

THE TALES OF THE HEIKE

(HEIKE MONOGATARI, MID-THIRTEENTH CENTURY)

The Tales of the Heike is about the Genpei war (1180–1185), fought between the Heike (Taira) lineage, led by Taira no Kiyomori, and the Genji (Minamoto) lineage, whose head became Minamoto no Yoritomo. The Taira's initial, rapid ascent to power was followed by a series of defeats, including their abandonment of the capital in 1183 (taking with them Antoku, the child emperor). By 1183 Yoritomo had gained control of the Kantō, or eastern, region; Kiso no Yoshinaka, another Minamoto leader, had brought Kyoto under his power; and the Taira had fallen back to the Inland Sea. In an interlude of fighting among the Minamoto, Yoritomo and his half brother (Minamoto) Yoshitsune defeated Yoshinaka in 1184. In a decisive battle at Ichi-no-tani in 1184, near the present-day city of Kobe, Yoshitsune, leading the Minamoto forces, decisively turned back the Taira, driving them into the Inland Sea. Finally, in 1185, the last of the Taira forces were crushed at Dan-no-ura, in a sea battle at the western end of the Inland Sea. In the same year, Rokudai, the last potential heir of the Taira clan, was captured and eventually executed.

This war between the Taira and the Minamoto marked the beginning of the medieval period and also became the basis for *The Tales of the Heike*, which focuses on the lives of various warriors from both military houses, particularly those of the defeated. The narrative also includes numerous non-samurai stories drawn from anecdotes (setsuwa), many of which deal with women and priests, that were frequently transformed by the composers of the *Heike* into Buddhist

narratives, much like the anecdotes in Buddhist setsuwa collections. Therefore, even though *The Tales of the Heike* is a military epic, it has strong Buddhist overtones, which are especially evident in the opening passage on impermanence, in many of the stories of Buddhist disillusionment and awakening (such as those about Giō or Koremori), and in the final "Initiates' Book" (Kanjiō no maki) leading to the salvation of Kenreinon'in, the daughter of Kiyomori, who has a vision of the fall of her clan.

The first variants of *The Tales of the Heike* were probably recorded by writers and priests associated with Buddhist temples who may have incorporated Buddhist readings and other folk material into an earlier chronological, historically oriented narrative. These texts, in turn, were recited from memory, accompanied by a lute (*biwa*) played by blind minstrels (referred to as *biwa hōshi*), who entertained a broad commoner audience and had an impact on subsequent variants of *The Tales of the Heike*, which combined both literary texts and orally transmitted material. The many variants of *The Tales of the Heike* differ significantly in content and style, but the most famous today is the Kakuichi text, part of which is translated here. This variant was recorded in 1371 by a man named Kakuichi, a *biwa hōshi* who created a twelve-book narrative shaped around the decline of the Heike (Taira) clan. At some point "The Initiates' Book," which unifies the long work and gives it closure as a Buddhist text, was added, as well as sections that were inspired by Heian monogatari and centered on women and the private life of the court.

Thanks largely to Kakuichi, the oral *biwa* performance of *The Tales of the Heike* eventually won upper-class acceptance and became a major performing art, reaching its height in the mid-fifteenth century. After the Ōnin war (1467–1477), the *biwa* performance declined in popularity and was replaced by other performance arts, such as *nō* and *kyōgen* (comic drama), but *The Tales of the Heike* continued to serve as a rich source for countless dramas and prose narratives. Indeed, most of the sixteen warrior pieces (*shuramono*) in today's *nō* drama repertoire are from *The Tales of the Heike*. *Heike* heroes began appearing in the ballad dramas (*kōwakamai*) in the sixteenth century, and in the Tokugawa period, stories from *The Tales of the Heike* became the foundation for a number of important kabuki and jōruri (puppet) plays, thus making it one of the most influential works of premodern Japanese culture.

The first half of the *Heike*, books one through six, relates the history of Kiyomori, the head of the Taira (Heike) clan, who comes into conflict with the retired emperor GoShirakawa and then with various members of the Minamoto (Genji) clan. The second half, books seven through twelve, is about three important Minamoto (Genji) leaders: Yoritomo, the head of the Genji in the east; Yoshinaka, who becomes a Genji leader farther to the west; and Yoshitsune, Yoritomo's brother. However, the real focus of the narrative is not on the Genji victors—in fact, Yoritomo, the ultimate victor, plays almost a peripheral role—but on a series of defeated Taira figures: Shigemori, Shigehira, Koremori, Munemori, and Kenreinon'in—all descendants of Kiyomori—who, bearing the sins

of the forefather, suffer different fates on their way to death. In short, in the first half, *The Tales of the Heike* centers on the 'Taira, on Kiyomori, the clan leader, and, in the second half, on the various defeated 'Taira, almost all of whom die or are executed. (Also important in the second half is the fall of the former Genji leader, Kiso Yoshinaka, who is defeated by Yoritomo.) It is not until "The Initiates' Book" that the tragedy of the 'Taira becomes an opportunity for reconciliation, between Kenreimon'in, Kiyomori's daughter, and the retired emperor GoShirakawa, who had been victimized by Kiyomori.

Book One

THE BELLS OF GION MONASTERY (1:1)

The bells of the Gion monastery in India echo with the warning that all things are impermanent.³⁰³ The blossoms of the sala trees teach us through their hues

303. According to Buddhist legend, the Gion monastery, which was built by a rich merchant in a famous garden in India, was the first monastery in the Buddhist order. It is also said that the temple complex included a building known as the Impermanence Hall, which contained four silver and four crystal bells.

that what flourishes must fade.³⁰⁴ The proud do not prevail for long, but vanish like a spring night's dream. The mighty too in time succumb: all are dust before the wind.

Long ago in a different land, Zhao Gao of the Qin dynasty in China, Wang Mang of the Han, Zhu Yi of the Liang, and An Lushan of the Tang all refused to be governed by former sovereigns. Pursuing every pleasure, deaf to admonitions, unaware of the chaos overtaking the realm, ignorant of the sufferings of the common people, before long they all alike met their downfall.

More recently in our own country there have been men like Masakado, Sumitomo, Gishin, and Nobuyori, each of them proud and fierce to the extreme. The tales told of the most recent of such men, Taira no Kiyomori, the lay priest of Rokuhara and at one time the prime minister, are beyond the power of words to describe or the mind to imagine.

Kiyomori was the oldest son and heir of Taira no Tadamori, the minister of punishments, and the grandson of Masamori, the governor of Sanuki. Masamori was a ninth-generation descendant of Prince Kazurahara, a first-rank prince and the minister of ceremonies, the fifth son of Emperor Kanmu.

KIYOMORI'S FLOWERING FORTUNES (1:5)

Not only did Kiyomori himself climb to the pinnacle of success, but all the members of his family enjoyed great good fortune as well. Kiyomori's eldest son, Shigemori, became a palace minister and a major captain of the left; his second son, Munemori, became a junior counselor and a major captain of the right; his third son, Tomomori, rose to the level of middle captain of the third court rank; and his grandson, Shigemori's heir Koremori, rose to that of lesser captain of the fourth court rank. In all, sixteen members of the family became high-ranking officials; more than thirty were courtiers; and a total of more than sixty held posts as provincial governors, guards officers, or officials in the central bureaucracy. It seemed as though there were no other family in the world but this one. . . .

In addition, Kiyomori had eight daughters, all of whom fared well in life. . . . One of them was made the consort of Emperor Takakura and bore him a son who became crown prince and then emperor, at which time she received the title of Kenreimon'in. Daughter of the lay priest and the prime minister, mother of the ruler of the realm, nothing further need be said about her good fortune. . . .

³⁰⁴ The Buddha is said to have died under sala trees, at which time the trees' blossoms, ordinarily yellow, turned white to express their grief.

SANEMORI (7:8)

Although all his fellow warriors on the Taira side had fled, Sanemori of the province of Musashi, one lone horseman, kept turning back again and again to engage the enemy and block their advance.

Purposely hoping to pass as a young man, he put on armor laced with greenish yellow leather over a battle robe of red brocade. He wore a horned helmet and carried a sword with gilt fittings, arrows fletched with black and white eagle feathers, and a rattan-wrapped bow. He was seated in a gold-rimmed saddle astride a gray horse with white markings.

Tezuka Mitsumori, one of the warriors under Lord Kiso, spotted Sanemori and, thinking he would make a worthy opponent, called out to him, "What valiant man is that who goes there? I admire you for fighting on alone when all your comrades have fled. Tell me your name!"

"And who may you be?" asked Sanemori in return.

"Tezuka Mitsumori of the province of Shinano!" came the reply.

"Then we are well matched," Sanemori answered. "With all due respect to you, however, I have reasons for not wanting to reveal my name. Come on now, Tezuka. Let's see what you can do!"

As the two men prepared to lock in combat, one of Tezuka's retainers, rushing up from behind in order to protect his lord from attack, threw himself at Sanemori.

"Ho there, little fellow! Would you presume to grapple with the bravest man in all Japan?" said Sanemori. Dragging the retainer to his side, he pressed the man's head against the pommel of his saddle, cut it off, and tossed it aside.

His retainer cut down before his eyes, Tezuka wheeled around to Sanemori's left side and, lifting up the lower fringe of his armor, struck him two blows with his short sword. As Sanemori faltered under the impact, Tezuka seized him and dragged him from his horse.

Still fierce enough in spirit, Sanemori was by this time exhausted from the battle, and moreover, he was an old man. Thus Tezuka was able to overpower him. When another of Tezuka's retainers arrived late on the scene, Tezuka ordered him to cut off Sanemori's head, and then he galloped off to show it to Lord Kiso.

"I have met up with a very strange adversary!" said Tezuka. "I took him for an ordinary samurai, but he was wearing a brocade battle robe. He might be a commanding general, I thought, but he had no troops. I asked him repeatedly to reveal his name, but he refused to do so. He spoke with an eastern accent."

"Aha," said Lord Kiso. "This must be Sanemori of Musashi. I met him once when I was visiting Kōzuke Province. I was only a boy then, and he already had flecks of gray in his hair. By now he should be completely white headed. But this man's beard and sidelocks are black—something strange is going on. Higuchi Jirō is well acquainted with Sanemori; send for Higuchi!"

The moment that Higuchi Jirō laid eyes on the head, he said, "Ah, how pitiful! Yes, this is Sanemori."

"If so," said Lord Kiso, "then he must be at least seventy by now. He should be completely white haired. Why are his beard and sidelocks still black?"

The tears streaming down his face, Higuchi replied, "You're right. I should have explained about that, but I was so touched by the sight that before I knew it these tears overcame me. Even on less than momentous occasions, a man of arms should be able to say something worth remembering. And Sanemori could do that, because I recall how he always used to tell me, 'If you're over sixty when you go into battle, you should dye your beard and sidelocks black so you'll

321. Otagi is a famous crematorium and cemetery in the eastern part of Kyoto.

look like a younger man. It may be childish to try to compete with the young ones to be the first to attack, but at least you won't be treated with contempt just because you're old!' So I'm sure he must have dyed his beard and sidelocks. Wash them and see."

"You may be right," said Lord Kiso. And when he had the beard and sidelocks washed, they did indeed turn out to be white.

As to the fact that Sanemori was dressed in a brocade battle robe, when he took his final leave of the Taira leader, Lord Munemori, in the capital, he stated, "Last year when we rode east to attack the Genji, I did not shoot a single arrow. So timid I was that I shied at the sound of a water bird taking wing. And then with the others I fled back to the capital from Kanbara in Suruga Province. I was not the only one who did so, and yet I regret it deeply as a shameful blot on my old age. Now that we are setting out to attack the northern provinces, I am determined to die in battle.

"I originally was a native of the province of Echizen in the north. In later years, because a domain was bestowed on me there, I had occasion to live in Nagai in Musashi Province. The old saying has it that when you return to your native land, you should do so wearing brocade.³²² So I would like permission to wear a battle robe of brocade."

"Nobly spoken!" said Munemori. And thus, we are told, he gave Sanemori permission to wear brocade.

In ancient times Zhu Maichen in China brandished his brocade sleeves in triumph when he returned to his home at Mount Kuaiji. And in our own time Sanemori has won renown for himself among the populace of the northern provinces. But how sad to reflect that imperishable as his fame may be, he himself is now no more than an empty name, his mortal remains gone to dust by the roadside to Echizen!

On the seventeenth day of the Fourth Month, when a hundred thousand or more Heike horsemen rode out from the capital, one might have supposed that no one could stand up against them. And yet now when they returned in the latter part of the Fifth Month, they had been reduced to slightly more than twenty thousand!

'Try to catch all the fish in the stream and you'll get plenty of fish this year, but no fish next year. Burn down the whole forest and you may shoot lots of game this year, but none the year after. As some people have pointed out, it is not wise to use up all your resources at one time.

THE DEATH OF TADANORI (9:14)

Taira no Tadanori, the governor of Satsuma, served as commanding general of the western flank at the battle of Ichi-no-tani. Dressed in a battle robe of dark blue brocade and armor laced with black silk, he rode a sturdy black horse fitted with a lacquer saddle flecked with gold. Surrounded by some hundred horsemen under his command, he was retiring from the engagement in a calm and unhurried manner, halting his horse now and then to parry with one of the enemy.

Okabe no Rokuyata, a member of the Inomata group of Genji warriors, spotted Tadanori and galloped after him in pursuit, urging his horse forward with spurs and whip and shouting, "Who goes there? Declare your name!"

"I'm a friend!" replied Tadanori, but as he turned to speak, he revealed enough of his face to make it apparent that his teeth were blackened.

"Ha!" thought Rokuyata. "No one on our side looks like that! This must be one of the Taira lords." Overtaking Tadanori, he began to grapple with him. On seeing this, the hundred horsemen under Tadanori, fighting men recruited from other provinces, fled as fast as they could, not one of them coming to his aid.

"Wretch!" exclaimed Tadanori. "You should have believed me when I said I was a friend!" Brought up in Kumano, a powerful man trained to act with lightning speed, Tadanori drew his sword and struck three blows at Rokuyata, two while the latter was still seated in the saddle and a third after he had unhorsed him. The first two glanced off Rokuyata's armor and did no harm. The third pierced his face, though not with sufficient force to kill him.

Tadanori pinned his attacker to the ground and was about to cut off his head when Rokuyata's page, rushing up from behind, drew his long sword and with one blow cut off Tadanori's arm at the elbow.

Tadanori realized this was the end. "Give me time enough for ten invocations of the Buddha!" he said. Gripping Rokuyata, he flung him a bow's length to the side. Then he faced west and, in a loud voice, recited these words: "His bright light illumines the worlds in the ten directions. Without fail He gathers up all living beings who recite His name!" He had scarcely concluded his recitation when Rokuyata approached from behind and struck off his head.

Rokuyata felt that the man had died like a true commanding general, but he still did not know his name. He found a slip of paper fastened to Tadanori's quiver, however, on which was written a poem entitled "On a Journey, Lodging Beneath the Blossoms." It read:

Evening drawing on, I'll take lodging in the shade of this tree,
and make its blossoms my host for the night.

The poem was signed "Tadanori."

Having thus learned who his opponent was, Rokuyata impaled the head on the tip of his long sword and, lifting it high up, declared in a loud voice, "You have heard much these days of this Taira lord, the governor of Satsuma—I, Okabe no Rokuyata Tadazumi, have killed him!"

When they heard Tadanori's name, the Taira and Genji warriors alike exclaimed, "What a pity! A man skilled both in arms and the practice of poetry, a true commanding general!" And there were none who did not wet their sleeve with tears.

NASU NO YOICHI (11:4)

In the provinces of Awa and Sanuki those persons who had stopped siding with the Heike and were awaiting only the arrival of the Genji now began to appear, fourteen or fifteen horsemen here, twenty horsemen there, coming down from the mountains or emerging from caves where they had been hiding, until Yoshitsune in no time found himself with a force of more than three hundred mounted men.

"The day is too far gone," he announced. "There's no hope of a decisive victory today!" He had just begun withdrawing his men when a small boat, beautifully decorated, appeared in the offing, rowing in the direction of the shore. When it had come within a couple of hundred feet of the shore, it turned sideways.

"What is that?" exclaimed the onlookers, for they could now see a woman of eighteen or nineteen, very lovely and refined in bearing, wearing crimson trousers over a five-layer robe of green-lined white. Attached to a pole she held a crimson fan with a golden sun painted on it. Wedging the pole into the siding of the boat, she beckoned toward the shore.

Yoshitsune called Sanemoto to his side and said, "What do you suppose is the meaning of that?"

"I think she wants us to shoot at the fan," he replied. "But I suspect they are trying to entice you to move forward where you can get a better view of the beautiful lady. Then they'll order one of their expert archers to shoot you down. Even so, we should get someone to shoot at the fan."

"Do we have anyone on our side capable of hitting it?" asked Yoshitsune.

"We have many first-rate archers. There's Yoichi Munekata, the son of Nasu no Tarō Suketaka. Small as he is, he's an expert marksman!"

"How can you tell?"

"If we have a contest shooting birds on the wing, he always manages to down two out of every three he aims at."

"Then send for him!" said Yoshitsune.

Yoichi, a man of around twenty, wore a dark blue battle robe trimmed with red brocade at the lapels and sleeve edges and a suit of greenish yellow-laced armor. He carried a sword with a silver cord ring and a quiver, visible above his head, containing the few black-spotted white eagle-feather arrows left from the day's shooting. These were fledged with black and white eagle feathers, and with them he carried a deer-horn humming arrow with hawk feathers and black and white eagle feathers. Holding his rattan-bound bow under his arm and doffing his helmet so that it hung from his shoulder cord, he made his obeisance before Yoshitsune.

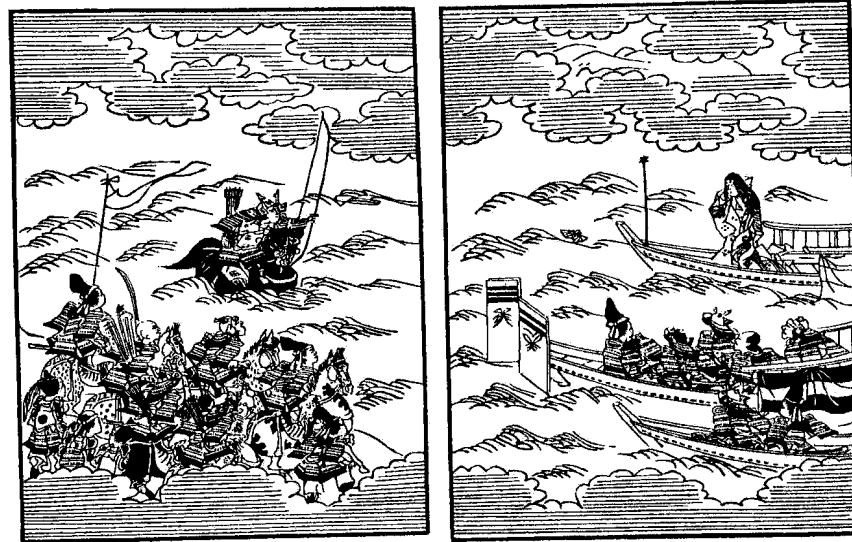
"Now then, Yoichi—hit that red fan square in the middle and show these Heike what you can do!"

"I'm not sure I can do that," Yoichi replied in a respectful manner. "And if I should fail, it would reflect badly on our side for a long time to come. It would be best to summon someone whose skill is certain to succeed."

Yoshitsune was furious. "All you fellows who have left Kamakura and come west with me are expected to obey my orders! If you are going to quibble over every little detail, you can leave my command at once!"

Thinking it inappropriate to decline any further, Yoichi replied, "I'm not certain I can make a hit, but since it is my lord's wish, I'll see what I can do."

Retiring from Yoshitsune's presence, he got on a sturdy black horse fitted with a tasseled crupper and a saddle decorated with a sand-dollar design. Re-adjusting the bow in his hand and taking up the reins, he advanced toward the edge of the water. The Genji troops kept their eyes fixed on him from the rear, exclaiming, "This lad will make a good showing, you may be sure!" Yoshitsune too watched with confident expectation.



A beautiful woman (*right*) in a Heike boat raises a fan as a challenge to the Genji archers. Under orders from Yoshitsune, Nasu no Yoichi (*left*) hits the target with his arrow. (A 1656 Meireki woodblock edition, by permission of Shogakukan)

Because the target was too far to be within range, Yoichi advanced some forty feet into the water, but he could see that the fan was still more than two hundred and fifty feet away. It was the eighteenth day of the Second Month of the lunar calendar, around six o'clock in the late afternoon, and a strong north wind was blowing, sending high waves surging up on the beach. The boat was wobbling up and down on the waves, and the fan, not firmly fastened, flapped back and forth. Out in the sea the Heike watched from their boats strung out over the water while the Genji, their horses lined up side by side, looked on from the shore.

Yoichi closed his eyes. "Hail to Bodhisattva Hachiman and to the gods of my homeland of Shimotsuke, the Buddha in his manifestation at Nikkō, and the gods of Utsunomiya and the Yuzen Shrine in Nasu. Help me hit the fan in the center, I pray you. If I fail in this attempt, I will break my bow and end my life, never to show my face before anyone again. If you would have me return once more to my native land, may my arrow not miss the mark!" Such was the prayer he offered up in his heart.

When he opened his eyes again, he found that the wind had died down a little and the fan had become a somewhat less difficult target. Yoichi took out the humming arrow, fitted it to his bow and, pulling the bow all the way back, sent it whistling on its way.

Yoichi was small in stature, and the arrow measured only three fingers more than the usual ten handbreadths and three fingers in length, but the bow was powerful and the arrow made a long droning noise that resounded all across

the water. Then with a crack it struck the fan about an inch above the rivet, knocking it loose. As the arrow plunged beneath the waves, the fan rose up into the sky. For a moment it fluttered about in the empty air, buffeted this way and that by the spring breeze, and then all at once it plummeted into the sea. In the rays of the setting sun, the red fan face with its golden sun could be seen bobbing and sinking as it drifted over the white waves.³³⁰

Offshore the Heike drummed on the gunwales of their boats to signal their admiration, while on the beach the Genji shouted and pounded on their quivers.

THE LOST BOW (11:5)

Perhaps he was carried away with the excitement of the moment: in one of the Heike boats a man of about fifty, wearing armor laced with black leather and carrying a wooden-handle halberd, stood up in a spot near where the fan had been displayed and began to do a dance. Yoshimori of Ise, having advanced on his horse to a position right behind Yoichi, said, "The commander has ordered you to shoot down that man!"

This time Yoichi took one of the plain arrows from his quiver and, fitting it into place, drew the bow back fully. With a thud the arrow struck the man's collarbone and sent him tumbling headfirst into the bottom of the boat. The Heike side looked on in silence while among the Genji, some once more rattled their quivers and shouted, "Good shot!" but others exclaimed, "Heartless!"

This was more than the Heike could endure. Three of their warriors, one bearing a shield, a second with a bow, and a third with a halberd, made their way to the beach and, planting the shield there, beckoned to the enemy and shouted, "Attack us if you can!"

"Some of you young fellows on good horses—attack them and kick them out of the way!" ordered Yoshitsune.

Five horsemen—Shirō, Tōōjichi, and Jūrō of Mionoya in Musashi, Shirō of Kōzuke, and Chūji of Shinano—let out a yell and charged forward in a group. From behind the shield the Heike shot a large arrow with a black lacquer shaft and black feathers. Jūrō was riding at the head of the group, and the arrow struck his horse in the left side near the chest rope, burying the tip of the arrow in the horse's flesh. The horse fell over like a toppled screen.

Jūrō of Mionoya, throwing his right leg over the horse's back, leaped down from the left side and immediately drew his sword. One of the Heike men emerged from behind the shield, waving a halberd in a threatening fashion, whereupon Jūrō, judging that with his small sword he could hardly stand up against such an opponent, began to scramble to safety. The man with the halberd was after him at once, but just when it seemed as though he would cut

Jūrō down with the halberd, he suddenly thrust the weapon under his left arm and with his right hand snatched at the neck guard of Jūrō's helmet. He could not quite reach it, but after making three unsuccessful tries, he finally, on the fourth, succeeded in grasping the neck guard. For a time the neck guard held fast, but at last Jūrō managed to wrest himself free, snapping off the neck guard at the top plate, and made his escape. The other four riders in his group, reluctant to risk having their horses shot at, looked on from a distance.

Having taken shelter among his companions' horses, Jūrō breathed a sigh of relief. His attacker did not attempt to pursue him but, leaning on his halberd and brandishing aloft the neck guard he had snatched from Jūrō's helmet, shouted in a loud voice, "You've no doubt heard of me for some time now, and today you see me in person! I'm the one the young fellows of the capital call Akushichibyō³³¹ Kagekiyo of Kazusa!" Having thus proclaimed his identity, he left the field.

Somewhat subdued by all this, the Heike decided not to try to attack Kagekiyo but instead ordered some two hundred or so of their men to go to the beach, where they arranged their shields so that they overlapped like a hen's wings and gestured to the Genji forces, shouting, "Come on and get us!"

"How dare they!" said Yoshitsune when he saw them, and he ordered Sa-nemoto and his son Motokiyo and the Kaneko brothers to act as a vanguard, Tadanobu and Yoshimori of Ōshū to take up positions to the left and right, and Tashiro no Kanja to cover the rear, sending more than eighty mounted men yelling and galloping to meet the challenge.

The Heike, most of whom were not mounted but were on foot, decided they would be no match for men on horseback and retreated, returning to their boats. The shields they had planted on the beach soon were scattered to left and right like so many tally slips.

Encouraged by this success, the Genji warriors pressed their attack, riding into the sea until the water came up to the bellies of their horses. Yoshitsune, too, fought his way deep into the water when one of the Heike boats, using rakes, two or three times managed to catch hold of his neck guard. Yoshitsune's men used their swords and halberds to free the neck guard from entanglement. While this was happening, however, Yoshitsune's bow somehow became snagged by the rakes and was dragged away from him.

Bending down from his horse, Yoshitsune tried again and again to use his whip to regain possession of the bow. "Let it go!" his men urged him, but he persisted until he finally recovered the bow and then, laughing, returned to the others.

His seasoned warriors, wagging their fingers in disapproval, said, "Why are you so reluctant to lose a mere bow? Even if it cost a hundred or a thousand strings of coins, how could it be worth risking your life for?"

330. Red was associated with the Heike and white with the Genji.

331. In names, the prefix "Aku-" often has the meaning of "fierce."

"It's not that I mind about the cost of the bow," replied Yoshitsune. "If this bow of mine had been the kind that was so stout that it took two or three men to string it—the kind my uncle Tametomo used—then I would deliberately let them snatch it just so they could say, 'Ah, so this is Yoshitsune's bow!' But this one was puny—just think if it had fallen into the hands of my enemies and they had said, 'Just look—this is the kind of bow used by the great Genji Commander in Chief Yoshitsune!' I couldn't bear the thought of their scornful laughter! That's why I risked my life to get it back." His men all were deeply impressed with this answer.

The sun having set by this time, the Genji forces withdrew and made their camp in the fields and hills between Mure and Takamatsu. They had not slept for three whole days. The first day they had set out by boat from Watanabe and Fukushima, and that night they had been so tossed about by the giant waves that they could get no sleep at all. Yesterday they had battled the enemy at Katsuura in the province of Awa and had spent all night crossing the mountains. Today again they had fought the whole day, and all of them were utterly exhausted. Some used their helmets for pillows; others used their quivers or the sleeves of their armor as pillows, falling at once into a deep and heedless sleep. Only Yoshitsune and Yoshimori of Ise remained awake.

Yoshitsune climbed up to a high point in order to look around and watch for an enemy approach and to try to determine what possible route the enemy might use to attack. Yoshimori took up a waiting position in a hollow so he could shoot the horses in the belly if the enemy attacked from that direction.

The Heike appointed Noritsune, the governor of Noto, to command a force of some five hundred horsemen and to prepare to launch a night attack. But because Moritsugi of Etchū and Emi no Jirō Morikata could not agree on which of them would spearhead the attack, the night passed without an attack. What could the Genji have possibly done if a night attack had been launched?³³² But the fact that no such attack was so much as attempted shows how low the fortunes of the Heike had sunk.

THE DROWNING OF THE FORMER EMPEROR (11:9)

By this time the Genji warriors had succeeded in boarding the Heike boats, shooting dead the sailors and helmsmen with their arrows or cutting them down with their swords. The bodies lay heaped in the bottom of the boats, and there was no longer anyone to keep the boats on course.

Taira no Tomomori boarded a small craft and made his way to the vessel in which the former emperor was riding. "This is what the world has come to!" he exclaimed. "Have all these unsightly things thrown into the sea!" Then he began racing from prow to stern, sweeping, mopping, dusting, and attempting with his own hands to put the boat into proper order.

"How goes the battle, Lord Tomomori?" asked the emperor's ladies-in-waiting, pressing him with questions.

"You'll have a chance to see some splendid gentlemen from the eastern region!" he replied with a cackling laugh.

"How can you joke at a time like this!" they protested, their voices joined in a chorus of shrieks and wails.

Observing the situation and evidently having been prepared for some time for such an eventuality, the Nun of the Second Rank, the emperor's grandmother, slipped a two-layer nun's robe over her head and tied her glossed silk trousers high at the waist. She placed the sacred jewel, one of the three imperial regalia, under her arm, thrust the sacred sword in her sash, and took the child emperor in her arms. "I may be a mere woman, but I have no intention of falling into the hands of the enemy! I will accompany my lord. All those of you who are resolved to fulfill your duty by doing likewise, quickly follow me!" So saying, she strode to the side of the boat.

The emperor had barely turned eight but had the bearing of someone much older than that. The beauty of his face and form seemed to radiate all around him. His shimmering black hair fell down the length of his back.

Startled and confused, he asked, "Grandma, where are you going to take me?"

Gazing at his innocent face and struggling to hold back her tears, the nun replied, "Don't you understand? In your previous life you were careful to observe the ten good rules of conduct, and for that reason you were reborn in this life as a ruler of ten thousand chariots. But now evil entanglements have you in their power, and your days of good fortune have come to an end.

"First," she told him tearfully, "you must face east and bid farewell to the goddess of the Grand Shrine at Ise. Then you must turn west and trust in Amida Buddha to come with his hosts to greet you and lead you to his Pure Land. Come now, turn your face to the west and recite the invocation of the Buddha's name. This far-off land of ours is no bigger than a millet seed, a realm of sorrow and adversity. Let us leave it now and go together to a place of rejoicing, the paradise of the Pure Land!"

Dressed in a dove gray robe, his hair now done in boyish loops on either side of his head, the child, his face bathed in tears, pressed his small hands together, knelt down, and bowed first toward the east, taking his leave of the deity of the Ise Shrine. Then he turned toward the west and began chanting the *nenbutsu*, the invocation of Amida's name. The nun then took him in her arms. Comforting him, she said, "There's another capital down there beneath the waves!" So they plunged to the bottom of the thousand-fathom sea.

How pitiful that the spring winds of impermanence should so abruptly scatter the beauty of the blossoms; how heartless that the rough waves of reincarnation should engulf this tender body! Long Life is the name they give to the imperial palace, signaling that one should reside there for years unending; its gates are dubbed Ageless, a term that speaks of a reign forever young. Yet before he had reached the age of ten, this ruler ended as refuse on the ocean floor.

Ten past virtues rewarded with a throne, yet how fleeting was that prize! He who once was a dragon among the clouds now had become a fish in the depths of the sea. Dwelling once on terraces lofty as those of the god Brahma, in palaces like the Joyful Sight Citadel of the god Indra, surrounded by great lords and ministers of state, a throng of kin and clansmen in his following, now in an instant he ended his life beneath this boat, under these billows—sad, sad indeed!

Yoshitsune returns to the capital with the imperial regalia and the Heike prisoners. The praise and awards showered on him arouse the suspicions of Yoritomo, and the situation is exacerbated when Kajiwaru Kagetoki slanders Yoshitsune. Meanwhile, Munemori and his son, as well as Shigehira and other leading members of the Taira family, are executed.