relationships with local warriors, to whom he guaranteed land rights in exchange for allegiance (a tactic the Taira sought in vain to counter by recruiting men through bureaucratic channels).

In early 1181, the Taira, already at a disadvantage, were further staggered by the death of Kiyomori, which left the hapless Munemori in control of the clan's destinies. Widespread famine and pestilence produced a lull in the fighting, but by mid-1183 Yosihitaka was threatening the capital. Munemori fled westward at the head of his kinmen, overriding the objections of his brother Tomonori and others who wanted to mount a last-ditch stand, and taking along Emperor Antoku in an attempt to legitimize the clan's claims. The retired emperor promptly enthroned another of his young grandsons, the sovereign known to history as Empress Go-Toba.

Meanwhile, three days after the flight of the Taira, Yosihitaka made a triumphant entry into the city, accompanied by his uncle Yuki-te. Hailed as a savior at first, he soon was out his welcome. His men foraged for provisions in the famine-stricken countryside, the volatile Yuki-te slandered him to Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, his rustic ways alienated the snobbish aristocrats, and his efforts to launch an effective campaign against the Taira in the west failed miserably. Four months after his grand entry, the retired emperor mustered a ragtag collection of soldier-monks and local warriors and ordered the "savior" to withdraw from the capital. Yosihitaka crushed the imperial forces, carried out wholesale denouncements of high court officials, made a futile attempt to persuade the Heike to ally themselves with him against his cousin Yoritomo, with whom the retired emperor was in active communication, and finally died at the hands of Yoritomo's eastern forces, which were commanded by two of the Kamakura Lord's half-brothers, Noriyori and Yoshitsune.

Less than a month later, the eastern forces attacked Ikuta-no-mori and Ichi-no-tani, the eastern and western entrances to a stronghold the Taira had established between the mountains and the sea, in what is now the area of Kobe. Thanks to a surprise assault from the mountains behind Ichi-no-tani, executed by Yoshitane and a few of his men, the stronghold fell, and the Taira fled over the water to Yoshima on Shikoku Island, crippled by the loss of many of their leading clansmen and retainers.

Noriyori returned to Kamakura after the victory at Ichi-no-tani, but Yo-
ritomo sent him westward later in 1184, with instructions to seek out and attack the Taira. Meanwhile, Yoshitsune had been guarding the capital. Yoritomo had indicated to Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa that he would also send Yoshitsune against the Taira, but now he changed his mind, angered because the retired emperor had granted his brother two desirable court offices without consulting him. Noriyori therefore advanced alone to 5u and Nagato provinces, where he presently found himself bottled up by two Taira forces—one, under the able Tomomori, threatening the Kyushu sea lanes from Hakone, and the other, imperiling his rear, dispatched to Kii in Bizen Province from Yoshima, where Munemori remained with Emperor Antoku. Further hampered by supply problems and a lack of boats, Noriyori idled away several months.

Finally, in early 1185, Yoritomo ordered Yoshitsune into action. Yoshitsune crossed to Shikoku during a storm, took the Taira by surprise, and drove them from Yoshima. Munemori joined forces with his brother Tomomori, and the opposing sides met in a last major engagement, the naval battle of Dan-no-ura, which ended with the defeat of the Taira and the deaths of Emperor Antoku, Kiyomori's widow, and most of the male members of the clan. Therefore, Yoritomo and Go-Shirakawa reached a tacit understanding, with ultimate authority exercised by the court in form and by the new military government at Kamakura in fact. The Genji dominated Japan, and Kiyomori's descendants disappeared from the pages of history.

Like other dramatic events of far-reaching importance, the rise and fall of the house of Taira, and especially the protracted five-year struggle known to scholars as the Genpei War, constituted a rich source of materials for the storyteller. Even before the final defeat of the Heike in 1185, tales must have been circulating about isolated events in the conflict. And at some point, probably early in the thirteenth century, the ancestor of the present Heike monogatari made its appearance.2

The Tale of the Heike is known today in numerous versions, probably dating from the thirteenth century to the Edo period (1600–1868), some are relatively short, some very long, some have variant titles; some are written in Chinese; some were seemingly designed to be read; and some contain internal evidence suggestive of use by Buddhist preachers (shakkyoji). By far the most characteristic, however, are texts of intermediate length, known to have been narrated by a class of blind men called biwa bashi. Biwa is the Japanese name for the pipa, a Chinese musical instrument resembling a lute, which had entered Japan with the introduction of Buddhism many centuries earlier; bashi ("master of the doctrines") designates a monk or, as in this case, a layman in monk's garb.

2. Japanese scholars classify the Heike as a "military tale" (gunki monogatari, senki monogatari), a historical or quasi-historical narrative in which warriors and their activities play a prominent role.

The biwa bashi had appeared in the countryside several centuries earlier. Many of them frequented Buddhist temples, where they probably first learned to play the biwa, and where they may have acquired the habit of wearing clerical robes. Thanks to their training, to their acute musical senses, and to their mastery of the biwa—which, like other stringed instruments, was considered an efficacious means of establishing contact with unseen powers—they seem to have impressed country folk as capable of communicating with the otherworld, and they were called upon to drive away disease gods and pacify angry spirits. They also functioned as wayside entertainers, telling stories (often of a sermonizing nature), reciting poems, and singing songs.

By the thirteenth century, large numbers of such men had congregated in the capital, where they must have encountered a demand for stories about the Genpei War—in particular, tales of tragic or violent death, which, when related with sympathy, would serve to quell the restless spirits of the deceased. Some of them are known to have frequented the Enryakuji Temple on Mount Hiei, the home base of a school of preachers famous for their eloquence and erudition; some almost certainly used their art to become acquainted with mid-level court nobles, the kind of men who collected oral stories as a hobby. Although the details are elusive, the ancestral Heike monogatari almost certainly emerged from such circumstances—from a pooling of the talents and practices of religiously oriented professional entertainers with the literary skills of educated men.

Medieval writers profited several explanations of our work's origins. The best known appears in Tsurezuregusa (Essays in Idleness), a collection of papers set down around 1330 by Yoshida Kenkō, a monk and former courtier with a reputation as a scholar and an antiquarian.

In Retired Emperor Go-Toba's time, the former Shinano Official Yūkūrō won praise for his learning. But when commanding to participate in a discussion of yugetsu poetry, he forgot two of the virtues in the "Dance of the Seven Virtues," and acquired the nickname "Young Gentleman of the Five Virtues." Sick at heart, he abandoned scholarship and took the tonsure. Archbishop Ten [the abbot of the Enryakuji Temple] made a point of summons and looking after anyone, even a servant, who could boast of an accomplishment, thus, he granted this Shinano novice an allowance. Yūkūrō composed The Tale of the Heike and taught it to a blind man, Shūbutsu, so that the man might narrate it. His descriptions of things having to do with the Enryakuji were especially good. He wrote with a detailed knowledge of Yoshitsune's activities, but did not say much about Noriyori, possibly for lack of information. When it came to warriors and the martial arts, Shūbutsu, who was an easterner, asked warriors questions and had Yūkūrō write what he learned. People say that the biwa bashi of our day imitate Shūbutsu's natural voice. (Tsurezuregusa, sec. 3.36)

If we assume that Emperor Go-Toba's "time" means both his reign (1183–98) and his period of authority as retired emperor (1198–1221),
The Tale of the Heike

and if scholars are correct in assigning the original Heike monogatari to the early thirteenth century, then Kenko's dating is approximately correct. Moreover, Yukitaga is a historically identifiable figure of the Heian period. In the absence of independent evidence, we cannot go further, but Kenko's statements probably reflect the kind of thing that actually happened, even though they may be wholly or partly inaccurate in their particulars. The same may be said of the attributions to other authors put forward in other sources, along with purported information about textual evolution. Although none of these attributions can be substantiated, they seem to support the assumption that a number of different people had a hand in the work's creation, and that some versions, at least, were the product of collaboration between bana hôshi and mid-level couriers or monks (or both).

The available evidence also suggests that a number of texts were in existence by the end of the thirteenth century. It is impossible to know how much the earliest versions may have resembled another one in content and style, or whether they all sprang from a single original, but we can say that any versions entirely unrelated to our present texts have disappeared without a trace. Although there are many points of difference between extant texts, they have all descended from a common parent, even the huge forty-eight-chapter Tale of the Rise and Fall of the Minamoto and the Taira (Genpei jôshi), which bears a unique title and was once considered an independent work.

This Introduction is not the place for a discussion of the immensely complicated, ill-understood connections between surviving Heike texts. We shall concern ourselves only with the version perfected over a thirty-year period and recorded in 1371 by a man named Kakuchi, a bana hôshi who took traditional materials, reshaped them into a work of literary distinction, and established a standard text, memorized and narrated by many successive generations of blind performers.

By the first half of the fourteenth century, the bana hôshi in the capital had become sufficiently specialized in what came to be called heikyoku, or "Heike monogatari narration," to form a guild, the Tôdôza, with a noble house as patron. A court noble's diary tells us that Kakuchi was active in the guild by 1349, when he is conjectured to have been about forty years old. There is no reliable information concerning his earlier life—merely a legend preserved in a seventeenth-century collection of Tôdôza traditions and precepts, Sashiki yoteshiki, which identifies him as having been a monk at Shôhazan.3 According to that work, he became a bana hôshi after the sudden loss of his vision, went to the capital, joined the Tôdôza, and rose to the guild's top ranks. Whatever his origins, by 1340 he was presenting heikyoku performances that the same noble diarist described as "different" (ike), a comment probably inspired not only by his textual revisions but also by his performance style, which seems to have been more complex, colorful, and melodic than anything previously attempted by the members of the guild.

Some scholars have hypothesized that Kakuichi drew on the Buddhist chants (shôkyô) in vogue at Shôhazan. We know that Shôhazan was a recognized center of Buddhist music by the fifteenth century, but it is not certain whether this was the case in Kakuichi's day—or, indeed, whether there is any truth in the legend associating him with the temple. Nevertheless, he undoubtedly revolutionized heikyoku performance. During his lifetime, and probably soon after the appearance of the original Kakuichi text, the Tôdôza split into two schools, the Ichikata-ryû and the Yasa-ryû. Personalities and other issues may have been involved, but the main reason for the disagreement seems to have been that a conservative faction, the future Yasa-ryû, refused to accept the innovations introduced by Kakuichi and adopted by the rest of the community, who became the Ichikata-ryû.

Thanks largely to Kakuichi, heikyoku won upper-class acceptance and became recognized as the leading contemporary performing art. Both the Ichikata-ryû and the Yasa-ryû continued to flourish in the so-called golden age of heikyoku narration, the century from Kakuichi's death in 1371 to the Onin War, which was fought in the capital between 1467 and 1477. Five or six hundred bana hôshi are reported to have been active in the city in 1462, and the best of them enjoyed the patronage of aristocrats and prominent warriors, for whom they sang on demand. But the Onin War marked a turning point in heikyoku history. Thereafter, other types of entertainment became more popular—for example, the Noh drama, the comic kyôgen play, and the recitation by "narrator monks" (katairos) of another military tale, Tôhôki (Chronicle of Great Peace).

This does not mean that Heike monogatari fell into obscurity. Stories about the Genpei epoch were never to lose their appeal, and The Tale of the Heike, the principal repository of such materials, continued to attract readers. Heike monogatari also served as a model for medieval chronicles of later military campaigns, and as a point of departure for countless dramas and prose stories. Of the sixteen warrior pieces (shatamono) in the modern Noh repertoire, a majority are based on Heike monogatari, and many follow its text closely, a practice specifically recommended by Zeami, the revered Noh dramatist. Other types of Noh plays retell Heike anecdotes about music and poetry, or center on some of the work's poetic figures. Heike heroes appear as protagonists in thirty-three of fifty extant ballad dramas (kôsakamai, a form prominent in the seventeenth century). They figure in innumerable kabuki and puppet plays (jôruri) as well, many of which continue to enjoy great popularity, as do modern films and television dramas dealing with the Genpei period. Heike characters also play important roles in all of the half-dozen or so popular prose fiction genres of the Edo period.

As a measure of the work's enduring appeal, we may note that a prologue

3. Shôhazan was another name for the Enryô-ji, a Tôdô Temple in Nara Province (now in Hino City, Hôshô Prefecture). Mokits Jûgo, Sashiki yoteshiki, p. 94.
The Tale of the Heike

called Shin Heike monogatari (New Tale of the Heike) was a national bestseller as recently as the 1950s. There are medieval and later Heike picture books, songs, comic verses, and parodies. It would be wrong to claim direct influence from Heike monogatari on all of the hundreds of literary and artistic productions inspired by the Genpei campaigns. Some authors retold old anecdotes rising from Heike monogatari; others launched Genpei figures on adventures of their own devising. But we can probably say that no single Japanese literary work has influenced so many writers in so many genres for so long a time as the Heike, and that no era in the Japanese past can today match the romantic appeal of the late twelfth century. It is not surprising that one of the two heikiya performing schools managed to survive the medieval period despite the competition of newer entertainments. The Yasaka-ryu dropped out of sight around 1600, but the Ichikawa-ryu secured shogunal protection, lingered into the twentieth century, and still boasts a handful of performers.

In seeking an explanation for the Ichikawa-ryu’s greater longevity, we may point to its lighter organizational structure, an advantage traditionally credited to Kakuchi, who is said to have created its four grades and sixteen subgrades of performers. The school also possessed a superior text, as is evident from a comparison with extant Yasaka-ryu texts. And, finally, it seems to have offered a more appealing performance style.

There are comments on performances in various Tendai documents, including extensive discussion in a seventeenth-century collection, Saikai yoseki, and there are also Edo-period scores, compiled when sighted amateurs took up hekiya as a hobby. In view of the prestige enjoyed by Kakuchi and his text, and of the generally conservative nature of the Japanese arts during and after the medieval period, it can probably be assumed that such sources, and the modern performers who use them, reflect Kakuchi’s own practice to a considerable extent.

Drawing on these sources, then, we can say that the performer was silent while the bise was played; that the bise music was relatively uncomplicated, as compared with, say, the samisen accompaniment in the furesi puppet theater; and that the bise passages were short. The instrument sounded the opening pitch for a vocal passage, gave the pitch for the succeeding passage, or heightened the mood conveyed by the text. The vocal part of the performance was a combination of declamation and singing. For each section [kaki]—that is, each titled subdivision of a chapter (makibi)—there was a prescribed katori, or narrative, pattern, designed both to suit the context and to provide the variety and drama necessary to capture and hold an audience’s attention. There are said to have been as many as thirty-three types of melodies in use at one time or another, of which some eight or nine were especially important. A brief look at four of them will give a general idea of their nature.

The most musical was the sanji (threefold), used for passages that dealt with the imperial court, the supernatural, the arts, or the classical past, or whatever an effect of gentle, elegant beauty was desired. High-pitched and leisurely, it was compared in Saikai yoseki to the flight of a large crane rising from the reed plains: the voice soared, wavered gracefully as though flapping its wings, and settled slowly to earth again.

A quavering, slow melody called orio (broken voice) was employed in pathetic or tragic passages, such as the description of little Emperor Antoku’s death by drowning, or to express heroic resolve, or to convey an address to the throne, or for letters, some kinds of dialogue, and soliloquies. A livelier melody, hiroi (‘‘picking up’’), was associated especially with fighting and deeds of valor, but might also be prescribed for descriptions of disasters, scenes of confusion, or any other sort of dramatic action.

For straightforward narrative, the performer might employ kudoki (recitation), a relatively fast, simple melody close to ordinary speech. Narrative was also rendered in shiragoe, ‘‘plain voice,’’ a brisk, declamatory style making no use of melody.

Kakuchi’s art as a performer manifested itself not only in the development of a superior repertoire of melodies, but also, and more significantly, in the painstaking combination of individual melodic elements into patterns that were dramatically effective and appropriate to the content. Armed with the model he provided, which regulated every nuance of every section, the rank and file of the Ichikawa-ryu enjoyed an invaluable advantage over their competitors. We cannot appreciate that advantage fully, nor can we recapture the medieval audience’s experience, even if we are fortunate enough to witness a brief performance by a modern narrator. Limited to all practical purposes to the printed page, we find ourselves in the position of those who must read a script instead of seeing the play performed. But just as the best dramatists surround such obstacles, so Kakuchi and his colleagues have created an independent literary work of lasting interest and importance. It is the translator’s fault, not theirs, if this abbreviated English version fails to convey the heroic spirit, humor, and lyricism with which the original is so richly endowed.

4. There are also three complete English translations—by A. L. Seidler; Hiroshi Kitagawa and Janice T. Tsuchida; and Helen Craig McCullough. Heike monogatari has received extensive scholarly attention in Japan (much of it devoted to the vexed question of textual transmission), but little has been written in the West, aside from brief treatments in surveys of Japanese literature. For a consideration of some aspects of the work, see McCullough, Heike, Appendix A, ‘‘The Heike as Literature.’’


Principal Characters

Antoku, Emperor (1178–85, r. 1180–83). Son of Emperor Takakura and Keineimori’in; grandson of Kiyo Mori
Atsumori, Taira (1169–84). Son of Tsunemori; nephew of Kiyo Mori. Died at Ichi-no-tani.
Dainagon-no-suke. Daughter of Gojō Major Counselor Kunituna; wife of Shigehira; one of Emperor Antoku’s nurses; lady-in-waiting to Keineimori’in
Go-Shirakawa, Retired Emperor (1127–92, r. 1155–58). Son of Retired Emperor Toba and Taikenmon’in; exercised authority during the reigns of Emperors Nijō, Rokujo, Takakura, Antoku, and Go-Toba. An instigator of coup against Taira clan. Nijō and Takakura were his sons; Rokujo, Antoku, and Go-Toba his grandsons.
Kagetoki, Kajiwara (d. 1100). Trusted lieutenant of Yoritomo; figures in Heike monogatari as provoking Yoritomo’s enmity toward Yoshitsune
Kamakura Lord, see Yoritomo
Kanehira, Imai. Foster-brother and chief lieutenant of Yoshinaka
Keineimori’in (1135–1223). Daughter of Kiyo Mori and nun of second rank; full sister of Munemori, Tomonori, and Shigehira; consort of Emperor Takakura; mother of Emperor Antoku. Taken prisoner at Dan-no-ura; died as a nun.
Kiso, see Yoshinaka
Kiyomori, Taira (1148–81). Son of Yorinori; head of clan after father’s death; dominated court despite nominal retirement in 1168
Koremori, Taira (?–?). Oldest son of Shigemori; committed suicide after taking the tonsure
Michimori, Taira (d. 1184). Son of Norimori; nephew of Kiyomori; died at Ichi-no-tani.


Morgaku, monk (1139–1203). In Heike monogatari, incites Yoritomo to rebellion; later gains reprieve for Rokudai, Koremori's son.

Munemori, Taira (1147–85). Son of Kiyomori and nun of second rank; clan head after Shigemori's death; palace minister. Executed in 1185.


Norimori, Taira (1128–85). Son of Tadamori; brother of Kiyomori; father-in-law of Naritsune. Died at Dan-no-ura.

Noritsune, Taira (?–?). Son of Norimori; nephew of Kiyomori. Depicted in Heike monogatari as a leading Taira commander.

Noriyori, Minamoto (?–?). Son of Yoshitomo; half-brother of Yoritomo. One of Yoritomo's two principal commanders in the Genpei campaigns.

Nun of second rank (1126–85). Taira no Shiki (Tokiko), principal wife of Kiyomori and mother of Munemori, Tomonori, Shigehira, and Kenreimon'in. Died at Dan-no-ura.

Rokudai, Taira (d. ca. 1140). Son of Koremori; grandson of Shigemori. Prospective head of Taira clan after Genpei War.

Shigehira, Taira (1157–85). Son of Kiyomori and nun of second rank. Important Taira commander; captured at Ichi-no-tani and later executed.

Shigemori, Taira (1138–79). Oldest son and heir of Kiyomori, whom he succeeded as clan head; palace minister.

Tadanori, Taira (1144–84). Son of Tadamori; brother of Kiyomori. Known as a poet. Died at Ichi-no-tani.

Takakura, Emperor (1161–83, r. 1168–80). Son of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa and Kensenmon'in; nephew of Tokitada; married to Kenreimon'in; father of Emperor Antoku.

Takakura, Prince, see Mochihito.

Takimasa, Hitotada (1138–1185). Yoritomo's deputy in the capital after the breach with Yoshitsune.

Tokitada, Taira (d. 1189). Member of a branch family. Brother of Kensenmon'in; uncle of Emperor Takakura; brother of nun of second rank; provisional major counselor.

Tomomori, Taira (1152–85). Son of Kiyomori and nun of second rank. Figures in Heike monogatari as a military leader. Died at Dan-no-ura.

Tsunemasa, Taira (d. 1184). Oldest son of Tsunemori; nephew of Kiyomori. Known as a poet and musician. Died at Ichi-no-tani.


Yorimasa, Taira (1133–86). Half-brother of Kiyomori; son of Yoritomo's benefactor, Lady Ike; provisional major counselor.

Yoritomo, Minamoto (1147–99). Son and eventual heir of clan chieftain Yoshitomo; eastern hegemon; founder of Kamakura shogunate after victory in Genpei War.

Yoshitsune, Minamoto (1154–84). Son of Yoshikata; cousin of Yoritomo. Leader of northern anti-Taira forces; killed in battle against Kiyomori's army.

Yoshitsune, Minamoto (1159–89). Son of Yoshitomo; younger half-brother of Yoritomo. As one of Yoritomo's two principal commanders, won pivotal victories in the Genpei campaigns. Later hounded by forces of the jealous Yoritomo.

Yukie, Minamoto (d. 1186). Son of Taneyoshi; uncle of Yoritomo. Known at first as Yoshimori. Military leader; allied successively with Yoritomo, Yoshinaka, and Yoshitsune.
Chapter x

Time: seventh month of 1169 to around fifth month of 1177
Principal subject: growth of bad feeling between the Taira clan and the court
Principal characters:
Go-Shirakawa, Retired Emperor. Head of the imperial clan
Jokei, Prominent Buddhist monk; holds title Dharma Seal
Kiyomori (Taira). Retired head of the Taira clan; main power at court
Motoyoshi (Fujiwara). Imperial regent
Narihira (Fujiwara). A favorite counsellor of Retired Emperor Go-Shi-
arakawa; the principal Shishi-no-tani conspirator
Noriyuki (Fujiwara). Son of Narihira; son-in-law of Norinori
Norinori (Taira), Brother of Kiyomori; father-in-law of Noritsune
Shigemori (Taira). Elder son of Kiyomori, on whom he is a restraining
influence; clan head
Shunko, Bishop. High official at Hosshoji, an important Buddhist
temple; a Shishi-no-tani conspirator
Takakura. Reigning emperor; son of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa
Yasuyori (Taira). A minor member of the Taira clan; a Shishi-no-tani
conspirator

x.x. Gion Shōja

The sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the impermanence of all things;
The color of the red flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline.
The proud do not endure; they are like a dream on a spring night;
The mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind.

1.6. Giō

[This is one of a series of early episodes describing the rise and increasing
arrogance of the Taira and their leader, Kiyomori.]

Now that Kiyomori held the whole country in the palm of his hand, he
judged in one freakish caprice after another, undeterred by the censure of
The Tale of the H rake

H otoke had entered her carriage after that harsh dismissal. She was just leaving, but she returned in obedience to the summons. Kiyomori came out to meet her. "I shouldn't have received you today; I'm just doing it because Giō made a point of it. But I may as well listen to a song as long as I'm here.

Let's have an imayō," he said. H otoke ascended respectfully:

\[ \text{Imayō} \]

\[ \text{kimi o hajimete} \]
\[ \text{miru e tta} \]
\[ \text{hito mo kerabashi} \]
\[ \text{bune no kai} \]
\[ \text{ome no ni no} \]
\[ \text{kameko ni} \]
\[ \text{tsuru koso mirite} \]
\[ \text{nobanare} \]

Now that it has encountered this lord for the first time, it will live a thousand years-
the seeding pine tree.
Crane seems to have come in flocks
to dispel themselves
where Turtle island rises
from the garden lake.

She chanted the song three times, and the beauty of her voice astonished everyone. Kiyomori felt a stir of interest. "You sing imayō nicely, my dear. I suspect you're a good dancer, too," he said. "I'll watch you do a number. Call the drummer," the drummer was set to his instrument and H otoke danced.

A beautiful girl with a magnificent head of hair and a sweet, flawless voice could hardly have been a clumsy dancer. Her skill was beyond imagination, and Kiyomori was dazzled, swept off his feet.

"What can this mean?" H otoke said. "It was my own idea to come, and I was thrown out for my pains, but then I was called back because Giō spoke up for me. What would she think if I were kept here? It's embarrassing even to wonder about it. Please let me go home now."

"That's out of the question. If you're hanging back because of Giō, I'll get rid of her," Kiyomori said.

"I couldn't dream of such a thing! It would be bad enough if you kept the two of us here together, but I couldn't possibly face the embarrassment if you sent her away and kept me by myself. Please let me go today. I'll come any time you happen to remember me."


Giō had resigned herself to this possibility long ago, but she had never dreamed that it might happen "so very soon as today." Now, with Kiyomori

2. Conventional storytellers's phrases, such as "that harsh dismissal," occur fairly often in The Tale of the H rake. As will be seen later, they are especially numerous in episodes having to do with women.

3. We are to understand that Kiyomori has decided to keep H otoke as a mistress. In some versions of the tale, this speech occurs after a retainer has carried her off into another room.


4. A phrase from Ariaizawa no Noritsuke's death poem (See 86a), uta ni yuru/michi no to

i kara te kikishi no/kinu kyo to wa/horo wa

( "Upon this pathway, I have long heard others say, men sing forth at last—yet I had not thought to go so very soon as today ")
The Tale of the Heike

mori insisting on her immediate departure, she prepared to leave as soon as the room was swept and tidied.

Every parting causes sadness, even when two people have merely sheltered under the same tree or scooped water from the same stream. With what regret and grief did Giō prepare to bid farewell to her home of three years, her eyes brimming with futile tears? But she could not linger; the end had come. Weeping, she scribbled a poem on a sliding door before she set out—perhaps to serve as a reminder of one who had gone:

moizuru mo
karasu mo onaji
gebee no kusa
izure ka aki ni
awateha tabaki
Since both are grasses
of the field, how may either
be spared by autumn—
the young shoot blossoming forth
and the herb fading from view.\(^5\)

She got into her carriage, rode home, and fell prostrate inside the sliding doors, sobbing wildly.

"What's the matter? What's wrong?" her mother and sister asked. She could not answer. They had to learn the truth by questioning the maid who had come with her.

The monthly deliveries of rice and coins ceased, and it was the turn of Hoteke's connections to prosper. All kinds of men sent Giō letters and messengers. "People say Kiyomori has dismissed her. Why not see her and have some fun?" they thought. But she could not bring herself to do that. She did not want to think of living in some strange country place. Wouldn't you please let me finish out my life in the capital? I'll regard it as a filial act in this world and the next."

Giō told herself that she had to obey her mother, hard though it was. She was pitifully distraught as she set out, her eyes brimming with tears. Unable to bring herself to go alone, she traveled to Nishihachijo in a carriage with her sister, Ginō, and two other dancers.

It was not to her old place, but to a much inferior seat, that she was directed.

"What can this mean?" she wondered. "It was misery enough to be dismissed through no fault of my own; now I have to accept an inferior seat. What shall I do?" She pressed her sleeve to her face to hide the tears, but they came trickling through.

Hoteke was overcome with pity. "Ah, what's this?" she said. "It might be different if she weren't used to being called up here. Please have her come here, or else please excuse me. I'd like to go and greet her."

"That's entirely out of the question!" Kiyomori made her stay where she was.

Then Kiyomori spoke up, with no regard for Giō's feelings. "Well, how's she been since we parted? Hoteke seems bored; sing her an imayo."

Now that she was there, Giō felt unable to refuse. She restrained her tears and sang:

hoteke no mukashi wa
bonburi nari
warera no tata ni wa
hoteke nari
irase mo buso
su sake ni o
kadehara no koto
kanashikere
In days of old, the Buddha
was but a mortal;
in the end, we ourselves
will be buddhas too.
How grievous those distinctions
must separate those
who are alike in sharing
the Buddha-nature.\(^6\)

She repeated the words twice, weeping, and tears of sympathy flowed from the eyes of all the many Taira senior nobles, courtiers, gentlemen of high rank, and samurai who sat in rows looking on.

\(^5\) The poem past on katora ("wattle"), separate) and obi ("aumow", "water"). Young shoot (moizuru "kasa") and "fading herb" (katora "kasa") are metaphors for Hoteke and Giō.

\(^6\) The song, an adaptation of a Buddhist chant, purses Hoteke's name.
Kiyomori was diverted by the performance. "An excellent entertainment for the occasion," he said. "I'd like to watch the dance, but some urgent business has come up today. Keep presenting yourself from now on, even if I don't summon you; you must amuse Hotoke with your inayo and dances." Giō departed in silence, suppressing her tears.

"I forced myself to go to that hateful place because I didn't want to disappoint my mother, and now I've been humiliated again. The same thing will happen if I stay in society. I'm going to drown myself," Giō said.

"If you do, I'll drown you," said her sister, Gino.

The mother, Toji, was greatly distressed. In tears, she offered more advice. "It's only natural for you to feel bitter. I'm sorry I urged you to go; I didn't think things would turn out that way. But if you drown yourself, your sister will then have to face the deaths of her two daughters. I'll drown with you. I suppose a person would have to say it's one or the other..."

After hearing her mother's tearful plea, Giō suppressed her own tears. "You're right. There's no doubt that I'd be committing one of the five deadly sins if we all killed ourselves. I'll give up the idea of suicide. But I'd just have to suffer more if I stayed in the capital, so I'm going somewhere else."

Thus it was that Giō took a nun's veil at the age of twenty-one. She built a small hut, a brush-dwelled hermitage deep in the Saginari mountains, and there she dwelt, reciting buddhist invocations.

"I vowed to drown myself with my sister," Gino said. "Why should I hang behind when it comes to renouncing the world?" Most pitifully, the nineteen-year-old girl also altered her appearance and secluded herself with Giō to pray for rebirth in paradise.

"In a world where even young girls alter their appearance, why should a feeble old mother cling to her gray hair?" the mother, Toji, said. She shaved her head at the age of forty-five and, like her daughters, performed buddhist invocations in earnest prayer for rebirth in paradise.

Spring passed, summer waned, and the first autumn winds blew. It was the season when mortals gaze at the star-dotted skies and weave of love outland. The leaves of the paper-mulberry, the tree reminiscent of our crossing the heavenly stream.

One afternoon, the mother and daughters watched the setting sun disappear behind the rim of the western hills. "People say the western paradise lies where the sun sets. Someday we'll be born into a peaceful life there," they said. The thought evoked memories and brought many tears.

7. The passage, written in prose seven-five meter, contains a pun on ikei ("paper-mulberry tree"); note, a reference to the Tanihata legend. On Tanihata, see Glossary.
offenses," she pleaded, with tears streaming down her face. "If you say you forgive me, I want to recite the sacred name with you and be reborn on the same lotus pedestal. But if you can't bring yourself to do it, I'll wander off—I don't care where—and then I'll recite buddha-invocations as long as I live, lying on a bed of moss or the roots of a pine tree, so that I can be reborn in the pure land."

Goi tried to restrain her tears. "I never dreamed you felt that way. I ought to have been able to accept your unhappiness here at Saga, for sorrow is the common lot in this world, but I was always jealous of you. I'm afraid there would have been no rebirth in the pure land for me. I seemed stranded halfway between this world and the next. The change in your appearance has scattered my old resentment like dewdrops; there's no doubt now that I'll be reborn in the pure land. To be able to attain that goal is the greatest of all possible joys. People have talked about our becoming nuns as though it were unprecedented, and I've more or less thought the same thing, but it was only natural for me to do it when I sensed society and resisted my fate."

What I did isn't worth mentioning if it's compared with the vows you've just taken. You weren't resentful, you knew no sorrow. Only true piety could instill such revulsion against the unclean world, such longing for the pure land, in the heart of someone who's barely turned seventeen. I look on you now as a teacher. Let's seek salvation together."

Secluded in a single dwelling, the four women offered flowers and incense before the sacred images morning and evening, and their prayers were not in vain. I have heard that all of them achieved their goal of rebirth in the pure land, each in her turn. And so it was that the four names, "the spirits of Goi, Ginyo, Horaku, and Toji," were inscribed together on the memorial register at Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa's Chisugodo Hall. Theirs were touching histories.

11. Horsemen Encounter the Regent

Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa became a monk on the sixteenth of the seventh month in the first year of Kō [1169]. He continued to deal with the affairs of state after taking the tonsure, and there was no way to distinguish between him and the reigning sovereign. The senior nobles and courtesans closest to him, and even the warriors in his north guards, received official ranks, and emoluments beyond their deserts, but some of them were dissatisfied, human nature being what it is. They exchanged whispered complaints with their friends. "If only So-and-so died, somebody else could be appointed to his province," they said. "If Thus-and-so died, I might get his office." In private conversations, the retired emperor expressed similar sentiments. "Since early times, many men have subdued the court's enemies in one reign or another, but nothing like this has ever happened before," he would say. "When Sadamori and Hidesato put down Massakado, when Yoriyoshi crushed Sadamoto and Muneto, when Yoshiki conquered Takehara and Ichihara, their only rewards were provincial appointments. It's not right for Kiyomori to do whatever he pleases; it's because the court has lost its authority in these latter days of the Law." But there never seemed to be a chance for him to administer a reprimand.

Meanwhile, the Taira bore the court no particular ill will. But then, on the sixteenth of the tenth month in the second year of Kō [1170], something happened that was to plunge the nation into chaos.

At that time, Shigemori's second son, Mickle Captain, Sukemori, was only a thirteen-year-old boy, with the title Governor of Echizen. Charmed by a light snowfall, which had created interesting effects in the withered fields, he decided to lead thirty young mounted samurai on an outing to Rendaino, Murasakino, and the fancy grounds of the bodyguards of the right. He took along a great many hawks, spent the day hunting larks and quail, and turned back toward Rokuhara as twilight fell. Meanwhile, Lord Motonori, the imperial regent, happened to be on his way to the palace from his mansion near the intersection of Nako-no-mikado and Higashi-no-tōin avenues. He was traveling north along Higashi-no-tōin Avenue and west along Oino-no-mikado Avenue, intending to enter through the Yūhōmon Gate, when Sukemori met his procession at the intersection of Oino-no-mikado Avenue and Inokuma Street.

"Who goes there?" asked the regent's men. "You're breaking all the rules. This is the regent's procession. Get off your horses! Dismount!"

Sukemori was arrogant and high-spirited, and all of his samurai were in their teens. None of them understood the niceties of social conduct. It meant nothing to them that they had encountered the regent, nor did it occur to them to pay him the courtesy of dismounting. Instead, they tried to gallop through.

Unaware that the leader of the band was Kiyomori's grandson (or, perhaps, making a pretense of not recognizing him in the dark), the regent's men retaliated by pulling them all off their horses in a most humiliating fashion.

When Sukemori went dragging back to Rokuhara with his tail, Kiyomori flew into a rage. "I don't care whether he's the regent or not! He's supposed to defer to my relatives," he said. "It was a hateful thing to do—to just go brawling ahead and insult a young boy. That's the kind of thing that leads to more slights. I'll teach him a lesson if it's the last thing I do. I'll get even!"

"Why worry about nothing?" Shigemori said. "It would be a real disgrace if a Genji like Yorimasa or Mitsumoto insulted us. It was rude for a son of mine not to dismount when he met a regenal procession." He called in the samurai who had gone with Sukemori. "Remember this from now on," he told them. "I'm going to apologize to the regent for your discourtesy." Then he went home.

B. Sadamori, Hidesato, Yoriyoshi, and Yoshiki were court-appointed warriors who defeated powerful local rebels in the 12th and 13th centuries. See Glossary.
Later, without a word to Shigemori, Kiyomori called in sixty or so rural warriors—Namba, Seno, and other rustics, who feared nothing except his commands. "The regent will go to the palace on the twenty-fifth to consult about the emperor’s capping ceremony. Intercept him wherever you please, and give his way-cleaners and escorts haircuts to avenge Sukemori," he said.9

Without the faintest suspicion of any such thing, the regent traveled west along Naka-no-mikado Avenue toward the Takanomaru Gate, which he was scheduled to use that day. He was to stay awhile in his palace apartments to make arrangements about the capping officiant and the promotions for the ceremony in the following year, so his procession was somewhat grander than usual.

When he reached the vicinity of Inokuma and Horikawa streets, a party of helmeted and armored horsemen from Rokuhara surrounded him and shouted a great battle cry from every direction, more than three hundred strong. They chased down his way-cleaners and escorts, who were magnificently attired for the day’s event, dragged them off their horses, abused them with scurrilous remarks, and cut off their hair. One of the ten scouts was Takemoto, an aide in the bodyguards of the right. Before the warriors sneered Fujiwara Chamberlain, Takamori, one of them said in a loud, clear voice, "Don’t consider this your fault. Think of it as your master’s." After that, all the warriors poked their bow ends inside the regent’s carriage, pulled the blinds down, cut loose the rump and chest ropes from the ox, and perpetrated other outrages. Then they went off to Rokuhara with victorious whoops. "Well done!" Kiyomori told them.

One of the regent’s attendants was a former messenger to Inaba named Toki no Kunihitomi, a man of low status but delicate feeling. In tears, he took hold of the shafts and pulled the regent home to his Naka-no-mikado Mansion. Words cannot describe the weariness of the state in which Lord Motofusa returned, the sleeve of his court robe raised to hold back tears. Never in all the generations since Yoshishima and Motozane had such an experience been visited on an imperial regent. (I need say nothing of Kamatari and Fujiwara.)10 This was the first of the Taira clan’s evil deeds.

Shigemori showed his displeasure by dismissing all the participants in the attack. "No matter what unexpected order my father might issue, it was your responsibility to at least give me a hint of it," he said. He sent Sukemori away to Ise Province for a time. "It was all your fault," he told him. "The sprout of the sandalwood already smells fragrant. When a boy is twelve or thirteen, he’s old enough to understand and obey the rules of courtesy. Your recklessness has blackened your grandfather’s name; you have no conception of filial piety." His conduct won praise from the emperor and everyone else.

As a consequence, the deliberations concerning the imperial capping were postponed. They took place on the twenty-fifth in the courtyard’s hall at the retired emperor’s residence. It would not have been proper to leave the regent as he was, so an imperial edict was issued on the ninth of the eleventh month, notifying him that he would be elevated to the chancellorship on the fourteenth. He professed his expressions of gratitude on the seventeenth. Nevertheless, the incident left a disagreeable aftertaste.

The year drew to a close. Emperor Takakura performed the capping ceremony on the fifth of the first month in the new year, the third of the Ka’o era [1171], and paid a formal visit to his parents on the thirteenth. When they received him, the retired emperor and his consort, Imperial Lady Kenshunin-in, must have found him very appealing in his new man’s cap. He was given one of Kiyomori’s daughters as a consort—a fifteen-year-old girl whom the retired emperor had adopted.

Around that time, Fujiwara no Moronaga resigned as major captain of the left. People said Tokuji, Major Counselor Sanesada was next in line for the post, but Kazuru, Middle Counselor Kanesasa inspired to it, and it was also eagerly sought by New Major Counselor Narichika, the third son of the late Naka-no-mikado Middle Counselor Ienari.

Prayers of various descriptions were begun by Narichika, who was one of the retired emperor’s favorites. He sequestered a hundred monks at Yawata with instructions to perform a full seven-day reading of the Great Wisdom Sutra. One day, while those holy men were keeping up a diligent chant, three swallows flew from the direction of Otokoyama, sat in an orange tree in front of the shrine, and pecked one another to death. Dharma Seal Kiyosei, the superintendent, reported the matter to the throne, perplexed because the doves, Hachiman’s favorite messengers, had behaved that way at the Iwashima Hachiman Shrine. The diviners in the department of shrines performed their rituals, and the oracle predicted a political disturbance. But there was no need for the emperor to be careful, it said, a subject was the one for whom discretion was indicated.

Narichika saw no reason for alarm. For seven nights running, under cover of darkness, he walked to the upper Kamigawa Shrine from his house at Naka-no-mikado-Karasumaru. On the seventh night, he went home, stretched out to rest, and had a dream in which he went back to the shrine. Something pushed the sanctuary door open, and he heard an unearthly, majestic voice chant a poem:

9. According to reliable historical sources, it was actually Shigemori who ordered the mutinyary action. The Tale consistently presents Shigemori in a favorable light in order to contrast his character with Kiyomori’s.
10. Yoshishima, Motozane, Kamatari, and Fujiwara were heads of the Fujiwara Clan.
Still unworried, he sent a Buddhist ascetic to the shrine, telling him to perform the Daigini ritual for a hundred days at an altar inside a hollow cryptomeria tree, which stood behind the sanctuary. While the monk was there, lightning struck the mighty tree and set it alight. A throng of priests and others ran over and put out the blaze, which had endangered the shrine. They tried to eject the performer of the heretical ritual, but he refused to go. "I made a solemn vow to shut myself up in this shrine for a hundred days. This is only the seventy-fifth day, so I can't leave," he said.

The shrine officials reported to the imperial palace. "Follow your own rules," the emperor commanded. "Throw him out!" Some of the lower servants at the shrine beat the ascetic on the neck with unpainted wooden staffs, and chased him off southwest beyond Ishi-jo Avenue.

Even though we are told that the gods reject improper petitions, Narichika went ahead and prayed for a major capitivity, a post to which he was not entitled. That may be why those weird things happened.

In those days, ranks and offices were not conferred at the discretion of the retired and reigning sovereigns, nor yet by regental decision, but solely as the Heike saw fit. Neither Sanesada nor Kanemasa won the capitivity; instead, a shocking thing happened. Kiyanomi's eldest son, Shigemori, who had been major counselor and major captain of the left; and the second son, Munomori, who was a mere middle counselor, feigned illness over several of his seniors to become major captain of the right. It was especially galling that Munemori took precedence over Sanesada, who was the senior major counselor, a member of a family eligible for the highest offices, an outstanding scholar, and the heir of the house of Tokudaiji. People made private predictions that Sanesada would leave secular life to become a monk, but he simply resigned as major counselor and retired to his mansion, where he awaited future developments.

"I could have put up with it if I'd been passed over for Sanesada or Kanemasa," Narichika said, "but I can't abide the thought of yielding place to Kiyanomi's second son. This is what comes of letting the Taara run everything. I'll find a way to bring them down and get what I want!" An apocalyptic speech! Even though his father had been a mere middle counselor, he himself, the youngest son of the family, had risen to major counselor with senior second rank. He had received revenues from a number of large provinces; and imperial favors had also been bestowed on his children and other dependents. What possible cause for dissatisfaction did he have? It must have been possessed by an evil spirit. He had been threatened with execution because he supported Nobuyori during the Heiji Disturbance, and it had been thanks entirely to Shigemori's pleas that his life had been spared. Yet he forgot his obligation and devoted all his time to wooing warriors and assembling secret stockpiles of weapons.

The area in the eastern hills known as Shishi-no-tani was a perfect natural fortress, adjacent to the Midera temple grounds at the rear. Bishop Shunkan had a villa there, and in that villa Narichika and his cronies held regular meetings to plot the destruction of the Heike. Once Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa went to pay them a visit, accompanied by Dharma Seal Jöken, a son of the late novice Shitou. The retired emperor broached the subject to Jöken while the conspirators were banqueting that night.

"This is unbelievable!" Jöken exclaimed. "With all these people listening! Word won't take long to leak out; there'll be a crisis!"

Narichika scowled. He jumped up, the sleeve of his hunting robe overturning the wine bottle in front of the retired emperor.

"What does that mean?" His Majesty asked.

Narichika resumed his seat. "The downfall of the heiji!"

The retired emperor smiled. "Everybody come forward and do a sanugata turn," he said.

Police Lieutenant Yasuyori advanced. "We have entirely too many heiji here; I'm drunk," he announced.

"What shall we do about them?" Bishop Shunkan asked.

"Off with their heads!" said the monk Saikô. He decapitated a bottle as he left the stage.

Dharma Seal Jöken was speechless with amazement. To be sure, it was shocking behavior.

If you are curious about the identities of the conspirators, they were the novice Renji; the Hosshi-jo administrator Bishop Shunkan; Yamato Governor Motoyama; Senior Assistant Minister of Ceremonial Masatsuna; Taira Police Lieutenant Yasuyori; Koremune Police Lieutenant Nobutera; New Taira Police Lieutenant Suekyuji and Tada no Kurando Yukiitsuna of the Setsu Genji, as well as many members of the north guards.

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22. The Daigini ritual was a prayer designed to exorcise the aid of demons called Nagini (antelopes) in gaining an end. It was considered heretical because Nagini did not belong to the Buddhist pantheon.

23. The Heiji Disturbance of 1159 was an abortive attempt to overthrow the Taara and their allies. One of Narichika's wives was Shigemori's sister, and Shigemori's son Koremune was married to Narichika's daughter.

24. Sanugata was a type of comic dance. The best three speakers are performers.
Chapter Nine

"put an end to Yoshinaka's excesses." At this point, the Genji are effectively waiting on themselves.

9.1. The Matter of Ikezuki

At Naritada's house near the junction of Rokujō and Nishino-mōri, where Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa was staying, the lack of amenities made it impossible to hold ceremonies on the first of the first month in the third year of Jōi 1184. Thus there were no felicitations; and because there were no felicitations at the retired emperor's residence, there were no congratulations at the imperial palace.

The Heike, for their part, saw out the old year and welcomed the new on the beach at Yoshima in Sanuki Province. The ceremonies prescribed for the first three days could not be performed in satisfactory fashion. Although the emperor was there with them, there were no banquets and no obsequies to the four directions. No court were offered to the throne, nor did the villagers from Kazusa in Yoshima present their music. "In spite of all the disruptions, things were never this bad in the capital," the Taira nobles said to one another.

Verdant spring had come, with ever softer breezes from the shore and ever milder sunshine, but the Heike felt as though they were kantō birds trapped in eternal ice. They indulged in long, pathetic reminiscences about life in the capital, and tried to while away the interminable days with memories of how "the willows on the east and west banks did not put forth leaves at the same pace, nor did the plum blossoms on the south and north branches open and fall together"—of how they had amused themselves with blossom-viewing in the morning and moon-viewing at night, and with poetry, music, kickball, small-bow competitions, and contests matching fans, pictures, plants, and insects.

On the eleventh of the first month, Kiso no Yoshinaka visited the retired

1. Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa's residence, the Kōjun Mansion, had burned down during the fighting between Yoshinaka and the retired emperor's supporters. The house mentioned here was one that had been put at Yoshinaka's disposal when he first entered the capital. Naritada was the head of the Palace Table Office.

2. That is, at the residence of the young Emperor Go-Tohō (1180–1234); its reign (1183–98).

3. Emperor Takakura's fourth son, Go-Shirakawa had put on the throne after the abdication of Emperor Antoku by his Taira relatives (see n. 2; not translated). The felicitations at the retired emperor's residence were supposed to precede the congratulations at the reigning emperor's palace.

4. The kantō was a mythical Humayun bird. It was supposed to emit "I'll build a nest today" when suffering from the cold at night, and to say, "I'll do it tomorrow" after sunrise.

5. A slight variation on a poem by the Shōtoku Taisensshō TSUNEO (1778–)

6. "... to Yoshinaka's excesses."

7. The Heike have twice defeated forces sent against them by Yoshinaka, and are gaining strength in the west. They are now held up with the boy-emperor Antoku in Sanuki Province. Meanwhile, after a falling out and a clash of arms in the capital between Yoshinaka and Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, Yoshinaka has gone his own way and taken control of the city and the court, causing Yoritomo to dispatch two of his brothers, Noriyori and Yoshitsune, to
The Tale of the Heike

emperor to announce that he was ready to march westward and subdue the Heike.

On the thirteenth, just as Yoshinaka was reported to be leaving, word arrived that fifty to sixty thousand horsemen had already reached Mino and Owari provinces, sent from the east by Yoritomo to put an end to his cousin's excesses.

In great consternation, Yoshinaka took out the bridges at Uji and Seta and divided his forces for defensive action. His strength was negligible at the time. To the Seta Bridge, where the frontal assault would come, he sent Imai no Kanbira with eight hundred horsemen. To the Uji Bridge, he sent Nishina, Takanashi, and Yamada no Jirō with five hundred horsemen; to Imura, he sent his uncle Yoshinori with three hundred horsemen. It was reported that the commanders-in-chief of the frontal and rear assault forces from the east were Gama no Onzōri Noriyori and Kurō Onzōri Yoshinaka; also that more than thirty great local landholders were marching with them, and that their combined armies numbered more than sixty thousand horsemen.

In those days, the Lord of Kamakura, Yoritomo, had in his possession two famous horses named Ikezaki [Bil-tempered Biter] and Surusumi [Instick]. Kajiwara Kagezane asked for Ikezaki more than once, but Yoritomo gave him Surusumi instead. "I am saving Ikezaki for the day when I might need to put on armor and ride. Surusumi is an excellent horse too," he told him. Then, for some reason, he gave Ikezaki to Sasaki Takatsuna when Takatsuna came to make his formal request for permission to leave. "Take the horse in knowledge that other people have wanted him," he said.

Takatsuna bowed. "I'll be the first man across the Uji River on this horse. If people tell you I died at the river, you'll know somebody got ahead of me. If they tell you I'm still alive, you can be sure I was the first," he said. Then he withdrew.

"That was a rash boast," the assembled landholders whispered among themselves.

Leaving Kamakura in independent parties, the easterners traveled toward the capital as they pleased, some by way of Atagawa and others by way of Hakone. When Kajiwara Kagezane reached Ushigamiga-hara in Suruga Province, he reined in for a white on top of a hill, watching as thousands of horses were led past by their mouth and bridle ropes, each with a colored crupper and a saddle to suit its owner's fancy. He congratulated himself. In all that mighty procession, there was no better mount than Surusumi, the horse Yoritomo had given him. Just then, he spied a horse that looked like Ikezaki. It wore a saddle trimmed with gold and a crupper with a short fringe, and it was champing white foam and pawing as several groomsmen struggled to control it. He rode down the hill.

"Whose horse is that?" he asked.

"It's Lord Sasaki's," they told him.

He was outraged. "I was going to go to the capital and stake my life in a wrestling match with one of Yoshinaka's famous Four Heavenly Kings, Imai, Higuchi, Tats, and Nenomi. Either that, or I was going to head westward and risk death against one of the Heike samurai—all those fellows who are supposed to be as good as a thousand ordinary warriors. But what's the point if this is how His Lordship feels? I'll wrestle with Sasaki and show him right here; thanks to me, His Lordship will lose two good men," he said. He waited, muttering.

All unsuspecting, Takatsuna rode into view, taking his time. Kagezane debated with himself. Should he ride alongside and grab him? Would it be better to hit him head-on and knock him to the ground? He decided to speak first.

"Well, Sasaki, I see His Lordship has made you a present of Ikezaki!"

Sasaki remembered immediately that he had heard people talk about Kagezane's desire for the horse. "As a matter of fact," he answered, "that's not quite what happened. When I was getting ready for this campaign, I realized that Yoshinaka would tear up the bridges at Uji and Seta. I didn't have a horse that could get me across the river. I wanted to ask for Ikezaki, but I knew it would be a waste of time, because I'd heard that His Lordship wouldn't even give him to you when you asked about it. I didn't have a prayer. So I decided to act and take the consequences. I was leaving just before dawn. Earlier that night, I came to a meeting of minds with a groom, stole his precious Ikezaki, and brought him with me. What do you think of that?"

Kagezane cooled down. "Damn it! I wish I'd stolen him myself!" He rode off with a laugh.

9.2. The First Man Across the Uji River

The horse Sasaki Takatsuna had received was a dark chestnut, very stout and brawny. He was named Ikezaki because he refused to let either horses or men approach him. People said he stood eight inches taller than an ordinary mount. Surusumi, the horse Kajiwara Kagezane had received, was also very stout and brawny. He was named Surusumi because he was pure black. Both were superb animals, inferior to none.

In preparation for the attack on the capital, the easterners broke up into frontal and rear assault forces in Owari Province. The commander-in-chief of the frontal assault force, Noriyori, advanced to Neoji and Shirahara in Owari Province with a total of more than thirty-five thousand riders, including these men:

- Takez no Tōrō Nohiyoshi
- Kagemi no Jirō Tanimura
- Ichimō no Jirō Tadayori
- Inagaki no Saburō Kamakura
- Inage no Saburō Shigenari
- Finger no Shirō Shigetomo
The commander-in-chief of the rear assault force, Yoshitsune, swooped down on the approach to the Uji Bridge, coming by way of Iga Province with a total of more than twenty-five thousand riders, including these men:

Yasuda no Saburō Yoshisada
Ôuchi no Tarō Kiyoyoshi
Hatakeyama no Shōji Jirō Shigerada
Kajiwara Genda Kagesue
Sasaki Shō no Takeda Katsuyoshi
Kasaya no Tada Arisu
Shibuya no Uma-no-jō Shigeshige
Hirayama no Mushidokoro Sueshi

The bridges at Uji and Seta had both been pulled up, and there were barricades made of tree branches floating on the current, tied to ropes between stakes driven at random in the riverbed. As was natural for the time of year, which was past the twentieth of the first month, the last of the snow had melted from the peaks of Hira, the Shiiga Mountains, and Nagazayama. The ice had melted in all the valleys, and the river was in full flood. Angry white waves raced downstream; rapid, roared like waterfalls; former eddies had become whirlpools. Dawn was just breaking, but a dense fog had risen from the river, dimming the colors of the horses' coats and the facings on the riders' armor.

The commander-in-chief, Yoshitsune, went to shore and looked out over the water. It may be that he wanted to find out what his men were thinking, for he said, "What shall we do? Would it be best to go around to Yodo and Inozai? Should we wait for the river to subside?"

At that time, Hatakeyama Shigetsada was only twenty-one. He came forward and spoke, "We used to hear lots of stories about this river in Kamakura. It's not some unknown body of water, looming up out of nowhere. It's the outlet of Lake Biwa, and it won't go down, no matter how long you wait. Nobody can bridge it for you, either. Was Ashikaga Tadatsune superhuman when he rode across it during the battle in the Jūhō era? I'll test it for you!" His five hundred horsemen surged forward and lined up before the bridge—members of the Ten League and others.

Just then, two warriors galloped into view from the tip of Tachibana-no-kojima, northeast of the Byōdōin. One was Kagesue and the other was Takatsuna. Neither of them had revealed his intentions, but each had secretly made up his mind to be the first across the river.

Takatsuna hailed Kagesue, who was about thirty-five feet ahead of him.

"This is the biggest river in the west! Your saddle girth looks loose; tighten it up!"

Kagesue must have feared that the girth really needed tightening. He stiffened his legs in the stirrups to hold them away from Sarusumi's belly, tossed the reins over the horse's mane, undid the girth, and tightened it. Meanwhile, Takatsuna galloped past him into the river. Kagesue followed, possibly feeling that he had been tricked.

"Look out, Sasaki!" Kagesue yelled. "Don't mess up trying to be a hero! There must be ropes on the bottom!"

Takatsuna drew his sword, cut the ropes as they touched the horse's legs, one after another, and rode straight across the Uji River and up the bank on Ieza, the best horse in the world. Kagesue mounted Sarusumi, forced into a diagonal course at the halfway point, landed far downstream.

Takatsuna stood in his stirrups and announced his name in a mighty voice. "The first man across the Uji River is Sasaki Shō no Takatsuna, fourth son of Sasaki Saburō Hideyoshi and ninth-generation descendant of Emperor Uda! If anybody here thinks he's as good as I am, let him wrestle with me!" He charged, yelling.

Shigetsada dashed into the river with his five hundred men. From the opposite bank, Yamada no Jirō released an arrow that sank deep into the forehead of his horse, and the animal began to falter. With the aid of his bow, Shigetsada dismounted in midstream and made his way along the bottom to the other shore, ignoring the white water leaping toward his helmet flaps from the rocks. As he was about to climb up, he felt a sharp tug from the rear.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Shigechika," a voice answered.

"It's you, Ōkishi?"

"That's right."

Ōkishi Jirō Shigechika was Shigetsada's godson. "The current was too swift for my horse; it got swept away," he said. "I had to catch onto you."

"You boys are always expecting somebody like me to get you out of trouble," Shigetsada said. He grabbed Shigechika, dangled him in the air, and tossed him onto the bank.

Shigechika straightened up and identified himself. "The first man to cross the Uji River on foot is Ōkishi no Jirō Shigechika of Musashi Province!" A roar of laughter went up from both sides.

Afterward, Shigetsada mounted another horse and left the river. A warrior dressed in an olive-colored tunic and a suit of armor laced with flame-red, leather, and riding a white-dappled reddish horse with a saddle trimmed in gold, advanced to the forefront of the enemy ranks.

"Who's this fellow galloping in my direction? Give me your name," Shigetsada said.

"I'm Nagase Shigetsuna, a relative of Lord Kiso."
The Tale of the Heike

“You’ll serve as today’s offering to the god of battle!” Shigetada rode alongside, seized the man in a powerful grip, pulled him down, and twisted off his head. Then he gave the head to Honda no Jirō to tie to Honda’s saddle rope.7

After this prelude, all the other easterners crossed and took up the attack. The men who were defending the bridge for Yoshinaka put up a brief resistance, but were routed and forced to flee toward Kotohaya and Yoshimi. Thanks to a plan devised by Inage Shigenari, the easterners at Seta got across the river at Kagoneone, in the area of Tanakami.

9.3. The Battle at the Riverbed

After Yoshitsune had defeated Yoshinaka’s forces, he sent a courier to Kamakura with a written account of the battle. Yoritomo’s first question was about Takatsuna. The courier answered, “He led the way across the Uji River.” And when Yoritomo opened the report, he read, “The first man across the Uji River was Sasaki Shūrō Takatsuna; the second was Kajiwara Genda Kageune.”

When Yoshinaka learned about the defeat at Uji and Seta, he hurried toward the retired emperor’s residence, the Rokujō Mansion, to make formal announcement of his departure. The retired emperor, the senior nobles, and the couriers at the mansion were wringing their hands and making all kinds of vows. “This is the end of everything!” they said. “What are we going to do!”

Just as Yoshinaka got to the gate, he heard someone say that the easterners had already reached the dry bed of the Kamo River. Without leaving any message worth mentioning, he turned away and paid a long farewell visit to a house near the intersection of Rokujō Avenue and Takakura Street, the home of a woman he had been seeing recently. One of the men with him was a new retainer named Bōgu no Chūta Iemitsu. “Why are you wasting so much time, Your Lordship?” this Iemitsu asked. “The invaders are already at the riverbed. You’ll die like a dog!” Yoshinaka still lingered inside. “All right,” Iemitsu said. “I’ll wait for you at the Shiida Mountains!” He cut open his belly and died. Then Lord Kiso rushed out of the house. “He killed himself to put some fight in me,” he said.

Lord Kiso’s force numbered no more than a hundred horsemen, chief among them Nawa Hitomori from Kōzuke Province. When they rode out onto the riverbed at the end of Rokujō Avenue, they saw thirty riders who looked like easterners. Two of the thirty were riding in front, Siboneya Korehiro and Teshigawara Arinao.

“Do you think we ought to wait for some reinforcements?” Korehiro said to Arinao.

“Now that their vanguard has been beaten, the ones in the rear must be demoralized,” Arinao said. “Charge!” He galloped forward with a yell.

Yoshinaka met him in desperate combat, and all the rest of the easterners pressed forward, each hopeful of being the one to take his head.

Meanwhile, Yoshitsune turned the fighting over to his subordinates and galloped toward the Rokujō Mansion with five or six fully armed men, planning to mount guard over the retired emperor’s residence and ensure its safety.

Naritada, the master of the Palace Table Office, had climbed onto the eastern wall at the mansion. As he surveyed the surroundings, shaking with fear, he saw a white banner shoot up above five or six warriors who were galloping toward him in clouds of black dust. Their helmets loose from combat and their bow-arm sleeves fluttering.” “Terrible news! Kiso’s back!” he said. The retired emperor and his retinue despaired. This was bound to be the end! But then Naritada informed them that the warriors were wearing a different kind of helmet badge. “I think they must be some of the easterners—the ones coming into the city today,” he said.

Even as he spoke, Yoshitsune galloped up to the entrance, dismounted, and pounded on the gate. “Kuro Yoshitsune, the younger brother of Yoritomo, has arrived from the east. Open up!” he shouted.

In a transport of joy, Naritada jumped off the wall and landed on his buttocks. The fall hurt, but he hobbled inside with the message, too happy to mind. The delighted retold emperor issued orders for the gate to be opened immediately.

That day, Yoshitsune wore a red brocade tunic, a suit of armor with purple-shaded lacing, and a horned helmet. At his waist, he had fastened a sword with gilt bronze fittings; on his back, he carried a quiver containing arrows fletched with black-banded eagle feathers. An inch-wide strip of paper was wound leftwise around the left-hand grip of his rattan-wrapped bow, apparently as a sign that he was the commander-in-chief for the battle that day. The retired emperor scrutinized him and his companions from behind a slatted window in the middle gate. “They look like gallant lads. Have them all give their names,” he said. The warriors identified themselves as first, the commander-in-chief, Yoshitsune, and, next, Yasuda Yoshitsuna, Hatakeyama Shigetada, Kajiwara Kageune, Sasaki Takatsuna, and Shibuya Shigetsune. There were six of them, counting Yoshitsune, and although the colors of their armor-braid may have differed, not one was inferior to any of the others in bearing or character.

At the retired emperor’s direction, Naritada summoned Yoshitsune to the threshold of the eave-chamber. His Majesty asked for a full description of the battle. Yoshitsune bowed and reported in a matter-of-fact voice. “Yoritomo was amazed when Yoshinaka revolted. He sent out sixty thousand horsemen against him, commanded by Noriyori and me and including more than a thousand foot soldiers and two thousand cavalrymen.”

8. During a battle, the weight of the plate gradually increased a helmet’s weight, forcing it toward the back of the head. The center on the bow (left) arm was particularly susceptible to damage, not only because it was exposed during shooting, but also because it was used as a shield.

7. Honda was Shigetada’s right-hand man. He also appears in other military tales.
than thirty principal warriors. Natori is coming by way of Settsu, he isn’t here yet. I defeated Yoshinaka’s men at Utii and hurried along to defend this residence. Yoshinaka has fled north along the riverbed, but I have sent men after him; they must have killed him by now.”

The retired emperor was well pleased. “Excellent! But I’m afraid that stragglers from Yoshinaka’s army might come here to cause trouble. Guard us carefully,” he said. Yoshitsune made respectful assent. He secured the four gates. Meanwhile, warriors kept galloping up to join him, and his force soon numbered more than ten thousand horsemen.

Yoshinaka had stationed twenty shaven-headed laborers at the retired emperor’s residence, planning, if worst came to worst, to carry him off to the west and make common cause with the Heike. But now he learned that Yoshitsune had already secured the mansion. Resigning himself to the situation, he galloped shouting into the midst of the thousands of enemy warriors. Time after time, he roared on the brink of death; time after time, he managed to break through.

“I’d never have sent Kanehira to Settsu if I’d known things would turn out like this,” he said in tears. “Ever since the days when we played together on bamboo horses, we’ve always promised each other that if we had to die, we’d die together. I can’t bear to think of the two of us going down in different places. If only I could find out where he is!”

He galloped northward along the riverbed. Again and again, between Rokujō and Sanjō, he turned to meet enemy attacks; five or six times, he drove back the foe’s cloudlike host with his meager force. Then he crossed the Kannon River and made his way to Awatapuchi and Matsuzaka. Last year, when he departed from Shinano Province, he commanded fifty thousand horsemen; today, as he passed the Shinomiya riverbed, he and his companions numbered but seven riders. And how infinitely more pitiful was the prospect of his solitary journey through the intermediate existence!

9.4. The Death of Kiso

Kiso no Yoshinaka had brought two female attendants, Tonoe and Yamabuki, with him from Shinano Province. Yamabuki had fallen ill and stayed in the capital. Tonoe was the more beautiful of the two, with white skin, long hair, and charming features. She was also a remarkably strong archer, and with a sword she was a warrior equal to a thousand, ready to confront a demon or god on horseback or on foot. She handled unbroken horses with superb skill; she rode unscathed down perilous descents. When there was a battle to be fought, Yoshinaka sent her out to act as his first captain, equipped with a stout sword, an especially long bow, and a strong bow, and she performed more deeds of valor than any of his other warriors.

Now she was one of seven who remained after all their comrades had either fled or perished.

There were rumors that Yoshinaka was making for the Tamba Road by way of Nagaoka, and also that he was heading north through the Yodo Pass. As a matter of fact, though, he was retreating toward Settsu in the hope of finding Kanehira. Kanehira had lost all but fifty of his eighty hundred defenders at Seta, and had started back toward the capital with his banner unfurled, worried about his master. The two arrived simultaneously at Uchibori Beach in Osaka, recognized each other from a distance of three hundred and fifty feet, and galloped together.

Lord Kiso took Kanehira’s hand. “By rights, I ought to have died on the riverbed beyond Rokujō Avenue, but I broke through an enemy host and retreated because I wanted to find you,” he said.

“It’s a great honor to hear you talk like that,” Kanehira said. “I ought to have died at Seta, but I’ve come this far because I was worried about you.”

“I see that our karmic bond still holds. My warriors scattered into the mountains and woods after the enemy broke our ranks, but some of them must be near here. Tell your man to raise that unfurled banner!” Yoshinaka said.

When Kiso’s banner was unfurled, more than three hundred riders responded—men who had fled from the capital or Settsu, or who had come from some other place. Yoshinaka’s spirits rose. “We have enough for one last battle. Who’s the leader of that band I see over there?” he said.

“They say it’s Ichijō Tadayori from Kai Province,” someone answered.

“What’s his strength?”

“He’s supposed to have six thousand riders.”

“Then it’s just the right match! If we have to die, let’s do it by attacking good men and going down because we’re outnumbered,” Yoshinaka said. He rode forward in the lead.

That day, Lord Kiso wore a tunic of red brocade, a suit of armor laced with thick Chinese damask, and a horned helmet. At his side, he had strapped a magnificent long sword; high on his back, there was a quiver holding the few arrows that remained from his earlier battles, all fletched with the tail feathers of eagles. He grasped a bow wrapped with rattan and sat in a gold-edged saddle astride his famous horse Onishighe [Roan Demon], a very stout and braying animal. Standing in the stirrups, he announced his name in a mighty shout. “You must have heard of Kiso no Kura; take a look at him now! I am the Morning Sun Commander, Minamoto no Yoshinaka, director of the imperial stables of the Left and governor of Iyo Province. They tell me you’re Ichijō no Tadayori from Kai. We’re a good match! Cut off my head and show it to Yototomo!” He galloped forward, yelling.

“Thief fellow who’s just named himself their commander-in-chief!” Tadayori said. “Wipe out the whole force, needn’t kill all of them, boys! Kill them!”

The easterners moved to surround Yoshinaka with their superior numbers, each hoping to be the one to take his head. Yoshinaka’s three hun-
dired horsemen galloped lengthwise, side-wise, zigzag, and crosswise in the middle of the six thousand, and finally burst through to the rear. Only fifty were left.

As the fifty went on their way after breaking free, they came to a defensive position manned by two thousand horsemen under the command of Toi Saneshira. Again, they broke through and went on. Again, they galloped through enemy bands—here four or five hundred, there two or three hundred, or a hundred and forty or fifty, or a hundred—until only five of them were left. Even then, Tomoe remained alive.

“Hurry up, now!” Lord Kiso said to Tomoe. “You’re a woman, so go on off. Go wherever you please. I’ve made up my mind to die fighting, or else to kill myself if I get wounded, and it wouldn’t be right to let people say I kept a woman with me during the last battle.”

At first, Tomoe refused to leave. When she could resist no longer, she pulled up, “If I could find somebody worth bothering with, I’d fight on alone. Give His Lordship something to look at,” she thought.

As she sat there, thirty horsemen came into view, led by Onoda Moreshige, a man famous in Musashi Province for his prodigious strength. Tomoe galloped in among them. She rode up alongside Moreshige, seized him in a powerful grip, and pulled him down against the pommel of his saddle. Holding him motionless, she twisted off his head and threw it away. Then she abandoned her armor and helmet and fled toward the eastern provinces.

Tadaka Mitsumura died fighting and Tadaka no Betto fled. Only two riders were left, Kanehira and Lord Kiso.

“I’ve never noticed it before, but my armor feels heavy today,” Lord Kiso said.

“You aren’t tired yet, and your horse is still fresh. Why should the weight of a suit of armor bother you? You’re discouraged because there’s nobody left on our side. But don’t forget—I’m worth a thousand ordinary warriors. I’ll hold off the enemy awhile with my last seven or eight arrows. That place over there is the Awaza Pinewoods. Kill yourself among the trees,” Kanehira said.

As the two rode on, whipping their horses, a new band of fifty warriors appeared. “Get into the pinewoods! I’ll hold these fellows off,” Kanehira said.

“By rights, I ought to have died in the capital. The only reason I ran off here was because I wanted to die with you. Let’s not be killed in different places; let’s go down together,” Lord Kiso said. He brought his horse alongside Kanehira’s, ready to gallop forward.

Kanehira jumped down and took Lord Kiso’s horse by the bit. “No matter how glorious a warrior’s earlier reputation may have been, a shameful death is an eternal disgrace. You’re tired; you haven’t got any followers. If you get isolated, and if somebody’s no-account retainer drags you down to your death, people will say, ‘So-and-so’s retainer killed the famous Lord Kiso, the man known throughout Japan. I’d hate to see that happen. Please please, go into the pinewoods,’” he said.

“Well, then…” Lord Kiso galloped toward the woods.

Kanehira dashed into the fifty riders alone. He stood in his stirrups and announced his name in a mighty shout. “You must have heard of me long ago; take a look at me now with your own eyes! I am the son of Shiro Kanehira, aged thirty-three, foster-brother to Lord Kiso. The fast black horse Yoritomo himself must know that I exist. Kill me and show him my head!”

He fired off his remaining eight arrows in a fast and furious barrage, falling eight men on the spot. (It’s hard to say whether or not they were killed.) Then he galloped around, brandishing his drawn sword, without finding anyone willing to face him. Many were the trophies he amassed! The surrounding easterners released a hail of arrows, hoping to shoot him down, but none of their shafts found a chink in his armor or penetrated the stout plates, and he remained uninjured.

Lord Kiso galloped toward the pinewoods, a lone rider. It was the twenty-first of the first month. The evening shadows were gathering, and a thin film of ice had formed. Unaware of this deep paddy field lay in front of him, he sent his horse plunging into the mire. The horse sank, head and all, and stayed motionless, despite furious flogging with stirrups and whip. Lord Kiso glanced back, worried about Kanehira. As he did so, Isibida Tamehisa, who was hard on his heels, drew his bow to the full and sent an arrow thudding into his face. Mortally wounded, he sagged forward, with the bowl of his helmet against the horse’s neck.

Two of Tamehisa’s retainers went up and took Lord Kiso’s head. Tamehisa impaled it on the tip of his sword, raised it high, and announced in a mighty shout, “Miura no Isibido no Jiro Tamehisa has slain Lord Kiso, the man known throughout Japan!”

Kanehira heard the shout as he fought. “I don’t need to protect anybody now. Take a look, easterners! This is how the bravest man in Japan commits suicide!” he said. He put the tip of his sword in his mouth, jumped headlong from his horse, and disappeared, run through. Thus, it turned out that there was no fighting worth mentioning at Awaza.

9.9. The Old Horse

Earlier, during 1185, the Heike won a battle against forces dispatched by Yoshinaka, another against Yakå, Yoshihata’s uncle, and others against local opponents, thanks in large part to the prowess of Kiyomori’s nephew Norimune. Then, during the first month of 1184, as the Genji forces fought among themselves, the Heike moved back to the old capital at Fukuoka and established a formidable stronghold nearby at Ichinoseki (now in Sasebo, Fukuoka). Flanked by mountains to the north and by the sea to the south, the position at Ichinoseki was narrow at the entrance and wide in the interior.
do any good unless he pulls the bow. If he’s as reckless as you, he won’t worth a damn!” Michimori may have felt the justice of the rebuke, for he threw on his armor and sent his wife away.

At dusk on the 5th, Noriyori’s Genji army began a slow advance toward Ikura-no-mori from Koyano.12 Looking out toward Surume-no-matsubara, Mikage-no-matsu, and Koyano, the Heike could see places where groups of the enemy had bivouacked and lit bonfires. As it grew darker, the fires resembled stars in a clear sky. Not to be outdone, they went through the motions of lighting bonfires of their own at Ikura-no-mori. When dawn arrived, the fires in the distance were like the moon rising over the hills. For the first time, they understood the old lines about fireflies in a marsh.

The Genji went about their work in busineslike, deliberate fashion, pitching camp and resting horses, as they pitched camp and feeding born. The Heike, their nerves on edge, expected an attack at any moment.

At dawn on the sixth, Yoshitsune divided his ten thousand riders into five forces. He sent Sesshige to the western approach and ichino-tori with seven thousand horsemen, and he himself circled around from Tanba road at the head of three thousand horsemen, planning to swoop down from the Hiyodorogoe Road onto the rear of the stronghold.

“Everybody knows how dangerous Hiyodorogoe is,” the warriors all said. “We’re ready to be killed in battle, but we don’t want to die in a fall. Is there somebody around here who knows these mountains?”

Hirayama Sesshige of Musashi came forward. “I do,” he said.

“You were raised in the east,” said Yoshitsune. “You can’t know anything about mountains in the west that you’ve never laid eyes on before today.”

“I don’t think you mean that,” Sesshige answered. “Poets know about blossoms at Yoshino and Hatsu; brave men know what’s behind an enemy stronghold.” It was an arrogant-sounding speech.

The next person to come forward was Beppu Kiyoshige of Musashi, a youth of eighteen. “My father, Yoshitsune, told me, ‘When you lose your way in the mountains, whether it’s because an enemy has attacked or just during a hunt, simply toss the reins over an old horse’s neck and drive him ahead of you. You’ll always come out onto a path.’”

“That’s excellent advice,” Yoshitsune said. “The classic tells us, ‘Even when snow covers the plain, an old horse knows the way.’” He put a polished saddle and a polished bit on an old whitish roan, tossed the reins.

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12. Ikura-no-mori (now in Osaka-ku, Kobe) was the eastern terminus of the Taira stronghold, about 25 km from Kii-no-tani, the western terminus. Koyano, the place where Noriyori had camped, was at the edge of the present city of Hagi, Hyogo Prefecture.

13. Anonymous (13th c.). Harumine no Hashi (Hashida Hashiri) is a term used to refer to the riverbank. Or are they fish, killed by the fishfolk where I dwell?” The Heike author apparently knew the slightly different version recorded in a variant, Shokokubushi text, which reads, “by the riverbank” (kawa no ma) instead of “by the riverbank” (kawa no ma).
reins over its neck, and drove it ahead of him into the depths of the unfamiliar mountains.

As was to be expected so early in the second month, there were places where lingering patches of snow dusted the peaks like blossoms, and others where the warlocks heard warblers in the valley and made their way through thick haze. When they climbed, they were among cloud-capped peaks; when they descended, they encountered rugged, forested slopes and towering cliffs. The snow had not melted from the pines; the narrow, mossy track was all but invisible. Snowflakes scattered like plum blossoms in the blustering wind. Darkness settled down over the mountain trail while they whipped their steeds this way and that, and they all dismounted to make camp.

Mutsushibi Benkei brought an old man to Yoshihime.

“Who’s this?” Yoshihime asked.

“He goes hunting in these mountains.”

“Then you must know the area very well. Tell us the truth.”

“Yes, of course I know it.”

“I want to go down from here to the Heike stronghold at Ichino-tani. Can that be done?”

“Absolutely not! There’s no way for a man to get down the gorge; it’s three hundred feet long. Or the rock face, either; it’s a hundred and fifty feet. It would be out of the question on horseback.”

“Do deer go through?” Yoshihime asked.

“Not when the weather turns warm, deer from Harima Province cross into Tanba Province to lie in the deep grass, and when it turns cold, deer go from Tanba Province to Inarino in Harima Province to feed where the snow is shallow.”

“Why, it sounds like a regular racetrack! A horse can certainly go where a deer goes. All right, you’ll be our guide.”

The hunter protested that he was too old.

“You must have a son?” Yoshihime asked.

“I have.” He presented an eighteen-year-old youth called Kumagai. They proceeded to put up the boy’s hair, named him Washino no Saburō Yoshihisa (his father’s name being Washino no Shōji Takehisa), and sent him to the vanguard to guide them. When Yoshihime met his end in Ōshū, estranged from Yoritomo after the defeat of the Heike, it was that same Yoshihisa who died at his side.

9.10 First and Second Attackers

Kumagai Naozane and Hiryūma Sueshige stayed with Yoshihime’s rear assault force until around midnight on the sixth. Then Naozane summoned his son, Kojirō Naoie. “Nobody will be able to get on in front when this force rides down the mountain. Let’s head for Toi’s route, the Harima Road, so we can be the first to attack Ichinomata,” he said.

“That’s a great idea,” Naoie said. “I’ve been wanting to suggest the same thing. Let’s start right away.”

“Come to think of it, Hiryūma Sueshige is marching with this force. I, a man who doesn’t care to fight in a crowd,” Naozane said. He told him to keep an eye on Sueshige’s activities and report back.

Just as he had suspected, Sueshige was already getting ready to leave. “Others can do as they please,” he was muttering. “I’m not going to fall into that trap behind.” A subordinate who was feeding his master’s horse called it an animal. “How much longer are you going to keep eating, you big stuffed animal?” said. “Don’t treat him like that,” Sueshige said. “You’re seeing him for the last time tonight.” He rode off.

Naozane’s men ran back and blurted out the news. “All right!” Naozane said. He too left at once.

Naozane was wearing a dark blue tunic, a suit of armor with red festoons, and a red cape, and he was riding his famous steed Gokumakura [Chesnut Gondal]. Naoie was wearing a tunic decorated with a faint design of water-plants, and a suit of armor laced with blue-and-white re-patterened leather, and he was riding a whitish horse named Seirō [White Tower]. Their standard-bearer was wearing an olive-gray tunic and a suit of armor laced with re-dyed cherry-patterned leather, and he was riding a blond chestnut horse. The three proceeded at a walk towards the right, serving on their left the gorge where the others were planning to make the descent, and came out onto the beach at Ichinomata by way of an old path, called Tai-no-hata, which had not been used for years.

Because it was still only around midnight, Tō Sancheira had waited with his seven thousand horsemen at Shioya, near Ichinomata. Naozane slipped past him in the dark, following the beach, and rode to the western gate of the Ichinomata stronghold. Not a sound was to be heard in the peace-reinforced camp at that hour, nor was a single Genji warrior following Naozane’s party.

Naozane called Naoie over. “There must be plenty of fellows who want the honor of leading the attack,” he told him. “We can’t leap to the conclusion that we’re the only ones. Some others are probably waiting around near here for morning to come. We’d better announce our names.” He waited until his horse to the barricade of shields and announced their names in a shrill shout. “The first men to attack Ichinomata are Kumagai no Jirō Naozane of Mutsusubashi Province and his son Kojirō Naoie!”

The Heike refused to answer. “Just keep quiet,” they told one another.

“They wear out their horses and use up their arrows.”

Meanwhile, a warrior came up behind Naozane. “Who’s there?” Naozane asked.

“Sueshige. Who wants to know?”

“Naozane.”

“Kumagai, is it? How long have you been here?”
An arrow hit Naozane's horse in the belly. The horse reared, and Naozane dismounted by swinging his leg over its back. Naoozane jumped down and stood beside him, wounded in the bow arm, after he had announced his age as sixteen and had fought until his horse's nose touched the shields of the barricade.

"Are you wounded, Kojirō?" Naozane asked.

"Yes," Naoozane said.

"Keep pushing your armor up. Don't let an arrow get through. Keep your neck-guard low. Don't get hit in the face."

Naozane pulled out the arrows stuck in his own armor, tossed them aside, and scowled at the stronghold. "I am Naozane, the man who left Kamakura last winter determined to give his life for Lord Yoritomo and bleach his bones at Ichin-no-tani! Where's Echū no Jirōbyōe, who brags about what he did at Muromato and Mizushima? What's happened to Kazusa no Gorōbyōe and Akushichiyōe? Isn't Lord Noriune there? Fame depends on who you fight; it doesn't come from meeting just anybody who happens along. Come out and face me!" he yelled.

Echū no Jirōbyōe Moritsuki was wearing his favorite garb, a blue-and-white tunic and a suit of armor laced with red leather. He advanced slow on a whitish roan horse, staring at Naozane. Naozane and his son did not give an inch. Instead, they raised their swords to their foreheads and advanced at a steady pace, standing side by side to avoid separation. Moritsuki may have thought he was overmatched, for he turned back.

"Isn't that Echū no Jirōbyōe?" asked Naozane. "What's wrong with you as an adversary? Come on! Let's wrestle!"

"No, thanks," said Moritsuki. He withdrew.

"Coward!" Kagekiyo said. He started to gallop out to grapple with Naozane, but Moritsuki seized his shoulder-guard. "This isn't the only battle Lord Noriune has to think about. Don't throw away your life here," he said.

Afterward, Naozane got a fresh mount and galloped forward, yelling, followed by Sueshige, who had been letting his horse rest while Naozane and Naoozane fought. Not many of the Heike warriors were mounted. The men on the archery platforms aligned their bows and released showers of arrows, but the numbers of the Genji were far fewer, and Naozane and the other escaped harm, lost in the mêlée. "Ride alongside and grapple with their Grapple!" came the orders from the platforms. But the horses of the Heike were exhausted from having been ridden, underfed, and made to stand in boats for long periods of time. One collision with Naozane's big, well-nourished beast, or Sueshige's, would have been enough to knock any of them flat, and nobody tried to wrestle with either warrior.

An arrow pierced Sueshige's standard-bearer, a man he valued as he did his life. Sueshige burst through the enemy ranks, took the sayer’s head swiftly, and came out again. Naozane also amassed many trophies.
Naozane, the first to arrive on the scene, had been kept outside because the gate was closed; Susaki, the second, had been able to gallop inside because the gate was open. So each claimed to have led the attack.

9.11. The Double Charge

Meanwhile, Narida Gorō arrived.

Tai Sanchira galloped forward at the head of his seven thousand horsemen, and the whole force attacked, yelling, with their colored standards raised.

The fifty thousand Gerji horsemen under Morinari had taken up positions on the main front, at Ikuta-no-mori. Among them, there were two men from Musashi Province named Kawara Torō Takanao and Kawara Hei Gorō Morinari. Takanao called over his brother, Morinari. "A great lancebreaker wins glory through his vassals' exploits, even though they may not do anything himself, but people like us have to earn their own reputations," he said. "It galls me to wait around like this, without even shooting an arrow, when we have an enemy in front of us. I'm going to sneak inside the stronghold and shoot. I haven't got a chance in a thousand of getting back here, so you'll have to stay; otherwise there won't be anybody to testify later."

Tears ran down Morinari's cheeks. "I can't listen when you talk that way. Do you think a younger brother would prosper if he stayed behind and let an older brother be killed? Let's not die in different places; let's face the end together," he said.

The two told their subordinates to carry word of their last moments to their wives and children. Then they went forward on foot, shed in straw sandals. With their bows as staffs, they clambered over the barricade of branches at Ikuta-no-mori and got inside the stronghold. In the dim starlight, even the color of their armor-lacing was invisible. Takanao announced their names in a mighty shout. "Kawara Torō Kitaichi no Takanao and Kawara Hei Gorō Morinari of Musashi: the first men from the frontal assault force of the Gerji to attack at Ikuta-no-mori!"

None of the Heike warriors felt like fighting. "Nothing is as fearsome as an eastern warrior," they said. "They're just two men in the middle of our huge force. What harm can they do? Let's humor them awhile."

The brothers were first-rate archers, and they let fly a fast and furious barrage of arrows.

"We can't put up with this! Kill them!" somebody shouted.

There were two brothers from the west who were famous archers, Manabe no Shirō and Manabe no Gorō from Bitchū Province. Shirō was at Ikita no-taki; Gorō was at Ikuta-no-mori. Gorō quickly drew his bow to the full and sent an arrow whizzing off. The shaft drove straight through the breastplate of Takanao's armor to his back. Takanao stood paralyzed, clinging to his bow for support. Morinari rushed up, slashed Takanao over his shoulder, and started to climb the barricade. Gorō's second arrow pierced a gap in the skirt of Morinari's armor, and the brothers fell together. One of Gorō's men went over and decapitated them.

When New Middle Counselor Tomomori saw the heads, he said, "If they were brave fellows! Each of them deserved to be called a warrior worthy of a thousand. I wish they could have been spared."

At that point, the brothers' subordinates shouted, "The Kawara brothers have just become the first men to die in battle against the stronghold!"

"If the Shi League hadn't been negligent, those two wouldn't have been killed," said Kajiwara Kagetoki. "The time has come. Attack!" He and his men shouted a mighty battle cry, which was taken up at once by the rest of the fifty thousand horsemen. Foot soldiers were ordered to clear away the branches, and Kagetoki and his five hundred horsemen charged, shouting.

Kagetoki saw that his second son, Heiji Kagetaka, seemed inclined to go too far ahead. He sent a messenger to say, "The commander-in-chief has announced that there will be no reward for any man who gallops ahead with nobody behind him."

Kagetaka pulled up for a minute. "Tell my father this," he said.

Then he galloped on with a shout.

"Don't let Heiji be struck down! Follow, men! Don't let Kagetaka be struck down!" Kagetaka's father, Kagetoki, and his brothers, Genda Kagetsue and Saburō Kagetsue, rode after him.

The five hundred horsemen of the Kajiwara galloped into the great enemy force, pressed it without mercy, and beat a swift retreat, their number reduced to a mere fifty. Kagetsue had somehow dropped out of sight.

"What's become of Genda?" Kagetoki asked the retainers.

"He must have penetrated too deep. It looks like he might have been killed," somebody said.

"My sons are the only things I have to live for. Why should I go on if Genda's been killed? I'm going back!" Kagetoki said. He turned around and announced his name in a mighty shout. "I am Kajiwara Heiji Kagetoki, warrior worth a thousand men! I claim descent from Kamakura no Go goro Kagemasu, the same who earned everlasting renown by felling an adversary with a return shot, after an arrow had gone through his left eye to the top layer of his neck-guard! If anyone here thinks he's as good as I am, let him kill me and show his commander my head!" He charged, shouting.

"Kajiwara is a warrior famous all over the east," Tomomori said. "Don't let him escape! Don't miss him! Kill him!" The Heike surrounded and attacked Kagetoki with their great numbers.

With no regard for his own fate, Kagetoki galloped through and around...