

***Kōnodai senki*: Traditional Narrative and Warrior Ideology in Sixteenth-Century Japan**

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“Tradition” is routinely invoked as an appeal to the past in order to legitimate the interests of the present. So, too, traditional narratives—in whole, in part, or in new combinations—are marshalled to legitimate new or foreign ideologies. For example, the author of *Beowulf* effectively combined traditional Anglo-Saxon prosody, Scandinavian history, folk tale, and myth both to present an idealization of traditional kingship and to condemn it: not even the best of kings, not even a Beowulf, is capable of fending off forever the inevitable and ineluctable disasters of internecine warfare arising from the horizontal and egalitarian structure of Germanic-Scandinavian society and the very competition for kingship itself.

In Japan, too, traditional narratives and narrative strategies have been employed to legitimate new power centers and their sources of authority. This pattern is clearly seen in *Kōnodai isenki* (*Chronicle of the Battle of Kōnodai*),¹ a sixteenth-century account of the battle in 1538 that finalized the transition of power from the old shogunal (military dictatorship) ruling family to a new warlord family in the area, still called the Kantō, around what is now Tokyo.

Historical Background

Between 1185 and 1867, Japan was ruled by a series of three warrior governments that were legitimated by the emperor’s appointment of a major

¹ For the text, see Hanawa 1977a. The numbers in parentheses refer to the lines in the text, which are not numbered in the Japanese text but are numbered in my translation. The author wishes to thank the Women Historians Reading Group of the History Department at Arizona State University for reading the article and making valuable comments that resulted in this version.

warlord to the position of *seiitaishōgun*, the military commander commissioned to pacify barbarians on the frontier.² The second of these warrior governments was the Ashikaga shogunate (1336-1573). The Ashikaga family headed a weak coalition of warrior families of roughly the same status and strength as its own that held together as long as they faced a common enemy. However, once the Ashikaga house had managed to defeat or coopt all its rivals in 1392, it immediately found itself challenged by its allies and even by the cadet house that had been established in the town of Kamakura (an hour west and south of Tokyo by train) to rule the Kantō and the north for the main house.

The power of the Ashikaga shogunate was broken by the civil war of 1467-77, the Ōnin War. Succession disputes not only in the Ashikaga main house but also in major warrior families serving the house (and often instigated by the shogunate) resulted in internecine warfare: there was no primogeniture to determine succession, and endemic factionalism in the main house based in the capital extended down to the vassals in the provinces. By the 1490s, Japan had devolved into some two hundred larger and smaller independent domains. Although mortally wounded, the Kyoto Ashikaga shogunate, like Madame Butterfly, took a long time dying: the *coup de grâce* was delivered by a warlord who ejected the last Ashikaga shogun from Kyoto in 1573 and began the process of reunifying Japan.³

The breakdown in the Ashikaga shogunate based in the capital was paralleled by the breakdown of the Ashikaga military government in the Kantō. After raising a major rebellion against the shogunal house in 1439 and assassinating the head of their own main vassals, the Uesugi, the Kamakura Ashikaga were forced out of their capital by the Uesugi and established themselves at Koga in the 1450s. The Uesugi requested that the Kyoto main house provide a replacement to head the Kamakura Ashikaga house, and a younger brother of the shogun was sent. Bringing bad habits from the capital, he favored the younger son to succeed him and was

² The three shogunates are the Kamakura Shogunate (1192-1333), the Ashikaga Shogunate (1336-1573 [Japan was politically fragmented as a result of the Ōnin War of 1467-77]), and the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867). Between 1333 and 1336, there was a brief attempt to restore imperial rule, and between 1573 and 1603 Japan was gradually reunified under two warlords who, because of their descent, were precluded from appointment to the position of shogun, which was reserved for descendants of the Minamoto.

³ The capital city was officially named Heian-kyō but called more generally Miyako, “the capital.” For the sake of convenience, I will refer to it by its modern name, Kyoto.

subsequently assassinated by the elder in 1491; he was “avenged” by a vassal of the neighboring province of Suruga, one Ise Nagauji (Hōjō Sōun; 1432-1519), who took over the entire province of Izu, in which Kamakura was located.⁴

The Ise served the Ashikaga shoguns in a variety of capacities as specialists in court ceremony, bureaucrats and functionaries, and even as tutors to the Ashikaga heirs. Ise Nagauji had served Ashikaga Yoshimi (1439-91) until 1468 (Steenstrup 1974:284). To legitimate his new position, Nagauji married his son Ujitsuna (1487-1541) to a descendant of the family that had controlled the previous warrior government and took their name, Hōjō. Thus he tried to erase his connections to a house subordinate to the Ashikaga and to create an identification with the family of the previous regime.

The Ise or Odawara Hōjō, as they are now called, became one of the leading forces in the east and north and controlled the provinces of Izu, Sagami, and (most of) Musashi. In establishing themselves as a power in the eastern part of Japan, the Ise Hōjō had taken advantage both of the breakdown of the Ashikaga cadet house and of the competition between the two branches of the Uesugi family serving as the Kamakura Ashikaga’s hereditary chief ministers or deputies. In the process of consolidating their power, the Ise Hōjō found it expedient to use a descendant of the Kamakura Ashikaga to bolster their authority. To this effect, Hōjō Ujitsuna married his daughter to Ashikaga Haruuji (d. 1560), son of Takamoto, the “Prince of Koga” (Koga *kubō*), and in the 1520s fought the Uesugi in their name.

Takamoto’s younger brother Yoshiaki (d. 1538), after a disagreement with his father and brother, left Koga. In 1517 he was invited by Takeda Nobukatsu Jōkan, who held Mariyatsu Castle in Kazusa Province, to help him in his campaign against a vassal of the Chiba of Shimosa Province. In that campaign, Yoshiaki apparently made a name for himself as a soldier and was installed in that vassal’s castle Oyumi; he was therefore called “Prince of Oyumi” (Oyumi *goshō*).⁵ He then allied himself with a major rival of the Hōjō, Satomi Yoshitaka (1512-76) of Awa Province, in the hope, of course,

⁴ All names are given in the Japanese style, with the surname or family name first and the personal name second.

⁵ The title *kubō* was first used for the emperor and during the Ashikaga period for the shogun. For the Kamakura Ashikaga, who had been established as *kanrei* or Deputy to the shogun, to assume the title was in effect to challenge the shogun’s authority by asserting parity of status. The title *goshō* means literally “imperial palace” and was used for the palaces of the shogun and of the Kamakura Ashikaga. By extension, it referred to the occupant of the palace; in Japan, you are where you are.

of taking over leadership of the Ashikaga family and of restoring its power in the Kantō.

The situation was resolved by this battle at Kōnodai, which took place on the seventh day of the tenth lunar month of 1538 in what is now Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture, which borders Tokyo on the east. Ashikaga Yoshiaki and Satomi Yoshitaka took up a position on the Ichi River (Ichikawa, more or less on the border between Musashi and Kazusa Provinces); Hōjō Ujitsuna and his son Ujiyasu (1515-70) marched out from their base at Edo Castle. In the battle Yoshiaki, his eldest son, and his brother Motoyori were killed; Satomi Yoshitaka escaped. Their victory in this battle secured for the Hōjō a position in the area that was dominant but not unchallenged (Ichikawa 1971-75, ii:232-41).

The Text

The Battle of Kōnodai was composed some time before the date of a colophon, at the end of one of the several surviving manuscripts, indicating that in 1575 (Tenshō 3.8.11)⁶ it was catalogued or filed together with two other texts whose narratives were connected with that of the *Kōnodai*. The manuscripts have not been collated, but there does not appear to be any great variation except that some copies are bound together with the above-mentioned texts and others are not (Kami 1977:85-86).

The text was block printed by Hanawa Hokinoichi in the early nineteenth century in the series now called the *Zoku gunsho ruijū*. This is the text I am using. As printed in the modern edition, the text runs to a short eleven and one-half pages or 603 lines of varying length. Probably because of its length, there are no subdivisions such as chapters.

Kōnodai is written in a style called *wakan konkōbun*, which mixes Chinese characters and the Japanese syllabary called *hiragana* and follows Japanese rather than Chinese word order (*kanbun*), which was used regularly only by clerics and high-ranking aristocrats. The balanced mix of Japanese and Chinese was commonly used in writing literary prose and was certainly easier to read, especially by a performer reading out loud to an audience. In addition, the text's sentences are broken up into small units: a grammatical sentence (with a verb ending in a sentence-ending inflection) can run to several lines, but a line can be as short as one word, a name in a list. The punctuation is indicated by small circles, which function like commas and periods.

⁶ Third year of the Tenshō era, eighth month, eleventh day.

Although there is little actual documentation of the battle, there are other extensive narratives besides the *Kōnodai senki*.⁷ The earliest is the 1538 account written a bare eighteen days after the battle, *Oyumi gosho-sama onuchiji ikusa monogatari* (*The Battle Tale of the Death of the Prince of Oyumi*; Bōsō Sōsho 1912, i:189-95). Also very short (five pages in the modern print edition), it may be the original of which *Kōnodai* was a reworking (Kami 1977:96); it certainly shares many features with the *Kōnodai*, including its pro-Hōjō sympathies. Other accounts of the battle are found in a series of histories of the Kantō region written in the seventeenth century and later: *Sōshū hyōran ki* (*Chronicle of the Military Disturbances in Sagami Province*; Hanawa 1977c), *Hōjō ki* (*Chronicle of the Hōjō*; Hanawa 1979a), *Satomi kyūdai ki* (*Record of Nine Generations of the Satomi*; Hanawa 1979b), and others. The accounts drawn from the Satomi side diverge significantly from the others in that they relate little or nothing.⁸

What interests the historian is how different the description of the event in the *Kōnodai senki* is from the later historical texts. For example, *Kōnodai*'s narrative is written in a style so terse and elliptical as to suggest it was written for insiders: one could not possibly understand what was happening without already knowing the context of the event and details of the battle. Indeed, the text actually omits certain critical information. The battle is framed as a confrontation between Hōjō Ujitsuna and Ashikaga Yoshiaki. Two very important characters are left out of the discussion altogether. The first is Yoshiaki's elder brother Takamoto, the Prince of Koga, and father of Ujitsuna's son-in-law. According to the 1538 *Oyumi* mentioned above, Takamoto had given Hōjō Ujitsuna an official order (*gonaiشو*, in his capacity as titular head of the Kamakura military government) to attack Yoshiaki (Bōsō Sōsho 1912, i:190). This detail is missing from the *Kōnodai*. Fifty years after the fact, the Ashikaga were hardly relevant and no longer needed as a source of authority for the Hōjō action. Further, the *Kōnodai*, like the *Oyumi*, does not mention the Satomi. Neither in 1538 nor in the early 1570s did the Hōjō care to hear that there was serious opposition to their control of the Kantō. The neglect to include the Satomi in accounts of the death of Yoshiaki may stem from the fact that Satomi Yoshitaka was still alive and kicking: he continued successfully to challenge the Hōjō until his death in 1574. In fact, his heirs continued to

⁷ For a collection of available materials, see Ichikawa 1971-75, v:405-38 (for both battles).

⁸ The different sources for the history of the battle have been examined and are not of importance here. See Satō 1925.

resist Hōjō encroachment vigorously and participated in Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 1590 campaign to destroy the Hōjō, the last major campaign in the reunification of Japan.

Indeed, the cavalier treatment of the date of the battle in the *Kōnodai*, which is given as a year earlier, and the indication of the date itself by what Kami Hiroshi calls a “traditional circumlocution”—“around the first ten days of the month of the sixth year of Tenbun [1537] or so they say” (line 4)—suggest that history is not the point of this account (Kami 1977:86-87). Kami has analyzed the *Kōnodai* as a collation of contemporary sermon materials, popular narratives, performing arts, and poems (*ibid.*:96-97). His focus is on the *Kōnodai* as a representative of one strain of late-medieval battle literature that was heavily influenced by contemporary narrative performing arts, both elite and popular. However, a close examination of the text reveals that something more than entertainment (in the sense that tragedies like *King Lear* or *Hamlet* are entertainment) is being offered here. It may look like a *tour de force* anthology of allusions to and characters, themes, scenes, and poems from well-known narratives old and new, but it also disguises and at the same time foregrounds an assertion of Hōjō legitimacy and the right to rule. Traditional narrative strategies represented by that patchwork are used to define—and to console—the losers of the Battle of Kōnodai as the latest victims of the onset of a cosmic cycle of decline, a period of the decline of Buddhism and the polity associated with it. The victory of the winners, on the other hand, is vindicated by a competing warrior ideology of rational conduct derived from Confucianism: the right to rule earned by proper lord-vassal relations, proper strategy, and proper consideration of omens and the Japanese gods. As the account of a battle that is based on narrative strategies identified with oral composition, which incorporates a wide variety of available Chinese and Japanese literary topoi and provides interrelated religious and political interpretations of the events, *Kōnodai senki* demonstrates the same form and function of other examples of the genre of battle narratives known as *gunki monogatari*.

On the *gunki monogatari* as Genre and Object of Scholarly Inquiry

It is not my intention to rehearse the history of the classification of *gunki monogatari* as a distinct genre of battle literature. However, since there is so little available in Western languages on the topic, perhaps a short introduction is in order. The *gunki monogatari*, “war tale” or “epic,”⁹ is a

⁹ I use “battle narrative” to refer to any account of battle or war in any genre.

narrative whose subject is a battle or war in which a great family is destroyed.¹⁰ An epic is never the story of a victory, but of a great tragedy. The key word is *metsubo*, “fall” or “destruction,” or a variation. Indeed, the original title of our text is “The Downfall at Kōnodai” or *Kōnodai gobotsuraku no koto* (line 2; Kami 1977:86).

The epic is usually a compilation of many accounts culled from many sources including diaries, official records, old war stories, and religious stories about those defeated and killed, about the victors shocked by the horror of battle into leaving the world, and about the servants, lovers, wives, and mothers who entered religious life to pray for the souls of the dead. The epic usually begins with a sermon-like introduction and ends with a peace-producing account of an imperial/shogunal reconciliation or with a pacification ritual. It is true that not all *gunki monogatari* share all the same features, but they do share enough of them to be recognized as belonging to the same genre.¹¹

Of the several hundred surviving examples of Japanese battle literature, including variations, over ninety percent were produced between 1375 and about 1600. However, only a handful of texts from the tenth through fourteenth centuries have received significant attention. Further, until the 1970s, only these few were generally recognized as *gunki monogatari* or *senki monogatari* (battle tales): the best-known include the *Hōgen monogatari* (*Tale of the [Disturbance] of the Hōgen Era*), *Heiji monogatari* (*Tale of the [Disturbance] of the Heiji Era*), *Heike monogatari* (*Tale of the Heike*), and *Taiheiki* (*Chronicle of the Great Pacification*).¹²

“War tale” seems to be acceptable to Japanese scholars; see, for example, Yamashita 1976.

¹⁰ Tomikura 1963:10; Takagi I. 1956:235; Takagi T. 1936:194.

¹¹ The standard definitions have been based on only those narratives produced between about 1200 and 1400 (Sugimoto et al. 1963:80).

¹² See, for example, Sugimoto et al. 1963, which lists and discusses fully and individually seven *gunki monogatari* through the *Taiheiki* and lumps together the production of the next two hundred years in a four-page review before discussing the *Gikeiki* and *Soga monogatari*. Even Tomikura Tokujirō admits that the 1393 *Meitokuki*, which he edited, is not considered to rank with either the *Heike monogatari* or the *Taiheiki* (Tomikura 1941:180). Kajiwara observes that *Meitokuki* does not have the scale of the other two, i.e., that it is a shorter work (1970:41-42). Ichiko Teiji states explicitly that the *Meitokuki*, *Kakitsuki*, *Ōninki*, and *Yūki* are not to be ranked with the *Heike* or *Taiheiki* (1957:232).

The restricted focus on the *gunki monogatari* was the result of research interests dominated by two main fields, literature and folklore. Literature had two major influences. The first was to restrict research to a few texts on the assumption that only they demonstrated the literary quality that made them worth studying. The judgment of quality was based on characteristics such as faithfulness to historical facts and the expression of morality, ideals, or intellect (Takagi I. 1956:235).¹³

The second influence of the field of literature in limiting the focus of research to such a small proportion of the narratives has been the need to establish the relationships among the variants preserved in manuscript and sometimes block print. This line of research calls for a daunting breadth of paleographical and philological skills; however, as the variants are many, so must the texts be few. Moreover, this line of research has been dominated by a kind of textual fundamentalism: the search for the true, original text buried in the accretions of the so-called expanded text.¹⁴ On the one hand, one could trace the development of a text like the *Heike monogatari* in all its stages back to the diaries and other documents on which the original text had been based. Kenneth Dean Butler's "The Textual Evolution of the *Heike monogatari*" is an excellent representative of this approach (1966). Nevertheless, this line of research could also be taken as indicating that the object was to identify and recover a first and original composition buried in a given text, to strip it of its additions and interpolations, and to reinstate it as the true and authentic version.

However, more recent scholarship recognizes that the process of the development determines the genre, that the end product, the expanded text, is the *gunki monogatari*. This reevaluation of the war tale as a genre was initiated by a younger wave of Japanese scholars¹⁵ who had allied themselves with senior scholars in the field of folklore.¹⁶ They looked at the "accretions" and the process of expanding the text to redefine the genre and, on that basis, added to the list of texts at least five examples from the period

¹³ See also Takagi T. 1936:194 and Tomikura 1963:10.

¹⁴ Analysis of the process of developing a *gunki monogatari*, for example, presumes that one starts out with a purely historical or documentary account to which legends or *setsuwa* are added. See Butler 1966:n. 6, Kajiwara 1970, and Kanai 1967:189-90.

¹⁵ For example, Kajiwara 1970 and Kami 1970.

¹⁶ Fukuda Akira and Kadokawa Gen'yoshi, among others.

after 1375, including *Kōnodai*.¹⁷ In particular, they looked at the accretion of popular religious material to define the genre: stories about taking the tonsure, the origins of sacred objects, the practical and spiritual benefits of specific practices, the attainment of paradise, and sermons. Japanese scholars refer to the religious material in the *gunki monogatari* as the “sermon” (*shōdō*) aspect and have recognized the specific importance of this religious material in defining the *gunki monogatari* as a distinct genre of battle literature.¹⁸

If the product of the research of specialists in literature was usually reduced to graphs elaborating the relationships among manuscripts and text variants, then the result of the folklore wing of research was the recovery of what was thought to be historical evidence of contemporary religious beliefs and practices as well as the institutions by which these materials were generated and transmitted.¹⁹ As might be expected, such divergence in aims and methodologies resulted in a real difficulty in defining the *gunki monogatari* as a genre. For example, in 1963 a special issue of a journal on the *gunki monogatari* offered a “dictionary” that could not define *gunki monogatari* with any more precision than as literary narratives about battles and incidents surrounding those battles (Sugimoto et al. 1963:80). Thus, really almost any account in which a battle was described could be included: the biography of a war hero, a vendetta.²⁰ Nevertheless, on one point all

¹⁷ The other four are *Meitokuki* (*Chronicle of the Meitoku Era*; 1393; Tomikura 1941), *Ōtō monogatari* (*Tale of [the Battle of] Ōtō*; after 1400; Hanawa 1977b), *Yūki senjō monogatari* (*Tale of the Battlefield of Yūki*; after 1488; Hanawa 1940c), *Sasago ochi no sōshi* (*Story of the Fall of Sasago Castle*; 1543?; Hanawa 1940b) and *Nakao ochi no sōshi* (*Story of the Fall of Nakao Castle*; 1543?; Hanawa 1940a). See further Kajiwara 1963:17, Kami 1960a (for *Sasago* and *Nakao*), and Kami 1960b (for *Kōnodai*).

¹⁸ Kami 1970:73, 76; Kajiwara 1970:49-53. Kajiwara uses the term, but not as a category, preferring a different term for each kind of religious story discussed.

¹⁹ Many folklorists try to puzzle out how the expanded text came to be expanded and occupy themselves in identifying oral-derived material as the product of religious propagandists and then, on the basis of that material, with reconstructing contemporary religious practices and beliefs. For example, see Sugimoto 1985:82-101; Fukuda 1981; and Kami 1960a:93-94 for the work of Usuda, Morogi, and Fukuda.

²⁰ The section on battle literature between about 1400 and 1600 lists six types depending on content: 1) disturbances in the government, 2) records of the battles of specific houses, 3) accounts of the careers of individual warriors, 4) battles and incidents in specific areas of the country, 5) specific battles, including the battle at *Kōnodai*, and 6) memoirs and reminiscences of individual warriors (Sugimoto et al. 1963:117). In fact, the same incident could be described in a variety of genres, contexts, and writing styles.

scholars seem to be agreed: of these texts, the single most representative and most important is the Kaku'ichi variant (by 1371) of the *Heike monogatari*.

The definition of the Kaku'ichi *Heike monogatari* as an epic poem (*jojishi*) as far back as 1910 (Yamashita 1994:9-16) offered a point of commonality for both wings of scholarship, even if this was not immediately realized or articulated. The definition of epic in Western literary theory included texts as divergent as *Gilgamesh*, the *Odyssey*, the *Inferno*, and *Paradise Lost*, but all with considerable literary reputations that, of course, invited favorable comparisons with the *Heike*. Thus, for example, when Kenneth Dean Butler declared in 1966 (5) that “the *Heike monogatari* [was] a true epic of major proportions” and might be considered “the national epic of Japan” comparable with the *Poem of the Cid*, the *Song of Roland*, and *Beowulf*, he was not saying anything particularly new. However, when in 1967 he introduced the oral composition theories of Milman Parry and Albert Lord to a symposium in Japan, the impact on research on the *Heike monogatari* and other areas was considerable (Yamamoto 1976:100). Parry and Lord are now cited in Japanese scholarship on oral narrative, as are Ong and Bowra.²¹ Now one speaks of *gunki monogatari*, of Japanese epics, as texts that derive their meaning in good part from the “structural integers (formula, theme, story pattern) perceived as constituents” (Foley 1992:279) of a traditional narrative form.

Thus, the only way to guess at what a *gunki monogatari* might be was to examine the texts chosen for inclusion.

²¹ Yamashita 1994:13, 45, 47; Murakami 1992:26-27, 46n. Even though contemporary scholarship on *gunki monogatari* may not use the diction of oral composition theory, scholars are sensitive to its methodology. For example, at the 1997 symposium on the *Heike monogatari* at Cornell University, three papers dealt with the reception and rewriting of narratives on the models of existing traditional themes: one used the literary term *topos* (Watson 1997), one the more general term *motif* (Matisoff 1997), and the third, under the influence of Ong and Foley, mentioned “narrative cycle,” the metonymic connection of an individual telling to the narrative cycle through motifs, “similar but not identical retellings . . . operat[ing] within the immanent narrative cycle” (Oyler 1997). In addition, Eric Rutledge has apprenticed with a *biwa hōshi* (“lute priest,” a performer, usually blind, of narratives chanted to the accompaniment of a lute) and determined that the types of errors found in manuscripts and on the basis of which families of genealogies of manuscripts have been determined are very much the sort of errors committed by performers both in practice and in performance, an indication that “phrases were at one time units of recitational composition that performers could choose among, like the formulas described by Milman Parry and Albert Lord” (1993:344).

Tradition, Structure, and Meaning in the *Kōnodai senki*

Although *Kōnodai* is a literary text composed by consulting an original version and perhaps documents and other accounts as well, *Kōnodai*'s meaning is created not solely by and within itself but also by its invocation of the tradition of the epic by means of narrative strategies that are usually associated with oral composition.²² John M. Foley terms this process “traditional referentiality” (1991:8-9):

Traditional referentiality, then, entails the invoking of a context that is enormously larger and more echoic than the text or work itself, that brings the lifeblood of generations of poems and performances to the individual performance or text. Each element in the phraseology or narrative thematics stands not simply for that singular instance but for the plurality and multiformity that are beyond the reach of textualization. From the perspective of traditional context, these elements are foci for meaning, still points in the exchange of meaning between an always impinging tradition and the momentary and nominal fossilization of a text or version. Even when the process becomes one of making oral-derived texts, the traditional phraseology and narrative patterns continue to provide ways for the poet to convey meaning, to tap the traditional reservoir. Poets do not persist in employing traditional structures after the advent of literacy and texts out of a misplaced antiquarianism or by default, but because, even in an increasingly textual environment, the “how” developed over the ages still holds the key to worlds of meaning that are otherwise inaccessible.

Such a process of generating meaning I call *metonymy*, designating a mode of signification wherein the part stands for the whole. It is this aspect of traditional art that may be understood as “conventional,” as long as one realizes that in this case the convention allows for much more than a preset, one-to-one allusiveness; in this case we are speaking about a situation in which a text or version is enriched by an unspoken context that dwarfs the textual artifact, in which the experience is filled out—and made traditional—by what the conventionality attracts to itself from that context. The phrase or scene or tale as a whole commands its meaning by synecdoche.

²² These strategies have recently been addressed in studies of the use of models in writing Japanese sacred biographies or hagiographies. In short, there is one model, the life of the Buddha, to tell the story of famous Japanese Buddhist saints and famous priests. James Foard finds useful the concept “prefiguration” (1992:86-92) and Shimizu Yoshiaki that of “commemoration” (1992:206-7). An approach similar to theirs was taken by William LaFleur (1976) in an earlier study of the life of the twelfth-century poet-monk Saigyō.

This definition of “traditional referentiality” is critical to understanding how the *Kōnodai* works as a narrative. *Kōnodai* is an oral-derived text, a literary text that employs “traditional structures” of oral narratives to bring into play a full range of other similar texts, that is, other versions of this one text or other representatives of the genre.²³ The connection between the *Kōnodai* and the other texts comprising the genre is a shared range of patterns of diction and narrative that indeed defines the tradition. This dynamic is extremely crucial to the *Kōnodai* because, even though such a short text, it is able through these patterns to invoke that much larger context of the tradition.

Oral narrative is characterized by thematic composition and formulaic

²³ Composition may be technically “literary” (composition is not accomplished during performance [Lord 1960:5]) but transmission and reception are still very much “oral.” This was true especially for the sixteenth-century warriors for whom the *Kōnodai* was most likely composed, most of whom were barely literate (able to read only Japanese syllabary if anything at all) and thus would have experienced the *Kōnodai* and all other epic cycles as public, recited performances. Strategies used in the Japanese epic are also used in many if not most genres of Japanese narrative, oral and literary, and in poetry as well. Further, strategies of oral composition persisted (and in some contexts dominated) in Japanese literature until well into the pre-modern period.

For example, Kabuki, the popular stage of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, has provided the best-known examples. Plays were made up of type scenes that included, among others, the battle scene (*shuraba*), sex scene (*nureba*), torture scene (*semeba*), and the hero-in-disguise-reveals-himself scene (*jitsu wa*). Distinctive motifs or type scenes were identified with the narratives of specific, well-known historical figures (Brandon 1975:5, 9, 11, 14). By using specific motifs or type scenes, a playwright could cross narratives; techniques included *mitate* (matching past and present), *yatsushi* (the hero in disguise) and *jitsu wa* (the hero revealed in his true guise). By means of these techniques, Kabuki playwrights were able to evade government censors by setting the early eighteenth-century forty-seven *rōnin* incident under the cover of the fourteenth-century Enya Hangan-Kō Moronao confrontation or to set the twelfth-century Soga revenge story in the period of the late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century through the theme of the poor man versus rich man rivalry over a courtesan. Although Kabuki offers the best-known examples, this traditional narrative strategy was articulated early in the fifteenth century by the *nō* playwright and theorist Zeami, who stated, “There is also the category of ‘created *nō*’ in which a new play is prepared . . . making use of the affinities between famous places or historical sites” (Sekine 1985:99, citing Zeami 1974:30). Thus, the *Kōnodai*, like other “oral-derived texts,” with its very mixed provenance in oral and literary composition practices shared with a broad variety of Japanese narratives over a very long period of time, can properly be said to be based on traditional narrative strategies.

diction. Narratives consist of themes or type scenes.²⁴ In *gunki monogatari*, as we shall see, we can expect a narrative composed of the background, battle, and aftermath sections (Kajiwara 1970:41). The aftermath section, for example, contains any number of themes: religious-awakening, taking-the-tonsure, and entering-religious-life stories featuring battle survivors or servants and female connections of the slain.

The themes are described conventionally in formulaic diction, which varies greatly depending on the tradition. In the Japanese epic, the diction is much looser than, say, in the *Odyssey*.²⁵ We expect the diction of the *Kōnodai* to be that of traditional Japanese oral narrative, called *kōshō bungaku* (oral literature) or *kuden bungei* (orally transmitted [narrative] arts). The process of composition and transmission in performance as described by Parry and Lord and the subsequent elaborations identified as oral theory or oral-formulaic theory are called *kuchigatari* in Japan.²⁶ Yamamoto describes oral composition, as evidenced by his analysis of recordings of the religious balladry of blind female performers called *goze*, as characterized by a basic meter of seven and five syllables, a high incidence of formulas in meter, and free substitution of formulas having the same meter and the same meaning or the same function (1977).

The diction of *Kōnodai* is a bit different. One characteristic is its high density of a limited number of verbal forms, whose overall impression is one of maddening repetitiveness. The verbs are almost exclusively in additive form, which in itself is not unique to Japanese prose or speech patterns. Almost all the verbs or verbals (having adjectival functions but inflected as verbs) that are not attributive (in dependent clauses) are inflected in one of six ways. Two forms are used the most often. The fifth uses the conjunctive

²⁴ The type scene “may be regarded as a recurrent block of narrative with an identifiable structure, such as a sacrifice, the reception of a guest, the launching and beaching of a ship, the donning of armor” (Edwards 1992:286). Some, like Edwards, distinguish between type scene and theme; others do not (1992:285-87 for a review). See also Foley 1990:331-35.

²⁵ Work by Yamamoto Kichizō on recorded *goze* (blind, female, semi-religious entertainers) ballads was the first serious attempt, as far as I can tell, to analyze formulaic diction in the Japanese oral tradition (Yamamoto 1977).

²⁶ For the theories behind Japanese oral composition and their history, from Yanagita Kunio’s 1932 *kuden bungei (la littérature orale, from Paul Sébillot)* to Yamamoto Kichizō’s translation of Parry’s “oral composition” as *kuchigatari*, see Yamamoto 1976:97-100. For the application of Yamamoto’s Parry/Lord-based studies of oral composition by *Heike* scholars, see Yamashita 1994:45-47.

particle *-ba* to indicate that one action follows another in time or by reason or cause:

Moto yori kano shōgun wa / yumiya o **konomase tamaeba** / Bōshū
Kazusa ryōgoku no gunpyō o ugokashi. . . . (19-21)

As well you know, as for that general / **he was fond of waging war and because he was** / he mustered the soldiers of the provinces of both Bōshū and Kazusa and. . . .

The sixth is with the conjunctive form *-te* of the inflected particle *-tsu*, which indicates completed action (rather like the ablative absolute in Latin):

On-kyōdai no on-naka fuwa ni **narase tamaite** / Michinoku goikken to zo
kikoekeru. (8-9)

Relations between the brothers **becoming strained** / he went [north] to Michinoku, so it is rumored.

These forms are of course found quite regularly in texts such as the Kaku'ichi *Heike monogatari*. In the *Kōnodai*, however, *-ba* and *-te* forms are used with numbing frequency. If any feature of diction suggests oral composition, it is this one; furthermore, it may be partially responsible for the low value placed on *Kōnodai* by earlier scholars. Even so, Yamamoto does not emphasize this feature as an indication of oral provenance.

The use of meter hardly approaches that of the *goze* ballads. Nevertheless, there are other features suggesting oral composition. The limited use of verbal inflections is complemented by a high rate of repetition of formulas and formulaic systems: “this is the gist of what [] thought/said,” “a resident of [] Province,” “high [ranking] and low,” “soak [] sleeves,” “there was not a person who did not praise [it],” “facing west,” “press hands together,” “said the invocation of Amida’s name,” “raise [face] to heaven and cast [hands] down on the ground,” “realm of the hell of fighting Asuras,” “pray for becoming a buddha,” “most moving,” and so on. Some are repeated within the text; some are part of a greater body of formulas shared with other texts, including the *Heike*. Finally, there is very little enjambement. Diction is, however, easy to imitate: the appearance of such elements in a text does not prove an oral provenance, but suggests rather that the composer was skilled in the use of traditional techniques of oral composition.

Finally, in the quotation above, Foley makes the fine distinction between texts that share traditional narrative strategies (formulas, formulaic

systems, and type scenes, and so on) constituting the particular idiom or register of oral narrative versus the intentional invocation of a particular narrative through the same techniques: “preset, one-to-one allusiveness.” According to Ziva Ben-Porat, “literary allusion is a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts . . . achieved through the manipulation of a special signal: a sign (simple or complex) in a given text characterized by an additional larger ‘referent[,]’ [which] is always an independent text” (1976:107-8, cited in Kamens 1997:6). This begs a question of the *Kōnodai*: is the composition of the account of the battle as a *gunki monogatari* a deliberate invocation or “activation” of all other *gunki monogatari* or of one in particular, perhaps the single most representative example of the genre, the Kaku’ichi variant of the *Heike monogatari*?

The *Heike monogatari* as the “Always Impinging Tradition”

The *Heike monogatari* is the tale of the rise of the Taira house under Taira Kiyomori (1118-81), who rose to become Prime Minister and grandfather of an emperor, and their complete destruction at the hands of the Minamoto in 1185. The reasons for its preeminence are as much political as aesthetic. The Kaku’ichi variant of the *Heike monogatari* was the monopoly of one guild (called the Tōdō) of epic singers (*biwa hōshi*, or “lute priests”), blind minstrels who accompanied themselves on a lute called the *biwa*. This guild claimed Kaku’ichi (active 1340-71) as its founder, and control of the text he produced secured control over the organization of the guild. Kaku’ichi had prohibited anyone but the head of the guild to make a copy or even to show a copy to anyone outside the guild. Even so, in order to obtain recognition of the Tōdō’s independence from its original guild, in 1399 a copy of the authorized text was presented to the third Ashikaga shogun Yoshimitsu (1358-1408; r. 1367-95;²⁷ Hyōdō 1993:62-63). Thus the right to control the guild passed to the Ashikaga and the performance of the *Heike* became part of the official ceremonies of the shogunal court: if the custom of the later Tokugawa shogunate was based on precedent as claimed, the head of the guild apparently performed the *Heike* before each new Ashikaga shogun at his promotion to office and at his funeral (Hyōdō 1997:1-2).²⁸

²⁷ Early abdication was practiced in the imperial and shogunal courts in order to secure the succession.

²⁸ Hyōdō assumes that this custom of the shoguns of the Tokugawa period had its precedent in the relationship between the guild and the Ashikaga shoguns.

Ashikaga interest in the *Heike* was based on the shogun's position and function as head of the entire Minamoto clan (*uji no chōja*), transferred to Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1483 (Hyōdō 1993:64-65). First, heads of clans, as winners of battles, had pacification rituals performed for the angry spirits of their defeated and dead enemies; Ashikaga Takauji (1305-58; r. 1336-), for example, built the temple Tenryūji in Kyoto to console the spirit of the emperor he had deposed. Thus, as chief of the Minamoto, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu then took over the management of the Kaku'ichi *Heike* as a performance meant to pacify the angry spirits of the Taira family, destroyed by the Minamoto two hundred years before (Hyōdō 1993:65, 77).

Second, the *Heike* provided the myth legitimating Ashikaga power. The *Heike* describes the fall of the warrior family, the Taira, also called the Heike, which had effectively taken over the imperial family and control of the country between 1159 and 1180, when civil war broke out. They were destroyed in 1185 by the Minamoto clan, also called the Genji, who established the first shogunate with headquarters in the town of Kamakura (Kamakura Period, 1192-1333). Thus, the Kaku'ichi *Heike*, completed after the fall of the Kamakura shogunate and written under its influence, is a tale of the transition of warrior leadership from the Taira to the Minamoto. Because of succession problems, leadership quickly passed to the family of the first shogun's wife, the Hōjō, who were Heike descendants. (As *shikken*, head of one of the shogunate's administrative boards, they acted as regents for a series of shoguns during their minority.) The Ashikaga, descendants of the Minamoto or Genji clan, brought down the Hōjō in 1333 and established a new shogunate in 1336. The *Taiheiki* (by 1374), composed under the influence of the *Heike* during the period of Ashikaga consolidation of power, tells the story of the rise of the Ashikaga in terms of the *Heike*'s theme of transition from Taira to Minamoto (Hyōdō 1997:4).

This theme of transition provided the Ashikaga with an effective rallying cry in mobilizing Minamoto forces against the Hōjō as Taira. The alternation between Minamoto and Taira would model later political actions: Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616), founder of the third and last warrior government, had a Minamoto genealogy concocted for himself; he also frequently had the *Taiheiki* read to him about the time he received the appointment of shogun (1603) and, following the precedent of the Ashikaga, took over the patronage of the Tōdō guild of *biwa hōshi* (*Tōdō daikiroku*, in Atsumi et al. 1984:16-17).

The *Heike monogatari*, then, functioned to legitimate the victory of the Minamoto and their descendants through the narrative theme of "alternation between Heike and Genji," in this case "the transition from

Heike to Genji.”²⁹ As the version officially authorized by the Ashikaga shogunate, it was the dominant if not the exclusive version and the one most likely to be heard in warrior circles.

Dissemination was intensified in the years following the Ōnin War of 1467-77: the weakening of the shogunate resulted in a weakening of control over the guild. Many copies, including abbreviated versions, of the authorized text were made, sold, and then used as scripts by the new forms of popular entertainment that sprang up during the sixteenth century.³⁰

Alongside the *biwa hōshi* there developed in the fourteenth century the “tale priest” (*monogatari sō*; Ishii et al. 1990:104-5; Yoshida 1959). Some were sighted laymen, even physicians, who read texts out loud to members of the warrior class, or *biwa hōshi* not in the guilds. Since they could not perform stories monopolized by the guilds (Butler 1967:259), many apparently composed as well.³¹ They are documented not only in contemporary diaries but also in epics, as was one in the train of the Governor of Shinano in the *Ōtō monogatari* (*Tale of [the Battle of] Ōtō*). In the sixteenth century, such professional reader/performers served in the entourages (*otogishū* or *dōbōsū*) of great warlords along with the art appraisers, musicians, and tea instructors (Ishii et al. 1990:120-21). Such a reader/performer in the service of the Ise Hōjō may well have composed the *Kōnodai senki*.

The Hōjō and the Warrior Ideology of Legitimate Rule in the Sixteenth Century

The Ise Hōjō would have been very interested in the ideology of the theme of the “alternation between Heike and Genji.” The Hōjō “dynastic

²⁹ Along with the *Hōgen monogatari*, *Heiji monogatari*, and *Jōkyū ki*, the *Heike* charts the alternation of power between the two clans. The last concerns the revolt in 1221 against the Minamoto warrior government, which was actually headed by the Hōjō (Taira descendants) by then.

³⁰ This discussion is based on a chart, “The History of the Tōdō Guild,” provided by Hyōdō as part of his presentation at the 1997 Cornell symposium on the *Heike* (Hyōdō 1997).

³¹ This fact begs the question whether the overwhelming dominance of the *Heike* cycle, especially of the Kaku’ichi version, not only forced performers outside the guilds to compose narratives of their own but also forced them to compose as much as possible in the style of the *Heike*.

philosophy was to establish a Kanto [sic] state ruled by scions of the Taira surpassing in martial virtues even the Minamoto clan in its prime and, certainly, the then declining Ashikaga shoguns, who were descendants of the Minamoto. The age believed that Minamoto and Taira ascendancy went by turns and the Odawara Hōjō perceived a parallel between the vindication of the Taira name achieved by the *shikken* and their own ‘Taira’ rule over the Kanto [sic]” (Steenstrup 1974:285).³² The identification of the Ise Hōjō with the original Hōjō was encouraged at many levels: the founder of the family, Hōjō Sōun (Ise Nagauji) read the *Taiheiki* and the *Azuma kagami* (*Mirror of the Eastern Provinces*) to learn all he could about the original Hōjō, and high-ranking vassals were required to wear the court dress of the Kamakura period. Thus, in the *Kōnodai*, as in real life, the Ise or Odawara Hōjō justified their ascendancy over the Ashikaga in the Kantō with the theme of “alternation between Heike and Genji” of the medieval epics.

To justify the transition from the Ashikaga Minamoto to the Taira Ise Hōjō, *Kōnodai* praises the Hōjō and criticizes Ashikaga Yoshiaki in terms of Confucian ideals. In the sixteenth century, Japan underwent massive changes as it devolved into some two hundred or more independent domains. The last vestiges of the old institutions under which the country had been unified had broken down completely: the imperial court and its bureaucracy, the vassal system under the Ashikaga shogunate, and even the old great temple and shrine complexes. Systems of organization based on family, temple affiliation, or government service gave way to those based on geographical proximity. Land tenure systems changed, as did taxation systems, and the basis of legitimate rule. The right to rule was based on success in warfare (the ability to protect and to expand the state) and on efficient administration; this system was derived from the Confucian idea of the conditional right to rule known in the West as the Mandate of Heaven. This concept was best articulated by Oda Nobunaga (1534-82), the first of Japan’s three unifiers, who claimed as the source of his authority to rule nothing less than the victories in battle granted by heaven. Whatever background a warlord’s family might have—descent from emperors or centuries of service in either the imperial bureaucracy or shogunal vassal system—a warlord looked to no other right to rule than his continued success and competence. On this basis, warlords experimented with forms of taxation, land tenure, and even recruitment and promotion on the basis of merit: the models for these experiments came from the Chinese classics.

³² The *shikken* was the regent for the shogun of the Kamakura period, a position held by the main line of the Hōjō family.

Indeed, the sixteenth century begins the replacement of Buddhism by Confucianism as the dominant ideology in Japan.³³ Confucian learning was on the whole the preserve of certain aristocratic families and of the Zen school of Buddhism. For example, long before the outbreak of the Ōnin War, Ise Nagauji, founder of the Ise Hōjō dynasty, had studied the Chinese classics at Daitokuji, head temple of a branch of the Zen Rinzai school of Buddhism (Steenstrup 1974:284). It is a commonplace that modern Confucianism in Japan began with Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619), who was the first, under the patronage of Tokugawa Ieyasu, to abandon his status as a Buddhist monk and establish a school of Confucianism separate from Buddhist institutions. However, one did not necessarily have to be an aristocrat or a Buddhist monk to study Confucianism: in the town of Ashikaga, the home territory of the Ashikaga family, at least, was the Ashikaga Gakkō (Ashikaga school), a secular institution substantially revived and endowed in 1439 by the Kamakura Deputy Uesugi Norizane (d. 1455). Staffed by Zen monks, at its height it trained about three thousand students, including monks, and was the foremost school of Chinese learning throughout the sixteenth century. One can only imagine the number of laymen and monks from this institution who entered the service of warlords throughout the century to advise on law, taxation, and strategy. Certainly, the availability of such advisers is evidenced in the successful restructuring of domains, such as that of the Hōjō and the Takeda, many of whose reforms were adopted by the last Tokugawa warrior government. Many of those reforms are seen in the household codes of warlords of the period. They range from an odd assortment of maxims of the “early to bed, early to rise” variety, like that of Ise Nagauji (Steenstrup 1974), to strict regulation of vassals and their land, as with that of the Takeda (Röhl 1959).

In an age in which vassals frequently overthrew their overlords, the Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety were appreciated and promulgated. This tendency is seen in the famous and widely studied Imagawa Letter of Imagawa Sadayo Ryōshun (d. 1429) to his brother and adopted son, written to admonish him for his bad administration and conduct (Steenstrup 1973). Because of Ise Nagauji’s relationship with the Imagawa (his sister was the mother of Imagawa Ujichika [1470?-1526; Steenstrup

³³ Confucianism can be described in brief as the ideology of the perpetuation of the state and the family, government by a virtuous ruler assisted by ministers chosen for their education and merit, and the personal development of social values in accordance with the principles of nature. At its best, Confucianism meant the education of humane men to administer a draconian legal system. At its worst, it justified the abuse of subordinates and children on the basis of the ultimate value of loyalty and filial piety.

1974:284) and years of service to the domain, it was no doubt an important text for the Hōjō, too. In it we can recognize many of the same Confucian themes pursued in the *Kōnodai* in complaints against Ashikaga Yoshiaki: putting private benefits before moral law (*tendō*, “the way of heaven”), razing family shrines, showing a lack of respect to parents, disregarding the advice of wise and loyal vassals, and so on. The letter also warns of the dire repercussions of the failure to understand the basic Buddhist principle of the consequences of actions (personified indeed by Taira Kiyomori in the Kaku’ichi *Heike*), what Steenstrup translates as “not understanding that pride goes before a fall” (1974:305).

The virtue of filial piety figures prominently in the *Kōnodai*. In the background section, Yoshiaki’s deepest thoughts (25-27) are compared with Ujitsuna’s (30-46): not only is the number of lines considerably in Ujitsuna’s favor, but so is the comparison. Yoshiaki is contesting power with his father and elder brother; he wins one battle and thinks he can conquer the Kantō. In contrast, Ujitsuna’s goals are the filial (Confucian) completion of his father’s dream, to be accomplished only through thought and planning (19-48):

As well you know, as for that general / he was fond of waging war and because he was / he mustered the soldiers of the provinces of both Bōshū and Kazusa and / he subjugated Takagi [Governor of] Echizen father and son, children (vassals) of Hara no Jirō’s house and / driving out the Governor of Shimotsuke and his son, [of the] same [family] / immediately afterward attacking and killing Hara no Jirō / deep in his heart this is the gist of what he thought: / “There is no one waging war to rival me. / Surely, there is no doubt that I shall become general of the Kantō,” he thought, however / at this time, [one] calling himself Hōjō Shinkurō Ujitsuna / was become [a man] of his times waging war. / Deep in his heart this is the gist of what Ujitsuna thought: / “Indeed the one who was my father invaded the Kantō and / he raised his flag over [the province of] Sōshū and / to himself this is what he said: / ‘Someday I shall conquer the Kantō and while recommending [my son] Kurō for office [at the imperial court], / I shall build a palace in Kamakura, and this is what I want,’ this he declared./ Now it becoming my generation / I shall conquer the province of Musashi and / in knowing that I shall soon have the Kantō in my hand / what chagrin to fear Yoshiaki’s might. / Thus even in the words of the ancients / ‘The inchworm shrinks / in order to extend [himself]’— now is the time to pay attention [to these words] / debasing myself and drawing near to that prince / awaiting the winds of opportunity, destroying him / after that, I shall extend my power over the eight provinces [of the Kantō], that is certain. / First, I [must] pull strings,” so saying / preparing gold, silver, and jewels / he sent messengers one after the other and although he expressed his earnest desire, it was of no

use.

Success also depends on consultation with vassals and respecting their advice. Ujitsuna's chief strategist Kinkokusai stresses the difference between Ujitsuna and Yoshiaki (103-12):

“As for what is called the council of this house / lord and vassals having come to a consensus / we consult the omens and when we do / together with the strategy there is no failure. / As for what is called waging war of the Prince's side / having made their wills one with the prince's [having submitted to the prince's will] / they do not even have a conference and since they do not / the wills of lord and vassal are [only finally] reconciled / and because they are / they are a little inferior and because they are / they may not be able to rectify their [way of] waging war [and their army can never match ours]. . . .”

Ujitsuna consults his vassals and they come to a consensus on strategy and tactics; Yoshiaki's vassals are forced to submit to his will. Indeed, when the size of Ujitsuna's attacking force is reported and a plea made for a sudden charge to drive back those who had just crossed the river, Yoshiaki, according to Ujitsuna “a warrior of reckless valor” (143), orders his men to advance at a stately pace and, in effect, to impress the enemy with their grandness as the tactic for forcing them back (174-204). His army spends a good hour exchanging verbal challenges and then volleys of arrows (212-20), which gives Ujitsuna time to surround them in a pincer movement as planned (222-24).

In an age when the recruitment and consolidation of relations with vassals depended greatly upon a warlord's ability to reward them by expanding the domain, success in warfare was of paramount importance. In the *Kōnodai*, the values of military leadership and strategy are stressed. Success depends first and foremost on proper reverence of the gods. As Ise Nagauji had proclaimed, “First of all, you shall believe in the Buddha(s) and the Gods” (Steenstrup 1974:289). Ujitsuna speaks at length on this (128-41):

“Well now, I invaded the Kantō and put it into confusion and / for more than thirty years I have preserved my rule. / This our country is the land of the gods. / As for the gods they do not receive negligence of worship and / surely they will reciprocate with their intercession. / Moreover, according to certain sacred texts / nothing is achieved without the aid of the gods. / Depending on how one shows respect, [the gods] increase one's power, so I heard and when I did / even though [Hachiman] is the tutelary deity of the Minamoto / I worshipped him most importantly at [the shrines in] Izu,

Hakone, and Mishima and / I even restored Wakanomiya [Shrine] and / I worshipped praying for [success in] waging war and / as for the gods, they lodge in the mind of an honest man and because they do / how could there be no sign in today's battle?"

The gods must be worshipped and revered and the shrine of the tutelary god of the Minamoto, founders of the shogunate, rebuilt. This detail is an allusion to an appalling act of sacrilege: the *Hōjō ki* (*Chronicle of the Hōjō*) and the *Sōshū hyōran ki* (*Chronicle of the Military Disturbances in Sagami Province*) relate that, under Yoshiaki's orders, in 1526 Satomi Yoshihiro (confused with his father Yoshitaka) invaded Kamakura, in the Hōjō domain, with his navy and rampaged through the shrines, including the Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine (Hanawa 1979a:444-45; 1977c:562). It enshrined the tutelary deity of the Minamoto, founders of the shogunal system, as well as the Ashikaga and Satomi, descendants of the Minamoto. It was Ujitsuna who rebuilt it and signaled thereby his claim to the position of leadership in the Kantō (Hanawa 1979a:453-54; 1977c:568-69). Not only does the *Hōjō ki* chastise Yoshiaki for the abuse of his own tutelary deity, but he also states, "Our country is the land of the gods" ("Waga chō wa shinkoku nari"). Reverence for the gods is of primary importance, and the *Kōnodai senki* chimes in with its own declaration, "This our country is the land of the gods" ("Sore waga chō wa shinkoku nari"; 130). This concept had become an important strain of the ideology of the military class ever since Japan's rescue by typhoons from two Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century. In addition, the gods are the source of legitimacy, and in this case legitimate control over the Kantō is at stake. Yoshiaki's ghost tells his nurse Rensei, "because of these mistakes / the gods and the buddhas may well have deserted him" (573-74).

This theme is important in the *Heike* cycle because it is the burning by the Heike (Taira house) armies of important temple complexes, especially that of the Tōdaiji in Nara, the centerpiece of a network of temples throughout Japan dedicated to the preservation of the imperium and the imperial family, that led to the death of their leader Taira Kiyomori and the ultimate defeat of the clan. Even the accidental burning of the temple Zenkōji in Nagano Province was seen to portend the fall of the Taira (2.13 [burning of Zenkōji]; 5.14 [burning of Tōdaiji]; and 7.7 [burning in hell of Taira Kiyomori]).

More importantly, it is the theme of the veneration and protection of the shrine of the Minamoto tutelary deity that places the *Kōnodai* in the cycle of epics concerning the "alternation between Heike and Genji." While the *Heike* celebrates the transition to the Minamoto, the *Kōnodai* justifies the

transition to the Ise Hōjō: the Minamoto have again (as in 1159, described in the *Heiji monogatari*) caused a major disturbance. Damage caused to the shrine by the Satomi under Ashikaga Yoshiaki's orders has been repaired by the Hōjō. Like the Hōjō of the Kamakura shogunate, the Ise Hōjō have had to replace the Minamoto in leadership because of the trouble they caused; the Hōjō are the proper caretakers of the Minamoto project. The Hōjō are indeed better Minamoto than the Minamoto themselves. *Kōnodai* reinforces this claim by ignoring, for the most part, Yoshiaki's brother Ashikaga Takamoto, the Prince of Koga, in whose name the Hōjō actually fought and defeated Yoshiaki.

Ujitsuna is a model of the good ruler described in the Chinese classics. The irony is that the direct condemnation of Yoshiaki as a leader is made by the ghost of his son, who died with him in battle: refusal to consult the gods (lack of reverence), bypassing the main Ashikaga house for private gain (lack of filial piety) and ingratitude to vassals.³⁴ Arrogance, then, is equivalent to bad leadership; bad leadership results in defeat in battle and the loss of rule. Even Yoshiaki's vassals who suffer and die because of him are presented as better than he because they exemplify the Confucian value of loyalty. His loyal vassal Henmi, Governor of Yamashiro, before killing himself, persuades others not to join him in death but to flee with Yoshiaki's younger son to save the house by citing a Jin dynasty strategist of the Warring States period (403-221 BCE): "Seeing the fall of the old king / be loyal to the new,' so saying / Kōsekikō left [these words to us]." (379-81). Yoshiaki's loyal concubine Aisu no kimi commits suicide.

What is distinctive about *Kōnodai* is the degree to which the arrogant lord Ashikaga Yoshiaki is compared with the good lord Hōjō Ujitsuna. Rarely in the epic is the victor given such a prominent role. What may not be obvious is that the comparison offers an opportunity to state principles of leadership and to legitimate transfer of authority on that basis. However, while the success of the Hōjō is defined in terms of the political values and texts associated with Confucianism, the destruction of Ashikaga Yoshiaki is given an added dimension.

³⁴ In the seventeenth-century *Hōjō ki* (*Chronicle of the Hōjō*) this same analysis is given by the Hōjō strategist, Ōfuji Kinkokusai, and the diction is very close, if not exactly the same (Hanawa 1979a:449).

Traditional Narrative Strategies: The Buddhist Sermon

While the *Kōnodai* justifies the victory of the Hōjō by invoking an important theme in epic, “alternation between Heike and Genji,” the defeat of Ashikaga Yoshiaki is explained by another theme of the epic, especially of the Kaku’ichi *Heike*—the Buddhist concept of decay. The author of the *Kōnodai senki* invokes this concept especially by use of certain patterns of narrative, specifically religious narratives so formulaic in nature that they might be considered “type scenes.” As mentioned above, this religious material, the so-called sermon aspect of battle narratives, is identified as crucial to the definition of the Japanese epic as a narrative genre. Religious narratives are by no means exclusive to the epic; nevertheless, their use in the epic is one of the characteristics distinguishing them from other genres of battle narrative.

In the Kaku’ichi *Tale of the Heike* and others one can find different kinds of religious material. The first is the motif of invoking the name of Amida Buddha who presides over the Pure Land paradise in the West, the *nembutsu* motif. The *nembutsu* is chanted in times of danger or in anticipation of death. For example, in the story of Giō, the dancer replaced by another in the affections of a powerful man, three women in a remote cottage hear a knock at the door at midnight and, anticipating the worst, chant the *nembutsu* before opening it (1.6).³⁵ The *nembutsu* is often chanted as the warrior faces death on the battlefield.³⁶ In the sixteenth century, the ten chantings of the *nembutsu* by a warrior were so strongly entrenched as a traditional convention of the genre that one epic has a warrior, a follower of Nichiren (1222-82), himself founder of a school of Buddhism violently opposed to the practice of chanting the *nembutsu*, chanting the invocation of the title of the Lotus Sutra (*daimoku*) ten times before death (Hanawa 1940a:36).

The second kind of religious material is the sermon. In the *Heike*, for example, the great Pure Land sectarian founder Hōnen (1133-1212) prepares

³⁵ The first number is the book number, the second the chapter number. Since the Japanese and English versions of the standard Kaku’ichi version are arranged identically, only the book and chapter numbers will be given. The standard Japanese edition is Takagi I. et al. 1959-60; for a serviceable if imperfect English translation, see Kitagawa 1975; others prefer McCullough 1988.

³⁶ The *Heike monogatari*, 4.12, describing the death of Minamoto Yorimasa or 9.14, describing the death of Tadanori. See also 9.19, 10.5, 10.10-12, 11.9, 11.18, and Epilogue.5 describing executions and other deaths.

Taira Shigehira for death with a sermon on Pure Land teachings (10.5). Sometimes the sermon is indicated in the rhetoric of a descriptive passage. In the *Tale of [the Battle of] Ōtō*, for example, in describing the battlefield after a slaughter, the narrator exclaims, “Those who have heard what people have seen and heard and have not at this time awakened to religion, [just] what time are they waiting for?” (Hanawa 1977b:371). There are no Buddhist sermons in the *Kōnodai*; there are, however, a lecture on good strategy and an oracle from the dead on bad leadership (see below), which have the same function in helping to establish the ideological framework of the text.

The third kind of religious material comprises the story of religious awakening (*hosshin-mono*), usually that of a warrior, and the story of entering religious life (*shukke-mono*), usually that of a woman. The best known of all *hosshin-mono* is the story of Atsumori, a young member of the Taira family killed in combat. However, the story is not about Atsumori, but about his slayer, Kumagai Naozane, who later became a famous *nembutsu* (priest). Killing Atsumori first opened his eyes to the reality of his life and led to a rejection of it (9.6). The best known examples of stories of entering religious life are the stories of the empress Kenreimon’in (*Heike*, “Epilogue”), the woman warrior Tomoe (Mizuhara 1937), and Tora (of the *Soga monogatari* [*Tale of the Soga*]; Fukuda 1981:54-60), who put on black and devoted their lives to praying for the souls of themselves and their dead. In the *Kōnodai*, the nurse of Yoshiaki’s son, Rensei, becomes a nun to pray for his soul. The nurse’s story as a story of entering religious life (*tonsei-* or *shukke-mono*) is traditionally part of the aftermath section. However, as the story that ends the epic, the nurse’s story has the traditional function of ending the tale of horror and woe with a representation of a pilgrimage, a ritual that will pacify the ghosts of the dead (592-602):

Rensei feeling she had wakened from a dream / weeping weeping departing
there / she hurried to a certain mountain temple and at the [age] of thirty-
one / she shaved [her head] and / clad herself ill in [a robe of] inky black
and / while she wandered the many provinces and the seven highways / at
holy Buddhist temples / at holy Shintō shrines she made her obeisances and
/ prayed for his buddhahood, how moving it was! / How moving it was!

The young prince’s ghost acknowledges her pilgrimage to his grave, saying, “[That having come] all the way here you pray for my afterlife / makes me so happy” (550-51). Her efforts on his behalf are indeed welcome because, having died in battle and slipped through the net of Amida’s compassion, he

has been condemned to the hell of “the realm of the fighting Asuras” (551, 585).

The fourth kind of religious material found in epic is the story of Rebirth in paradise or *ōjō-den*. This is the story of the death of a Pure Land believer, like Taira Kiyomori’s daughter, the former empress Kenreimon’in, whose Rebirth in paradise is prepared by facing west, tying the hands with a five-colored cord attached to a statue of Amida, and chanting the *nembutsu*. The attainment of Rebirth in paradise is indicated by the scent of incense, the appearance of purple clouds in the sky, the sound of music, and sometimes a rain of flowers, all representing the coming of Amida to welcome to paradise believers who have died calling on his name (*raigo*; Epilogue.5). The closest to this theme in the *Kōnodai* is the description of the suicide of Yoshiaki’s concubine, who dressed herself for death, wrote her last poems, and, before biting off her tongue, “facing the west, she pressed her hands together and finally in a loud voice she said the invocation of Amida’s name” (496-97).

The fifth and last kind of religious material is the story of the origins of an object of worship, usually a temple, the *engi*. Again, in the *Heike*, for example, a passage is devoted to Zenkōji, the head temple in Nagano of an Amidist cult (2.13). However, the antecedents of many people, places, and things are described, including those of the imperial regalia, the sword and the mirror (12.11 and 14). The *Kōnodai* also includes an aetiology of the hill Kōnodai itself (62-72): it cites the legend that the famous mythical hero Yamato Takeru had named the hill for a stork, a good omen, that had alighted there.

Again, Japanese scholars refer to the religious material in the epic as the “sermon” (*shōdō*) aspect and have long recognized the importance of this religious material in defining the epic as a distinct genre of battle literature. I would go further and claim that this religious material determines the very form and function of the Japanese epic as a Buddhist sermon. The heavy influence of the sermon in general and of Pure Land Buddhism in particular may be due to the fact that one of the earliest stages in the Kaku’ichi *Heike*’s development was produced by the Agui school of Pure Land preachers and propagators, to which are attributed the crucial beginning and ending chapters as well as much of the Pure Land material that appears in the text (Sekiyama 1978:69). In the first part of the thirteenth century, the preaching of Pure Land Buddhism was proscribed in Kyoto, and the early traditions are thought to have been used surreptitiously to preach (Butler 1966:9). Certainly the immediate ancestor of the founder of the Agui school,³⁷

³⁷ The founder was Chōken (1126-1203), seventh son of Shinzei, whose name also appears in 1.12, 3.15, and 3.18.

Fujiwara Michinori Shinzei, is featured prominently in the text (1.12, 1.13, 2.4, and 4.1), as are the Fujiwara and Taira followers of the founder of Pure Land Buddhism as an independent school. Of those examples of medieval battle literature that have been identified as epic, the Buddhism espoused is predominantly (I will not say exclusively) Pure Land.

By using specific motifs and specific types of religious narratives also incorporated into the larger narrative of the *Heike*, the *Kōnodai* can invoke the wider Buddhist interpretation informing the *Heike* very economically. The description of Yoshiaki's concubine folding her hands in prayer, facing west (the direction of Amida's Pure Land paradise), and chanting the *nembutsu* before committing suicide invites comparisons with other such descriptions, particularly that of the death of Kenreimon'in in the Kaku'ichi *Heike*, which is a much more fully developed version of the type scene; indeed, the story she tells of her own life fully develops the sense of despair consequent on losing her family in war, a despair from which only the mercy of Amida can save her. Even if the description of the death of Yoshiaki's concubine is an abridged or truncated version of the type scene "story of Rebirth in Amida's paradise," it is no less a "story of Rebirth in Amida's paradise" than Kenreimon'in's and loses nothing in terms of its meaning in the broader narrative of the epic precisely because, as a type scene, it invokes the story of Kenreimon'in. The part can stand for the whole in all its forms (metonymy) because of the operation of the contiguous performance (anaphora): the audience, depending on experience, has heard one or more versions, plays them simultaneously, compares and draws meaning from the comparison (Foley 1991:9-10). *Kōnodai*, despite its short length, has access to meaning that its 600-odd lines alone could not possibly provide; even as an abridged or truncated *gunki monogatari*, it still has access to the meaning inherent in the entire genre.

Buddhist Historiology in the Epic

As Buddhist sermon, the function of the epic is to interpret the historical event, in this case the war or battle, as proof of Buddhist doctrines of eschatology and soteriology. Therefore, the Kaku'ichi *Heike* explains the downfall of the Taira in terms of the basic tenet of Buddhism—all things are subject to change—and its elaboration in Pure Land Buddhism, as seen above. The question is, then, how this function is merged with the historical theme of "alternation between Heike and Genji" that explains the rise of the

Minamoto. The way that history (the narration of events) and Buddhism (the analysis) are fused in the *Heike* provides the interpretive framework for the *Kōnodai senki*.

The content of the epic falls into three parts (Kami 1970:73). First comes the background, which describes the events leading up to and causing the battle. The second part is the account of the battle itself. Here, victors can shine through their noble exploits on the field; even so, the focus is on the deaths of the defeated. The third and last part describes the aftermath of the battle. In this section survivors are executed, witnesses of the battle retreat into religious life, and the families and loved ones of the dead devote themselves to their afterlives. Ideally, these three parts fall neatly in succession; however, in longer works with many protagonists, the battle and aftermath sections of their stories of each individual are included in the same chapter. For example, in the case of the *Heike*, there are too many characters and too many battles to place all the battle stories in one section and all the aftermath stories in another. Rather, for each important character the battle story and the aftermath story are included in the same chapter. However, the six chapters tacked on to the end of the *Heike*—the story of the empress in the aftermath of the destruction of her family—serve as a summary and recap, and thus create the effect of the overall three-part structure of shorter epics.

The three-part structure of the epic organizes the content as an historical narrative. Over this structure is laid the structure of the Buddhist sermon, itself based on the system of Buddhist logic. There are five parts. The first is the citation of the theme derived from sacred scripture, the sutras, or by extension, the teachings of sectarian founders. The second is the explanation of the citation. The third is a parable that illustrates the citation. The fourth is an example given as a proof of the teachings, and the fifth is a summary/conclusion (Sekiyama 1978:24-25).

The Background Section of the Epic

The function of the background is to describe the events leading up to the war or battle and to give the cause for the destruction of a great house. In historical—or historiological—terms, the cause is the arrogance of the head of the house.³⁸ The theme is presented in the opening lines of the Kaku'ichi

³⁸ For Taira Kiyomori, see *Heike monogatari* 1.1. Such are also the cases of Yamana Ujiyō in the *Meitokuki*, of Ogasawara Nagahide in the *Ōtō*, and Ashikaga Mochiuji in the *Yūki*, whose actions precipitate the destructions of their families.

Heike: “Yes, pride must have its fall, for it is as unsubstantial as a dream on a spring night. The brave and violent man—he too must die away in the end” (Kitagawa 1975:1:5); moreover, the background section describes the arrogance of Taira Kiyomori and the suffering he causes: the suffering to the court (in his intervention in the emperor’s love affairs and elimination of rivals to his own daughter [6.4]), the suffering to individuals (such as the two entertainers Giō and Hotoke), the suffering to the religious realm (precedents in ritual broken [e.g., 1.8]), and the suffering to himself (he dies of a fever whose heat is equal to that of hell [6.7]).

These historical events are given an interpretive framework of Buddhism; in the opening chapter of the *Heike* are the first elements of the Buddhist sermon.³⁹ It opens with lines citing the Buddhist theme of the narrative:

The bell of the Gion Temple tolls into every man’s heart to warn him that all is vanity and evanescence. . . . [A]ll who flourish are destined to decay (Kitagawa 1975:1:5).

The reference to the Gion temple bell that tolls at the death of a monk comes from one Buddhist text, the *Gion zukyō*, and the reference to the sāla tree that turned color at the death of the Buddha from another, the *Nirvana sutra*. Then comes the explanation: what flowers withers, and, more importantly, pride goeth before a fall. Next the text cites examples of traitors from the pasts of China and Japan and then focuses on an example from the recent past, Taira Kiyomori. The entire *Tale of the Heike* is the story of Taira Kiyomori and the destruction of the Taira house exacted in retribution (Epilogue.5). As set up by the first chapter, the rest of the *Heike* functions as parable and proof of Buddhist doctrine. The *Heike* is in fact a very long, serialized sermon.

Similarly, the background section of the *Kōnodai* explains the events leading up to the battle (lines 1-56): Yoshiaki’s ancestry, his sojourn in the far north, his return to take Oyumi, his ambition to take the Kantō, and the similar ambitions of his rival Hōjō Ujitsuna. This section includes traditional type scenes of “the warrior declaring his name” (399-408), “description of armor and accouterments” (270-72), “the warrior’s faithful horse” (312-35), and, especially, “the loyal vassal” (245-48, 346-420) and “the arrogant lord” (107-12, 143-44, 175-204 for Yoshiaki’s incompetence

³⁹ Not all epics set the stage with a Buddhist citation. The *Taiheiki*, for example, begins with a Confucian/Taoist exposition on chaos; the *Meitokuki* and *Ōtō monogatari* begin with Confucian references. However, the *Yūki senjō monogatari* and *Sasago ochi no sōshi* are placed firmly if briefly in a Buddhist context in the opening lines.

in war).

It is true that in terms of its opening *Kōnodai* lacks both a literal statement of Buddhist orientation and a characterization of Yoshiaki as arrogant. Much, however, is referenced through its diction. For example, the *Kaku'ichi Heike* begins by “inquiring” into the careers of arrogant leaders in China (*ichō o toburaeba*), “inquiring” about the same in Japan (*honchō o ukagau ni*), and, finally, “inquiring” into the ancestry of Kiyomori himself (*Sono sensō o tazunereba*). Similarly, the *Kōnodai* begins by “considering the year of the battle” (*on-ikusa no nengō o kangauru ni*) and “inquiring fully into the background of the destruction of the noble Prince” (*goshō-sama no go-metsubō no yurai o kuwashiku tazuneru ni*), which phrase leads directly into Yoshiaki's ancestry. This loose formulaic system based on verbs meaning to ask or to inquire or even, by extension, to consider is employed extensively in the introductions of popular religious narratives concerning the origins of gods and shrines. Thus, its economical use in the *Kōnodai* places it firmly by traditional association in the ranks of popular religious narrative in general and the Buddhist epic exemplified by the *Heike* in particular. The death of Ashikaga Yoshiaki in battle is understood in religious terms, whatever other reasons might be stated explicitly in the text. In common with other epics, it presents the theme of the destruction of a great house because of the pride, violence, and arrogance of the head of the house. The theme of destruction through arrogance is explicitly stated at the end of the text as summed up by the ghost of Yoshiaki's son in the aftermath section (557-70). Yoshiaki's arrogance consists of refusal to consult the gods, bypassing the main Ashikaga house for private gain, and ingratitude to vassals (557-73):

Relate in detail to the young prince my younger brother / this time his father
the great prince / for his destruction there are three mistakes to blame and /
as for the first: although his spirits were high / his martial spirit not
consulting the omens / he did not know the fear of heaven [and] / as for the
second: he bypassed the main house and / thinking he would become master
of the eight provinces / because he thought [of this] deep in his heart / he
made the way of heaven (government) a matter of private interest and / as
for the third: Mariyatsu Jōkan had served him as a follower but / not long
after [Yoshiaki] disowned him and because he did / suddenly [Jōkan] died. /
His resentment becoming an evil spirit / it bore a grudge against his prince. /
Because of these mistakes / the gods and the buddhas may well have
deserted him.

In Buddhist terms, however, the real cause of the end of the *Heike* or Taira house is *mappō*, the fourth and final age, one of religious decline, after

the death of the historical Buddha, which is used to explain the degeneracy and decline of the social and political sphere or the destruction of a temple (2.12 [the fate of Zenkōji], 2.13 [the squabbling on Mt. Hiei], 4.9 [fate of Miidera], 4.15 [of Kōfukuji]) and even an earthquake (12.1).⁴⁰ The idea of the breakdown of both the religious and the sociopolitical realms in the Final Age of the Dharma is a basic tenet of Pure Land Buddhism, which proposes that the most appropriate response to such dreadful times is belief in the Buddha Amida and his forty-eight vows to save all Sentient Beings who think or call on his name. In Japan, *mappō* was calculated as beginning in 1052 (Hori 1967:210). Taira Kiyomori is presented as a villain, of course, but more importantly as an agent of *mappō* in the disorder he causes to religious, public, and personal lives.

Mappō is not invoked by means of a one-to-one correspondence between one particular vocabulary word and its denoted meaning. The “narrative” of Pure Land preaching also works on the principle of metonymy. The world is in the grip of the Final Age of the Dharma. The world is therefore in chaos. This chaos is defined in terms of the Six Realms of Existence (*rokudō*), which now penetrate each other, so that one can in a single lifetime experience the sufferings of all Six Realms, regardless of virtue earned in previous incarnations and the anticipated rewards of being born in one of the first three. The only escape is the mercy of Amida Buddha, who has vowed to cause to be reborn in his Pure Land paradise all who call on his name, that is, who chant the *nembutsu* (*Namu Amida Buddha*), especially at death. No one of the terms Final Age, Six Realms, Amida, Pure Land, or *nembutsu* makes sense without the others. Therefore, any one of these terms invokes the others and the meaning of the whole. Thus, when Taira Kiyomori’s daughter Kenreimon’in describes her life in terms of experiencing the sufferings of all Six Realms, when as an empress and mother of an emperor she should have experienced very little suffering at all in her life, she also invokes *mappō* and her father as the agent of *mappō* as the direct cause of her predicament. The fact that this personal interpretation of her life and the description of her death with full signs of being welcomed into Amida’s Pure Land paradise come at the end of the Kaku’ichi *Heike* reinforces the Pure Land interpretation of the fall of the Taira as a consequence of *mappō*.

Here, *Kōnodai* follows the form of the Kaku’ichi *Heike* and other epics. The anticipated framework—the Final Age of the Dharma (*mappō*), the concomitant breakdown in public and private life, and the only salvation

⁴⁰ Imperial edicts accuse Kiyomori of destroying both Buddha’s Law and the Imperial Law (4.7, 4.8, 5.10, and 7.10).

through Amida Buddha—is provided in traditional places in the battle and aftermath sections. After describing the death of Yoshiaki’s horse, the text summarizes by saying, “That was the age of wisdom, this the world of the Final Age of the Dharma (*mappō*) and of fools of which these are even the proofs” (342-43). Again, in the aftermath section’s descriptions of the fate of Yoshiaki’s ladies, the text notes with a very general allusion to Buddhist teachings: “Until yesterday this being a place of fame and honor / they played with the ball of fortune and / in the morning, [things] having changed, down the road of ignoring the law of karma they retreated to their destinations” (449-52).⁴¹

The Battle Account Section of the Epic

The second part of the epic is the account of the battle. Battle accounts also have two interrelated functions, the historical and the religious. First they describe the battles as they happened: who fought whom, where, when, and how; what were the notable exploits and victories; who was killed. Sometimes an epic will be quite exhaustive in detailing the numbers and types of troops, their weapons, and their deployment. The *Kōnodai* describes the positions of the armies, their councils, their tactics, and the deaths of Yoshiaki, his son, his brother, and his loyal vassals (53-501).

The second function of the battle account is to describe the suffering caused in battle to the family and vassals of the head of the house. True to the medieval tradition, the descriptions in the epic are explicit and quite horrific. No nice, clean shoulder wounds here. Arms and legs are lopped off; blood soaks the grasses; and the corpses of men lie strewn together with the carcasses of horses, as in the *Ōtō* (Hanawa 1977b:371). Like all epics, and especially later epics, the *Kōnodai* is replete with gore. Sad are the deaths of Yoshiaki’s brother and son who obey the family code not to commit suicide but seek their deaths in battle (228-310), sad the fate of his horse, Devil Moon Coat, which makes its way back to Oyumi, where, exhausted and covered with blood, he collapses—screaming—in the garden of the palace to the great dismay and fright of the ladies: “there was not one person who did not soak his sleeves [with tears]” (312-45). But most poignant is the death of Henmi, Governor of Yamashiro (“the loyal vassal”), who committed suicide after convincing four others to retreat and escape

⁴¹ For a discussion of the role of *mappō* thought in Japanese historical tales and medieval epic, see Brown 1979:370-401.

from Oyumi with Yoshiaki's younger son in the hope of reviving the house in the future (394-420):

Thus the Governor of Yamashiro drew a fan from his waist and / he beckoned the side of the enemy / a vassal serving lord Hōjō / Yamanaka Shūrinosuke (Assistant Director in the Office of Palace Repairs) as soon as he saw this sight / two or three hundred horsemen had come hurrying up [to him]. / "Yamanaka am I and who might you be? / Declare your name," so saying he attacked and when he did / Yamashiro hearing this / "As for me, [I am] of the Prince's side, Henmi, [Governor of] Yamashiro, hearing this / you might know [of me] already. / Since I am an aged warrior / I was cut off by great numbers and / I was delayed [in attending] the prince [at his death]. / I pray you, act as my second," so saying / he slipped out the sword at his waist and / he cut a cross into his stomach and / he took out his entrails by the handful and / he had just bade farewell [to this world] and when he did / as soon as Yamanaka saw this sight / since he was a person of [delicate] sensibility / under his breath was heard a single line of poetry: / "I who struck and the man struck together within the same [lotus] calyx may we not be born?" / saying, he swung his sword in a flash and / as for the head, it fell away. / The manner of the end of that person / there was indeed not a single person who did not praise [it].

The *Kōnodai* describes the death of Henmi in a collation of formulas and themes. The encounter with Yamanaka is modeled after the death of Taira Atsumori at the hands of Kumagai Naozane at the Battle of Ichinotani as described in the Kaku'ichi *Heike* (9.16) through the character of Yamanaka. Like Kumagai, 1) he is under pressure by the presence of many colleagues who will take Henmi's head if he does not, 2) he demands to know Henmi's identity, and 3) he expresses Buddhist sensibilities at the taking of another warrior's life.

In addition, by having Henmi call himself "aged warrior," the author makes an allusion to Saitō no bettō Sanemori (1111-83) one of the major figures of the *Heike* who died in the wars between the Taira and Minamoto. Not only was he honored with a chapter for himself in the *Heike* (7.8), but the play *Sanemori* was prominent in the *nō* repertoire. His story is also invoked in the *Kōnodai* by Ujitsuna's vassal Kinkokusai, who calls himself an "aged warrior" (116), as does Ashikaga Yoshiaki's loyal vassal, Henmi Governor of Yamashiro (405). Sanemori, a follower of the Taira, had dyed his hair black lest he be refused combat by younger men: ". . . it would be miserable to be scorned by people as an aged warrior" (*rōmusha toshite hito no anadoran mo kuchioshikarubeshi* [Takagi I. et al. 1959-60, ii:81]). The word for "aged warrior" (*rōmusha*) functions as a formula echoing a narrative tradition that infuses any single narrative situation with a

poignancy felt for an old man struggling to maintain his dignity as a warrior. Although the theme of the aged warrior was created in the *Heike*, the frequency of references through citation of the diction has resulted in a narrative tradition in both literary and oral contexts.

The description of the death of Ashikaga Yoshiaki is not as sympathetic as that of Henmi's death. The theme of the "standing death" (*tachiji*) is used to describe the death of Yoshiaki, who is allowed to demonstrate his prowess as a warrior by cleaving in twain the helmet of a huge opponent before succumbing to a shower of arrows (283-309):

As for the enemy soldiers, seeing this / becoming afraid they did not draw near. / From among the great numbers [of men] / a man announcing himself as Yokoi Shinsuke / taking a bundle of thirteen [arrows] to his three-man bow, he fixed [arrow to bow] until none remained and / he shot for an hour. / These arrows flying across [at Yoshiaki] / were what sealed his fate. / Completely through the armor the noble Prince was wearing / they stuck right out of his back. / Valiant as the prince was even so / while he was distracted / struggling to keep his eyes open / glaring [suddenly] at the direct vassals of the Hōjō right in the eyes / using his seven-foot three-inch sword as a support he died on his feet. / "Well!" they said, even so / there was no one who would come near him. / In such a situation / a resident of Sōshū / announcing himself as Matsuda Yajirō / drawing his three-foot one-inch [sword] / he came hurrying in front of the lord. / He probed under the flap of his armor twice with his sword and when he did / as well you know, his soul had departed and because it had / suddenly he fell down to the bow hand. / Matsuda saw this sight and / he took his head.

This theme of the standing death or *tachiji* is found in other epics. In the *Meitokuki*, it is used to describe the death of Yagi Kurō, who

bearing wounds deep and slight in five or six places, made a crutch of his sword, and chanted the *nembutsu*, saying, "Namuamidabutsu, namuamidabutsu." He was walking slowly in the direction of Ōmiya when soldiers of Yamana Gunai-sho surrounded him and, in the end, he was killed. How cruel it was! (Tomikura 1941:89)

However, the most famous standing death is that of Benkei, the warrior priest who followed Yoshitsune (1159-89), in the fifteenth-century *Gikeiki* (*Chronicle of Yoshitsune*):⁴²

⁴² McCullough 1966:289. The Japanese text has it as "dying while standing" (*tachinagara shi suru koto* [Okami 1959:381]).

Singlehanded he checked the entire enemy host, not a man of whom dared meet him face to face. One could not even guess at the number of arrows lodged in his armor. He bent them and let them hang, for all the world like a straw raincoat wrong side up, with their black, white, and colored feathers fluttering in the breeze even as *obana* reeds in an autumn gale on Musashi moor. . . .

The victorious Benkei, hearing this, planted his halberd upside down on the ground, rocking with laughter. He stood there like one of the two Guardian Kings. . . .

After an interval during which none of the enemy ventured to approach, someone spoke up: "I have heard it said that heroes sometimes die on their feet. Let someone go up and take a look." None of his comrades volunteered, but just then a mounted warrior came galloping past and the swish of wind caught Benkei, who had indeed been dead for some time. As he fell, he seemed to lunge forward, gripping his halberd.... Only after he had remained motionless on the ground for some minutes was there an unseemly rush to his side.

In time, people realized that Benkei had stood like a statue to protect his lord from intrusion while he was committing suicide.

The motifs in common are the armor bristling with arrows, the death position with the body braced against the weapon, the fierce glare of the two protective deities (*niō*) at Buddhist temple gates, the hesitation of the enemy to approach, and the sudden drop to the ground. The "arrow" motif is also prominent in the description of the death of Satō Tadanobu in the *Gikeiki* (204):⁴³

Then he offered his body as a target for arrows, with his armor pushed up stiffly. The missiles of ordinary soldiers were deflected, but the best archers found their marks, and soon the arrows standing in his armor were so numerous that his senses began to fail.

Pulling out one's entrails by the handful is another standard motif in later descriptions of death in battle. In the *Gikeiki*, for example, Yoshitsune decides to die like his vassal Satō Tadanobu (290):⁴⁴

With that very dagger he stabbed himself below the left nipple, plunging the blade so deep that it almost emerged through his back. Then he stretched the incision in three directions, pulled out his intestines, and

⁴³ Anyone who has seen Kurosawa Akira's film *Kumonosujō* will identify the death under a hail of arrows as a well-recognized theme in popular Japanese narrative.

⁴⁴ For the Japanese text, see Okami 1959:383.

wiped the dagger on the sleeve of his cloak. He draped the cloak over his body. . . .

This ripping out of the intestines is even more gruesome in the description of the suicide of Tadanobu (205-6). Nevertheless, it was a real practice of the sixteenth century: Father Frois's description of the suicide of Shibata Katsue (1530-83) was considered so indelicate that it was left in the Latin in a standard history text (Murdoch 1910-49).

The battlefield has special significance, a particular role in the rhetoric of the sermon in describing suffering as characteristic of the human world. According to the doctrines of the Tendai school of Buddhism, from which the Pure Land school derives, in this world are Six Realms or paths of existence (*rokudō*): the realms of hell, of the hungry ghosts, of animals, of the anti-gods, of humans, and of the gods. Normally, one would expect rebirth exclusively in one or the other. But the Tendai concept of the interpenetrability of the realms means that no matter the realm into which one is reborn, one will be able to experience the other realms. This interpenetrability is experienced through the suffering characterizing each of the realms and the place of this experience is the battlefield, the place of the anti-gods or Asuras, the *shurajo*. In the *Heike*, Kiyomori's daughter, the former empress Kenreimon'in, relates an account of her own life in terms of the Six Realms and their interpenetrability, her life in the palace (the realm of the gods), in warfare (*shuradō*, that of the anti-gods), on the run without provisions (that of the hungry ghosts), and witness to death by fire (that of hell; Epilogue.4). The battlefield is representative of the breakdown in the world order, proof of *mappō*, and the place of the fall of the house. Those who should have had everything experience all horror here: Antoku, Kiyomori's grandson, who in a previous life had mastered the ten precepts and been rewarded with rebirth in the estate of emperor, dragged by his grandmother into the sea during a battle (11.9); Taira Michimori and his wife Kozaishō—he dead in battle, she, pregnant, a suicide by drowning (9.18 and 19); Taira Atsumori, young and a gifted musician, slain with a sword through the throat on the beach at Ichinotani (9.16).

The *Kōnodai*, too, if briefly, makes reference to this entire interpretation of the battlefield in describing the opening moves of the battle (212-20):

In the meantime, as for the noble Prince, seeing this sight / the soldiers of the three provinces at the head of his forces he readied and / they faced the Hōjō. / For just about an hour they fought with words / and after that the battle with the first volleys of arrows / and when they were over / they began to fight with swords and when they did / the war cries clashing

against each other / made this a place none other than the realm of the fighting Asuras.

Again, later, Yoshiaki's brother and son, killed in the battle, are described as being in "the hell of the realm of the fighting Asuras" (551, 584).

The Aftermath Section of the Epic

The battlefield is replete with suffering; nevertheless, it cannot contain the suffering, which continues into the aftermath of the battle, the third and final part of the epic. In the *Heike*, the children of the defeated are slain, as is the twelve-year-old boy Rokudai (12.9). Like the Empress Kenreimon'in, the women of the dead survive all, but spend their lives in endless grief, mourning and chanting the *nembutsu* for their lovers, husbands, and sons as well as for themselves (Epilogue.1). Even the victors become victims: sooner or later, like Kumagai Naozane, as a result of their battlefield experiences, they retreat into religious life to chant the *nembutsu* for themselves and the men they killed.⁴⁵ In the *Kōnodai*, Yoshiaki's nurse, Rensei, makes her way to the battlefield, engages the ghost of the young prince in dialogue, and then, as described above, takes the tonsure and goes on pilgrimage to Buddhist and Shintō holy sites to pray for buddhahood (502-602).

The epic conventionally ends with a resolution. In some, the tale ends with the story of a reconciliation: in the *Yūki senjō monogatari*, the antagonists "met in the suburbs of Kyoto and made peace" (Hanawa 1940c:734). In others, in the Kaku'ichi *Heike monogatari* for example, the tale ends with a story of Rebirth in paradise (*ōjō-den*). The ending must have (in the manner of sympathetic magic, shall we say) a salutary effect to counter all the pain manifested by the narrative, to pacify the ghosts. The *Heike* ends with the story of Kiyomori's daughter, the former empress Kenreimon'in and her death, accompanied by all the signs of Rebirth in paradise. Sending the spirit off to paradise is an effective form of exorcism.⁴⁶

The story of Kenreimon's life is a summary of the *Heike*, a summary of the story of Taira Kiyomori and his house, a summary of the Buddhist

⁴⁵ This is a pattern from Mt. Kōya propaganda traditions. It is also seen in the *Ōtō* and the *Yūki*.

⁴⁶ Not all versions of the *Heike* actually end with this story, although they always include it.

doctrine of *mappō* and suffering in the Six Realms, a summary of the Pure Land teachings of escape from rebirth in the Six Realms through belief in the vows of Amida. The story of the life and death of Kenreimon'in is the summary and conclusion of the *Heike monogatari* as Buddhist sermon.

In the *Kōnodai* the third and last aftermath section is intercut with the end of the battle through the story of Yoshiaki's horse, which runs all the way back to Oyumi and breaks up a moon-viewing party being held by Yoshiaki's ladies (311-45). The scene again shifts back to Oyumi and a series of stories of the survivors: the vassals report to their new lord and persuade him to escape with them to Awa Province (421-44), the ladies of the palace suffer injuries and it is even suggested that they are raped by peasants as they flee (445-62), Yoshiaki's favorite concubine commits suicide (445-501), and his elder son's nurse travels to the battlefield, communicates with his ghost, and enters a temple as a nun to pray for his soul (502-602).

The multiform theme of the "warrior's horse" crosses the narrative of the *Kōnodai* with a narrative cycle focused on Minamoto Yoshitsune, a daring general who had defeated the Taira in 1185 and was hounded to his death in the far north by his brother Yoritomo (1147-99), the first Kamakura shogun. As described in the *Heike monogatari*, one of Yoshitsune's vassals, Satō Tsuginobu, took an arrow for Yoshitsune at the Battle of Yashima (1184) and Yoshitsune gave his own horse Black Captain to a priest to pay for the copying of scriptures for Tsuginobu's soul (11.3). In the *Gikeiki*, Tsuginobu's brother relates that when Tsuginobu gave his life for Yoshitsune's at the Battle of Yashima, he rode to hell on Black Captain (Okami 1959:205).⁴⁷ According to the variant of this story related in *Kōnodai senki* (337-345), the horse followed its master to the underworld (336-41):

In ancient times at Yoshitsune's battle at the beach of Yashima / Satō Tsuginobu took an arrow meant for him and when he did / [the horse] he gave, Black Captain, / this horse having circled Tsuginobu's corpse three times / in the end dying / he went to the underworld, so I have heard.

The logic of the development of the horse presented for the sake of a warrior's soul to the horse that follows its master to hell is clear if one accepts, firstly, the Buddhist teaching that warriors go to hell for dying and

⁴⁷ Helen Craig McCullough translates the section as "When my brother Tsuginobu sacrificed his life for Yoshitsune at the battle of Yashima, the mount he received for his journey to hell was Tayūguro, a horse given to His Lordship by Hidehira of Ōshū" (1966:176).

having killed in battle and, secondly, that the means of one's death are taken to hell. In the fifteenth-century biography of Yoshitsune, *Gikeiki*, Satō Tadanobu speaks of the sword with which he commits suicide as "An excellent blade! . . . I shall take it with me to hell." He then shoves the sword into the open wound he has just cut into his belly with it, saying, "That's how I treat the sword I take to hell" (McCullough 1966:205). I have not seen another example of the warrior's horse announcing the death of its master except in Kurosawa Akira's 1957 film, *Kumonosujō* (*Throne of Blood/Castle of the Spider's Web*), an adaptation of *Macbeth*. However, an old Scottish folksong, "Bonnie George Campbell," recounting the appearance of his horse with empty saddle at his home ("toom cam his saddle all bloody to see, hame cam his good horse but never cam he") indicates that this might be a fairly widespread theme, as does the custom of leading a saddled horse in the funeral cortege of an officer. In the case of the *Kōnodai*, we have not only a traditional theme but also a one-to-one allusion to the *Heike* cycle.

The story of what happened at Oyumi is reminiscent of the fates of the Heike survivors, the Heike women dragged out of the sea at the Battle of Dannoura (11.11) and the execution of male children (11.16, 12.9). The violence done to Yoshiaki's ladies is typical of popular stories of the period (such as the sermon ballad, or *sekkyōbushi*, *Oguri hangan*), which emphasize sex and violence as the "hell picture" of Buddhist sermons (445-62):⁴⁸

In the meantime the ladies of the Inner Palace / high [ranking] and low more than two hundred and eighty persons cried out all at once and when they did / surely even the state of the shrieks in hell / was thus. / Until yesterday this being a place of fame and honor / they played with the ball of fortune and / in the morning, [things] having changed, down the road of ignoring the law of karma / they retreated to their destinations and when they did / they hurried along on rough stones and / the blood flowing from their feet / stained the grass on the wayside this / must surely be like the road to the netherworld. / Some were stuck by horses' hooves and / and they died and / some passed to the hands of the peasants and / they came to an unhappy end and / indeed even the retreat from the capital of the Heike general Munemori / how could it have been worse than this?

Usually, the horrors of war are restricted to the battlefield, but the *Kōnodai* extends the battle to Oyumi and the flight of Yoshiaki's ladies; if the

⁴⁸ Taira Munemori (1147-85) was the second son of Kiyomori and head of the Taira when, in 1183 after a disastrous defeat, they retreated from Kyoto to escape an advancing Minamoto army.

arrogant lord causes suffering to his vassals and kinsmen in battle, he also causes suffering to the women and children who survive them. This violence is also a feature of the *Oyumi goshō*: the theme of the terrible fate (very likely at the hands of Hōjō soldiers, but this is not explicitly said) of the common people of the provinces of Kazusa and Shimosa and their toddlers lost, trampled, and buried on the beach—even the hardened warriors wept—has been transferred to the ladies of Yoshiaki's court. The theme of the five- and ten-year-old princes, who “had never even walked on the white sands of the garden” but were led away in the confusion howling for their nurse and governess, is also transferred to the story of the concubines who had to walk on rough ground and left blood from their feet on the sides of the paths (453-55; Bōsō Sōsho 1912:193). This example provides a very interesting transition from the traditional theme “children in danger” to what may be a newer theme, “women in danger.”

The woman Yoshiaki's most endangers is his favorite concubine, who commits suicide out of loyalty (463-501):

At this time, most moving indeed [was the case of] / a person exceedingly beloved of the noble great prince called Aisu no kimi and / she retreated far and away from the gate but / “A wise man does not follow two princes / nor a virtuous woman serve two husbands” she remembered it was said and / she withdrew into the Inner Palace and / entering her apartments / next to her skin she put on a white, lined garment and / over that she layered a robe of figured silk and / she tied on her long crimson culottes and / her disheveled hair she bound high and / she dyed black her long brush in an inkstone and / the traces of her hand inscribed on fine crepe paper [the color] of turning leaves she saw and when she did [she had written] / “How interesting, now I even from the age of seventeen years / until the end of my twenty-first autumn / not even for a moment did I leave the side of the prince. / His love surpassing in beauty like the chrysanthemum / even in the poem on the season of the dew on the leaves of the chrysanthemum at Narumi / this which was pledged by that Emperor Xuanzong to Yang Gueifei / even this pledge of the seventh day of the seventh month / ‘If in the sky a bird with wings abreast / if on the earth one branch joined to another,’ saying this / he declared in lover's talk. / Now at the point of my life [standing before] the crescent moon [like a bridge to the next world] / my decision is not to return [but] / together with you [my prince] [crossing] the river of death / let us surmount the waves of the pools and shoals,” so writing / even the brush was shaking as she wrote and / the season being the end of autumn / remembering [this she wrote] as follows: / “As for me, lost in thought [of you] I am like the autumn mist [suspended] in the deep grass; as for you [my prince], on whom I relied, the wind that tears through the trees [has torn me from you]” / saying this, together with her tears she folded [the

paper on which she had been writing] and / while she put it in her scented sleeve / facing the west, she pressed her hands together and / finally in a loud voice she said the invocation of Amida's name and / she bit off her tongue and when she did, spitting it out / she lay down with her head to the north. / The manner of the end of that lady / as truly admirable it is remembered.

The story of Aisu no kimi is given in the *Oyumi gosho-sama*, but her name is not given.⁴⁹ As the *Oyumi gosho-sama* notes, "according to the custom of past and present too," Yoshiaki had taken ten concubines and among them was one just twenty who said, "As long as I live, in whatever world, there is someone [to whom] I must [keep my] pledge" (*Itsu made ikite, itsu no yo ni, tare ni chigirite arubeki* [Bōsō Sōsho 1912:193]). The "lover's pledge" as theme in the *Oyumi* has then been much expanded in the *Kōnodai* (and indeed reversed from a man's pledge to a woman's pledge) in order to link her story to that of the tragic denouement of the love between Tang Emperor Xuanzong (r. 713-56) and his concubine Yang Gueifei: he was forced to consent to her strangulation at the hands of his soldiers because she was blamed for the rebellion of her *protégé* and adopted son An Lu-shan in 755. This story was famous in Japan through the poem by Bo Juyi (772-846) "Song of Eternal Woe" (Turner 1976:168-81). In the *Kōnodai*, the direct reference is made as follows (481-85):

. . . kano Kensō kōtei no Yōkihi ni **chigireru** kore wa / **fumizuki nanuka no chikai** ni mo / **ten ni araba hiyoku no tori** / **tsuchi ni araba renri no eda** to / mutsugoto ni notamaishi.

. . . this which was **pledged** by that Emperor Xuanzong to Yang Gueifei / even this **pledge of the seventh day of the seventh month** / "If in the sky a bird with wings abreast / if on the earth one branch joined to another," saying this / he declared in lover's talk.

The original poem is translated by Turner (1976:181) as follows:

⁴⁹ The name Aisu no kimi could simply have been made up from the verb *aisu* ("to love") and the noun *kimi* to mean something like "beloved lady" or even "lady who loves." I have seen an "Ai no kimi" somewhere. The problem is that the orthography is a bit strange: the word for "love" is *ai* and the text has *ahi*. Since the text does not use the markings that would indicate a *zu* rather than *su*, her name could also be Aizu no kimi ("lady from Aizu"), a district in Iwashiro Province. She might then have been connected to the powerful Ashina family. However, Aizu was usually written "Ahitsu" rather than "Ahisu."

. . . and her message told of a deep **oath** that they two only knew. / —**The seventh moon, upon the seventh day** / Alone at midnight in the Immortal Hall **they swore** / When none was near in private talk they swore / **In heaven as birds that yoked together fly** / **To fly, or else on earth to grow as trees** / **That twine their branches from a single stem.**

Just what translation from the Chinese was familiar or available to the composer is not yet determined. As Watson (1997) notes, the story was well known both through Bo Juyi's poem and "its companion piece, the prose 'Account to Go with the "Song of Lasting Pain"' written by the poet's friend Chen Hong." It was referred to often in the opening chapter of Murasaki Shikibu's novel *Genji monogatari* (*Tale of Genji*, c.1000) and more than a dozen times in the *Heike*.⁵⁰ This story of Xuanzong and Yang Gueifei, although literary and originally Chinese, was both naturalized and circulated orally through recitation of the *Heike* and other oral narratives.

Next to nothing is known about Aisu no kimi, and therefore her story is made up almost entirely of traditional themes and other borrowed materials. Even the poems she writes are cited from other sources and not that precisely. Consider the first poem (493):

Omoiru mi wa fukagusa no aki no tsuyu **tanomishi kimi** wa kokarashi no kaze.

As for me, lost in thought [of you], I am [like] the autumn dew [suspended] in the deep grass; as for **you** [my prince], **on whom I depended**, the wind that rips through the trees [has torn me] from you.

This is an adaptation of a poem by Fujiwara Ietaka (1158-1237) included in the imperial anthology he edited in 1205, the *Shinkokin wakashū*:⁵¹

Omoiru mi wa fukagusa no aki no tsuyu **tanomeshi sue** ya kogarashi no kaze.

As for me, lost in thought [of you], I am [like] the autumn dew [suspended] in the deep grass; **the tip [of the blade] which let me depend on it—oh**, the wind that rips through the trees.

⁵⁰ Watson's paper makes clear, however, that in the chapter "Kogō" (6.4) the story has been adapted to conform to the topos of "the grieving monarch" rather than "the lover's pledge."

⁵¹ Also in the *Jisanka*, compiled from the poems of seventeen poets, including emperor Gotoba (r. 1184-98), included in the *Shinkokin wakashū* (Kami 1977:89). The poem is no. 1337 (Shinpen 1983:244).

More importantly, because she commits suicide out of loyalty, she is a female comparand to Henmi, Governor of Yamashiro and a “loyal vassal.” Even the author’s praise of her contains verbal repetition of the same diction used to praise Henmi, Governor of Yamashiro, who follows his lord in death (500-1):

... **kano nyōbō no saigo no shigi** / ge ni yasashiku zo oboekeru.

... **the manner of the death of that** lady / truly as **admirable** it is remembered.

Compare this with the judgment of Henmi (419-20):

Kano hito no saigo no shigi / homenu hito koso nakarikere.

The manner of the death of that person / not a person was there who did not praise [it].

Her death is described as “admirable” (*yasashiku*); the adjective *yasashi* resonates with a complex layer of meanings. Because of the lengthy description of her poems, the word ties in the usual idea of the elegance or refinement of court poetry and music; indeed, the word is used this way in the Kaku’ichi *Heike* (5.11). However, as a traditional formula, it also brings to mind the courtly warrior like Taira Atsumori, slain in the field, who was praised in the same text for his “refinement” in bringing a flute to the battlefield (*Heike* 9.16). Furthermore, the “old warrior” Sanemori was praised in the same Kaku’ichi *Heike* as “admirable” for refusing to retreat and standing his ground alone against the enemy (*Heike* 7.8). Thus the combination of type scenes and diction economically places Aisu no kimi in the ranks of the courtly warrior, as talented as he is brave. The story of Aisu no kimi, described in terms of a death in battle, is that of a loyal vassal; values are not differentiated by sex but by caste. Her story even fills a gap by providing what is lacking in the text, an example of the traditional theme of the warrior who chants the name of Amida Buddha as he dies in battle or by suicide. Aisu no kimi is described in terms of the traditional themes associated with a warrior in battle—most stunning is the variation on the description of the warrior’s armor and accouterments. Her story includes many of the traditional themes that usually describe a warrior at death: she dresses herself for death (470-73), writes her death poems (474-95), faces west and chants the name of Amida Buddha (496-97), and only then bites her tongue and dies (498-501; this motif is often found in later popular

drama and even films).

If Aisu no kimi is one example of an historical person whose life is told solely in terms of borrowed materials and traditional themes, then the nurse of Yoshiaki's son, Rensei, must be a totally fictional character created to fit the pattern of the fate of the survivors of battle and the women left behind, a fate that usually involves the themes of religious awakening and taking the tonsure. Thus, as in other epics, the dead are survived by women who live out their lives seeking salvation in the afterlife: Tora for Soga Jurō in the *Soga monogatari* (*Tale of the Soga Brothers*), the mother of thirteen-year-old Tokiwa Hachirō in the *Ōtō monogatari*, and the nurse of the two executed Ashikaga princes in the *Yūki senjō monogatari*. The traditional form and function of the epic as a specific genre demands this pattern of consolation for the dead as an ending. The common interpretation of the epic is that because of its religious, sermon content, it functions as a form of pacifying the dead. Certainly, victors in battle pacified the souls of their dead enemy by building temples for them, entering their names in Buddhist death registers and having ceremonies performed for them.

The narrative genre with the structure closest to that of a pacification ritual is the *nō* theater, which was developed at the end of the fourteenth century and came under the patronage of the Ashikaga shoguns. According to Honda Yasuji, many *nō* plays are basically stagings or dramatizations of spirit pacification rituals. The structure has three parts: first, the ritualist arrives at the ritual site and hears the story of the spirit as a third-person narrative delivered by a local—the spirit in disguise is actually the spirit speaking through the mouth of a human medium. Second, the same story is told again as another third-person narrative delivered by another local resident, the *kyōgen*; this retelling is based on the need to translate the usually unintelligible words of the “victim” under possession. These two narrations (*saimon*) act as invocations of the spirit, who appears in his “true form” in the third part of the play and delivers his story in a first-person narration. The pacification is achieved through the dialogue (*mondō*) between ritualist and spirit (Hoff 1978:141-207).

Rensei's journey to the battlefield at Kōnodai and encounter with the ghost of her late charge is in the style of the *nō* play in general and one play in particular, *Sumidagawa* (*Sumida River*) by Jūrō Motomasa (1395-1459) or his father Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443).⁵² It concerns a mother whose son has been kidnapped; she has gone mad in searching for him, only to find he has died in the area of what is now Tokyo, the same general area as that

⁵² For the text, see Sanari 1931. For an English translation, see Japanese Classics 1955.

of *Kōnodai*. Thus, Rensei's plight is compared to hers.

For example, Rensei travels from Oyumi to the battle site. The journey is described in a traditional narrative passage form called "going the road" (*michiyuki bun*), incorporated into the *nō* only in the fourteenth century, which uses place names along the route to describe emotional states through their relationships with other narratives and poems (510-30):

. . . departing Oyumi in the middle of night / when she went, in the waves
on the shore of Yūki / she wrung out her sleeves and skirts. / She indeed
was reminded too of the river of death at the border of the netherworld. /
She passed beyond Mikawa and when she did / "Indeed this must be [the
famous] Matsuyama at Inage" [she thought]. / The wind blowing through
the pines piercing her body / how uneasily the plovers call / on the rapids
of the Kemi River / wondering whether they might have met you [my
prince] / putting her faith in the buddhas and the gods she passed through
the thick-grown bamboo of Funabashi. / When she had gone as far as her
feet would lead her / the ferry man of the Ichi River boat / she asked
whether or not the prince she thought of was there and when she did [he
said] / "For whom do you wait in the area of the hills at Matsudo?" / She
arrived too at Sagami Hill and when she did / while going to the noble
young prince's grave / while she plucked the flowers of the various
grasses / the tears flowing from her sleeve / imitating a libation of water /
this is the gist of her lament . . .

Of the sites mentioned, major highway stations in the sixteenth century, several are still stations on the railroad line: Yūki, Mikawa, Kemikawa (Kemi River), Funabashi, Ichikawa (Ichi River). The composer even "puns" Kemikawa to make a poem with the standard poetic formula, the place-name Mogamikawa (line 517).

In this section Rensei cites part of a poem by Ariwara Narihira (825-80), hero of the romance *Ise monogatari* (*Tales of Ise*), which is also quoted in *Sumidagawa*, in both cases in addressing the ferryman at Ichi River (523):

. . . **waga omou kimi ari ya nashi ya to koto toeba** . . .

. . . she asked **whether or not the prince she thought of was there** and
when she did [he said] . . .

The poem appears in the play as

Na ni shi owaba, iza **koto towan**, Miyakodori, **waga omou hito wa, ari ya
nashi ya to.**

O, birds of Miyako, If you are worthy of your name, Tell me, does my

love still live? (Japanese Classics 1955:151-52)

There are two changes: *kimi* (“you”/“prince”) is substituted for *hito* (“person”), and the inflection of *koto tou* is changed as it is moved in position and the syntax changes. Exact verbal repetition is not necessary to invoke either the play or the original poem: a scene of loneliness and separation in its multiforms is generated.⁵³

When Rensei arrives at the battlefield, she encounters the ghost of the young prince; this also happens to the mother in *Sumidagawa*. The theme of the encounter with a ghost is the traditional structural basis of the *nō*. The *nō* play very often ends with representations of the pacification of angry spirits of the dead, as does this play, which presents invocation of Amida’s name as a service for the boy. This story in the *Kōnodai* of Rensei’s ritual dialogue with the spirit (*mondō*) also crosses narratives with another *mondō* tradition carried by other epics. Rensei invokes the great priest-poet Saigyō and his poem at the grave of the former emperor Sutoku and gives a poem as the response of Sutoku’s ghost (536-43):

In ancient times Saigyō, I think it might be, / [going] to the grave of the
Sanuki former emperor [Sutoku] / remembering that he had chanted a
poem, [wrote] as follows: / “Good prince, even though you think of your

⁵³ Again, the diction of another passage in the *Kōnodai* is vaguely reminiscent of a similar passage in the play *Sumidagawa* (Kami 1977:91-92). When the ghost of the young prince disappears back into the mound (587-90):

Rensei mo on-ato o shitai tatematsurishi ni / **shinonome mo akeyukeba** / **kusa hōbō to shite** / **tsuka** nomi nokoreri.

Rensei too as she tried to follow after him / dawn broke and when it did / the grass being everywhere / only the mound remained.

In *Sumidagawa*, as the mother prays at her son’s grave, his ghost appears briefly and then disappears as dawn breaks. The play ends with these lines (Sanari 1931:391-92):

. . . **shinonome** no sora mo honobono to, **akeyukeba** ato taete, waga ko to mieshi wa
tsuka no ue no **kusa**, **hōbō to shite** tada, shirushi bakari wa Azachigahara to, naru koso
aware narikere, aware nari kere.

Day breaks in the eastern sky. / The ghost has vanished; / What seemed her boy / Is but a
grassy mound / Lost on the wide, desolate moor. / Sadness and tender pity fill all hearts, /
Sadness and tender pity fill all hearts! (Japanese Classics 1955:159)

The formula “aware” also ends the *Kōnodai*; it is a standard ending for tragic narratives in oral tradition and performing arts.

resplendent palace of old, after what has happened, what does it avail
you?"⁵⁴

Sanuki no In is the retirement name of Sutoku, seventy-fifth emperor of Japan (1124-41), who was forced by his father to retire and on whose son's behalf the revolt of the Hōgen civil war of 1156 was fought and lost, whereupon he was exiled to Sanuki, dying there in 1164. The exchange of songs (*uta mondō* or *mondōka*) at a grave is a well-known theme. The allusion is to Sutoku's resentment: he had lost in a succession dispute and then been exiled. However, the particular exchange including this poem is recorded as a set only in the collection of popular and religious narratives called the *Shasekishū*. The first poem is Saigyō's (in his collection *Sankashū*) and is cited in several epics in the *Heike* cycle as being presented to his wife rather than to the former emperor's grave (Kami 1977:90).⁵⁵

The very name Rensei invokes two other narrative cycles. Rensei is the religious name of Kumagai Naozane, who killed the young Taira Atsumori, according to the *Heike* cycle. His story forms the basis of the "old warrior kills young warrior" type scene (even though there is no historical evidence that he indeed did kill Atsumori), and his function in the aftermath section of the story is to pray for Atsumori's soul—in fact, he took the tonsure and became quite a famous follower of the founder of the independent Pure Land movement, Hōnen.

Rensei is also the name of the nurse of Princess Jōruri, the sometime lover of the tragic hero of the *Heike* cycle, Minamoto Yoshitsune, brother of the first military dictator Minamoto Yoritomo. A diary (*Munenaga nikki*) records that in 1531 (Kyōroku 4.9.13) a *zatō* ("blind performer" [Ishii et al. 1990:108]) was performing the story of Princess Jōruri in Odawara, the capital of the Hōjō domain (Kami 1977:95-96). The Jōruri cycle was a popular "spin-off" of the *Heike* cycle and gave its name to the style of chanting associated with puppet performance of the Tokugawa period (1603-1867). Here the author of the *Kōnodai senki* displays a virtuoso command of traditional strategies of invoking other narratives by substituting a nurse for the killer in the function of securing the peace of the victim's soul in the afterlife.

⁵⁴ "Yoshiya kimi mukashi no tama no yuka tote mo kakaran nochi wa nan ni kawasen," a poem by Saigyō Hōshi (1118-90) from his collection *Sankashū* and quoted in many texts, including epics.

⁵⁵ These include the *Hōgen monogatari*, Nagato text of *Heike monogatari*, *Gempei tōjōroku*, and *Gempei jōsuiki*.

Conclusion

The Kaku'ichi *Tale of the Heike* is probably the most perfect example of Buddhist historiography, the interpretation of history through Buddhist doctrine. The epic, the *Heike* and the others, are informed by the two basic elements of the sermon. The first is the statement of a religious theme—and this can be Taoist, as in the case of the *Taiheiki*, or Confucian as in the case of the *Meitokuki*, but most often it is Buddhist. The second is the use of recent history as a proof of that theme. Even if the theme is Taoist or Confucian, the epic is constructed as a Buddhist sermon, and the text will in fact contain a great deal of Buddhist material. The fall of a great house in battle is set in a religious view of history. Thus the epic is a sermon, and *Kōnodai senki* functions in part as a sermon.

In the *Kōnodai senki*, the narrative of the winners, the Hōjō, is based on material that can either be documented or is replicated in other, historical accounts. However, the narrative of the loser, Ashikaga Yoshiaki, Prince of Oyumi, is almost completely made up of material culled from a range of popular narrative traditions: religious propaganda stories, the epic in general and the *Heike monogatari* in particular, the Yoshitsune cycle in general and the *Gikeiki* in particular, the *nō* play in general and *Sumidagawa* in particular, the Princess Jōruri cycle, the Xuanzong and Yang Gueifei cycle, poetry, and so forth.

There are two interrelated ways to look at this situation. First, this poem was composed under Hōjō patronage, and its sources were limited to those provided by the Hōjō: the author did not really know the names of Yoshiaki's sons; nor did he have access to Ashikaga or Satomi vassals and their documents and battlefield stories. Thus, he provided fictional "filler" as he thought appropriate to the form and function of the text he was composing. Or, secondly, the *Kōnodai senki* can be seen as presenting a calculated manipulation of traditional themes and motifs to legitimate a transfer of power from one family to the other. The traditional form and function of the epic places the losers of the battle in a particular relation to the winners. The Buddhist framework of the epic places responsibility for the destruction of Ashikaga Yoshiaki on the Final Age of the Dharma. The Hōjō are vindicated by other sources of authority—Confucianism and the Japanese gods. The Hōjō acknowledge the angry spirits of the dead as in need of pacification, but use the traditional references to Tendai and Pure Land Buddhist eschatology and soteriology both to console them and to exculpate themselves from responsibility for their deaths. At the same time, the Hōjō can put the blame squarely on the shoulders of Ashikaga Yoshiaki, the arrogant lord and "warrior of reckless valor," by comparing him

unfavorably with Hōjō Ujitsuna, who honors the gods, consults his vassals, and plans his battles carefully. Yoshiaki is “framed” by the traditional form and function of the epic as Buddhist sermon and all the elements associated with it, including the themes and diction of popular, orally delivered narratives.

It is difficult to speak of separate and clearly differentiated oral and literary traditions in Japan. There is a vast difference between speaking in Japanese and writing in Chinese just as there is between performing a script composed in advance and composing in performance, usually by the blind or the unlettered. These differences, however, were mitigated over a thousand years by a process of mutual “feedback.” On the one hand, chirographic traditions were disseminated through a variety of public oral performances such as public readings, sermons, lectures, and even secondarily through citation in plays. On the other hand, as in the case of the *Kōnodai senki*, literary composition deliberately co-opted and used the techniques identified with oral composition. Except for extremes of the scale, then, there is no distinct literary or oral tradition of composition; it is more correct to speak of traditional strategies of narrative composition. As the *Kōnodai senki* indicates, the epic is a genre of narrative in which historical events are recomposed in terms of a wide variety of available Chinese and Japanese literary topoi *and* popular themes and type scenes.

Clearly, the epic, as the account of a battle and as represented by the *Heike*, is a way of rehearsing distant or historical events, a type of historiology with its own rhetorical structure (form and function) dependent as much on mythmaking as on manuscripts. And yet, understanding the *gunki monogatari* as a narrative genre is crucial to evaluating such texts for their historical content as well as their historiography: in certain cases, the *gunki monogatari* is the only extant narrative account of an historical incident.⁵⁶ Because other narratives, war tales and histories, concerning the battle are available for comparison, *Chronicle of the Battle of Kōnodai*, an “admittedly reduced textual record” of traditional narrative strategies (Foley 1992:292), provides an excellent case study for determining the characteristics and use of traditional narrative strategies in the *gunki monogatari*.

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⁵⁶ This is the case of two texts covering material connected with that of the *Chronicle of the Battle of Kōnodai*, *Story of the Fall of Nakao Castle* and *Story of the Fall of Sasago Castle*.

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Appendix

Account of the Battle of Kōnodai
 Translation of *Kōnodai senki*,
 a Sixteenth-Century Japanese Epic⁵⁷

1. Account of the Battle of Kōnodai or Account of Kōnodai, Part One
2. The downfall at Kōnodai
3. To begin, in considering the year of the battle of Kōnodai in the province of Shimōsa
4. [we find] it was around the first ten days in the tenth month of the sixth year of Tenbun [1537], or so they say.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The author wishes to thank Katsuko Hotelling, Associate Japanese Studies Librarian at Hayden Library, Arizona State University, for all of her assistance in translating the work. However, all mistakes are the author’s. The translation attempts to preserve as much as possible the features of the diction of the original.

5. In enquiring fully into the background of the destruction of the noble Prince
6. [we find] as for that lord, a descendant of the Emperor Seiwa,
7. the second son of the general Masauji, the younger brother of the noble Takamoto, Yoshiaki he was called.
8. Relations between the brothers becoming strained
9. he went [north] to Michinoku, so it is rumored.
10. Now then, a futile dispute that the Deputy-Governor General of the province of Kazusa, Mariyatsu, Governor of Mikawa,
11. had fought over territory with Hara no Jirō, a vassal serving the Chiba, had lasted many years.
12. On account of this, the Governor of Mikawa sent a messenger [north] to Mutsu and
13. persuaded Yoshiaki to remove [to Chiba in 1517].
14. He advanced on Oyumi Castle in which that Hara no Jirō had entrenched himself and
15. took it within three years and
16. established Oyumi as the seat of Yoshiaki.
17. The samurai of the provinces of both Bōshū (Awa) and Kazusa were without treachery and
18. they protected that prince.
19. As well you know, as for that general
20. he was fond of waging war and because he was
21. he mustered the soldiers of the provinces of both Bōshū and Kazusa and
22. he subjugated Takagi [Governor of] Echizen father and son, children (vassals) of Hara no Jirō's house and
23. driving out the Governor of Shimotsuke and his son, [of the] same [family]
24. immediately afterward attacking and killing Hara no Jirō
25. deep in his heart this is the gist of what he thought:
26. "There is no one waging war to rival me.
27. Surely, there is no doubt that I shall become general of the Kantō," he thought, however
28. at this time, [one] calling himself Hōjō Shinkurō Ujitsuna
29. was become [a man] of his times waging war.
30. Deep in his heart this is the gist of what Ujitsuna thought:
31. "Indeed the one who was my father invaded the Kantō and
32. he raised his flag over [the province of] Sōshū and
33. to himself this is what he said:
34. 'Someday I shall conquer the Kantō and while recommending [my son] Kurō for office [at the imperial court],
35. I shall build a palace in Kamakura, and this is what I want,' this he declared.
36. Now it becoming my generation
37. I shall conquer the province of Musashi and

⁵⁸ *Nengo*: year name. In premodern Japan, years were grouped under year or age names which were changed to commemorate auspicious events or to change bad luck. They were not named after the reigns of emperors as in the modern period.

38. in knowing that I shall soon have the Kantō in my hand
 39. what chagrin to fear Yoshiaki's might.
 40. Thus even in the words of the ancients
 41. 'The inchworm shrinks
 42. in order to extend [himself]'—now is the time to pay attention [to these words]
 43. debasing myself and drawing near to that prince
 44. awaiting the winds of opportunity, destroying him
 45. after that, I shall extend my power over the eight provinces [of the Kantō], that is certain.
46. First, I [must] pull strings," so [say]ing
 47. preparing gold, silver, and jewels
 48. he sent messengers one after the other and although he expressed his earnest desire, it was of no use.
49. This is the gist of what Hōjō thought:
 50. "As for my luckless enemy, in real battle⁵⁹ shall I decide the outcome," indeed so [saying] he was enraged.
51. "Although good news travels slowly
 52. ill news runs apace,"⁶⁰ or so they say.
 53. Rumours of this were reported at Oyumi.
 54. Since this was the case,
 55. he thought to take up a position at an advantageous place and
 56. he thought about what would be the best place to stop an attack and
 57. he enquired whether somewhere there might be a good site, and when he did
 58. the places the captains proposed were many, even so [the best among them was the following]
 59. a tributary of the Tone River
 60. was called the Ichi River and extending to the bow hand [left]
 61. there was a hill called Kōnodai.
 62. As for this mountain,
 63. long ago Yamato Takeru was returning to the capital after subjugating the Ebisu [natives] of the east [and] just at that time
 64. resting on that mountain
 65. in looking at the depths of water near the bank of the river at the foot of the mountain [he saw]
 66. [from] somewhere or other, a bird called a stork flying in
 67. beginning to tread the shoals of the river
 68. he greeted the royal prince and because he did
 69. the royal prince in his exceeding happiness
 70. facing that bird, he declared "I give you this mountain," and because he did
 71. this bird, receiving the imperial decree, always lived on this mountain.
 72. People who saw, naming it, called it Kōnodai [Stork Hill].
 73. As for this mountain, a vassal serving the Ogi[ga]yatsu⁶¹ [Uesugi]

⁵⁹ *Hadae o uchiaite*: strike his skin, hit him where it hurts.

⁶⁰ "Although good news leaves the gate, bad news runs a thousand *ri*."

74. Ōta no Dōkan,⁶² facing Usui⁶³ Castle, he took it as fiefs [for his vassals], or so they say.
75. Having made the river at the foot [of the mountain] a line of defense, he waited for the enemy facing him, and when he did
76. with laborers from the three provinces of Bōshū, Kazusa, and Shimōsa
77. in three days and three nights he built fortifications and
78. and [there] posted Motoyori, younger brother of the noble Prince and [his own son] the young prince and
79. issuing commands to the samurai of the three provinces
80. he awaited the approaching Hōjō, that was indeed extraordinary.
81. In the meantime
82. as for the honorable Hōjō, being stunned by this news
83. “Before the many samurai of the Kantō swear fealty to him
84. I shall quickly decide the outcome,” so [saying],
85. setting out from Odawara on the fourth day of the tenth month
86. on the fifth, at the hour of the dragon [6-8 in the morning]
87. he arrived at Edo Castle, famous in the province of Musashi.
88. He saw the roster of those enlisted [in his cause] and when he did
89. they numbered more than 20,000 horse, or so they say.
90. In the meantime
91. As for Ujitsuna, [there was a man] called Kinkokusai⁶⁴
92. he was originally raised at Negoro and
93. making the fate of this house his fate
94. in waging war he had not once made a name for failure.
95. That Kinkoku the honorable Hōjō summoned into his presence⁶⁵ and
96. “How now, Kinkoku, listen.
97. This time hurry and face the forces [of the Prince] and
98. you shall absolutely decide the outcome.
99. You will be the first in the charge and
100. [so] fight a glorious battle!” so [saying]
101. Kinkoku received an exceptional spring colt and
102. being exceedingly pleased, this is what he said to Ujitsuna:
103. “As for what is called the council of this house
104. lord and vassals having come to a consensus

⁶¹ In text, “Ōginoyatsu.”

⁶² Sukenaga, 1432-86. Served not the Ōgigayatsu but the Yamanouchi branch of the Uesugi family, who served as First Ministers for the Ashikaga Kamakura Deputies, from whom Yoshiaki was descended, and who had been forced out of Kamakura.

⁶³ Western district of Kōzuke province and fought over by the Takeda and Uesugi.

⁶⁴ Ōfuji Kinkokusai, a principal Hōjō strategist.

⁶⁵ Possibly, “this Kinkoku [Ujitsuna] summoned to an audience at the Hōjō palace.”

105. we consult the omens and when we do
 106. together with the strategy there is no failure.
 107. As for what is called waging war of the Prince's side
 108. having made their wills one with the prince's [having submitted to the prince's will]
 109. they do not even have a conference and since they do not
 110. the wills of lord and vassal are [only finally] reconciled and because they are
 111. they are a little inferior and because they are
 112. they may not be able to rectify their [way of] waging war [and their army can never match ours].
113. Somehow or the other this lay priest will be first in the charge and
 114. because I have had this interview with you
 115. indeed when I have left your presence
 116. although they call me an aged warrior
 117. I will be like the eagle and the crested eagle.”
 118. In the meantime as for lord Hōjō
 119. concealed in the dead of night he crossed the Asakusa River and
 120. Otsu Station still in the deep of night he passed and
 121. waiting for the enemy, on the banks of the Matsudo
 122. what was said at the council of war was interesting indeed.
 123. Ujitsuna sat on a camp stool and
 124. he was taking his rest.
125. Most importantly [including his son] Ujiyasu
 126. he summoned the many samurai and
 127. this is the gist of the orders he gave:
 128. “Well now, I invaded the Kantō and put it into confusion and
 129. for more than thirty years I have preserved my rule.
 130. This our country is the land of the gods.
 131. As for the gods they do not receive negligence of worship and
 132. surely they will reciprocate with their intercession.
 133. Moreover, according to certain sacred texts
 134. nothing is achieved without the aid of the gods.
 135. Depending on how one shows respect [the gods] increase his power, so I heard and when I did
 136. even though [Hachiman] is the tutelary deity of the Genji
 137. I worshipped him most importantly at [the shrines in] Izu, Hakone, and Mishima and
 138. I even restored Wakanomiya [Shrine] and
 139. I worshipped praying for [success in] waging war and
 140. as for the gods, they lodge in the mind of an honest man and because they do
 141. how could there be no sign in today's battle?
 142. I have heard and since I have
 143. that, as for Yoshiaki, very possibly being a warrior of reckless valor
 144. he will break through the lines facing him.
 145. This being the case, if it is so
 146. parting the numbers of men on our side to the left and right,
 147. capturing in our center the troops on the side of the Prince

148. we will bring up reinforcements and press them and when we do
 149. even though they have the might of the Four Kings and Man-eating Devils
 150. in the end we shall take them.”
 151. First of all, as generals on the bow hand
 152. most importantly the honorable Hakone
 153. Matsuda
 154. Oishi
 155. Shimizu
 156. Kano
 157. and Kasawara he assigned and
 158. then, as generals of the right hand side
 159. Tōyama
 160. Kinkoku
 161. Yamanaka
 162. Obata
 163. Tame
 164. Arakawa
 165. and the rest of the samurai[.]
 166. “Keep your eyes on the direct vassals and
 167. while we band together with [us], father and son, in the center
 168. let friend and foe observe our bravery or cowardice.
 169. As for the [greatest] single battle in months and years, there may be nothing to
 surpass today.
 170. Sally forth,” so [saying], he gave the order.
 171. As for the soldiers
 172. they heard this and
 173. while they beat the attack drum
 174. they crossed the Matsudo River and when they did
 175. from within the camp of the Prince
 176. Shiizu
 177. Murakami
 178. Horie
 179. Kajima, most importantly,
 180. about fifty horsemen charging up Sagami hill
 181. they saw the numbers of the enemy.
 182. Quickly they returned to camp and
 183. [this is] the gist what they said to the prince:
 184. “In seeing the numbers of men of the Hōjō [we estimate]
 185. they may have exceeded ten [or] twenty thousand.
 186. If they cross that river
 187. as for this single battle, the outcome is uncertain.
 188. The knaves who have crossed the river
 189. may well already number one [or] two thousand.
 190. To clear them off who have no martial spirit, send numbers of men and
 191. drive them back to the river at their rear and drown them and when you do
 192. while the direct vassals readied to face us too are losing heart
 193. surely they shall disperse,” so [saying]

194. one by one they said this and when they did
 195. the noble Prince heard and [his adviser said]
 196. “As for the outcome of the battle, it does not depend upon
 the numbers of men, great or small but
 197. one relies upon the dispensation of heaven, the fact is.
 198. In these years we did not take to the field⁶⁶ against these Hōjō and therefore
 199. the Kantō is unsettled.
 200. This time accomplishing the subjugation
 201. we shall pacify the eight provinces.
 202. Grandly, make them cross the river, I say,” he declared and when he did
 203. as for the near and outsider vassals
 204. they gave the appearance of being skeptical.
 205. In the meantime, as for Ujitsuna, quickly crossing the river
 206. parting [his forces] to the right and left
 207. as for the father and son, while they banded together with them in the center
 208. as for the appearance [the two presented] as they awaited the Prince’s forces
 209. even though it was not yet time
 210. they were as [calm as] chickens waiting for their friends
 211. at the games at Tatsuta.⁶⁷
 212. In the meantime, as for the noble Prince, seeing this sight
 213. the soldiers of the three provinces at the head of his forces he readied and
 214. they faced the Hōjō.
 215. For just about an hour they fought with words
 216. and after that the battle with the first volleys of arrows
 217. and when they were over
 218. they began to fight with swords and when they did
 219. the war cries clashing against each other
 220. made this a place none other than the realm of the fighting Asuras.
 221. As well you know, as for the Hōjō, since they had already discussed this
 222. attacking [in the formation] of a three-quarter moon
 223. capturing the direct vassals of the Prince’s forces [with them] in their center
 224. even though [the fighting] became furious, they attacked.
 225. As for the troops of the three provinces
 226. they were cut off by the enemy from the prince and
 227. they were unable even to draw their bows.
 228. In such a situation
 229. most importantly the great prince
 230. his younger brother Motoyori and the young prince, as for all three
 231. alighting from their horses
 232. they drove off to the east and west the soldiers coming at them from all four
 directions and when they did
 233. as for the traces of their sudden retreat

⁶⁶ *Hata o awasenu*: clash banners, or fight a real battle.

⁶⁷ The last two lines are inverted in the Japanese original.

234. it was like the disarray of divining sticks.
 235. They fell back and they pushed forward and
 236. up to seventy-three times
 237. they brought in reinforcements and attacked them and because they did
 238. valiant as they were the princes too
 239. were worn out.
 240. This is what the young prince said:
 241. “Hear now, Motoyori, listen.
 242. I bear very serious wounds and
 243. I shall cut my stomach,” he declared and when he did
 244. Motoyori heard and [said]
 245. “In this house there is a code forbidding cutting the stomach.
 246. Why should we do what the Hōjō band want us to do?
 247. we [must] break through the direct retainers
 248. and stab and be stabbed by Ujitsuna and serve [in death] as companions to our
 master,” so [saying]
 249. they [tried to] cut their way through [the enemy].⁶⁸
 250. As for the Hōjō [lords], seeing this
 251. “Those are the princes themselves [coming at us]!
 252. Don’t let them escape,” so [saying]
 253. they took up their halberds.
 254. The samurai nearest the lord
 255. Ishimaki
 256. Kuwabara
 257. Daidōji
 258. Itō
 259. Asakura, most importantly,
 260. thinking this the critical moment they fought and when they did
 261. how sad it was! as for both princes, as for their hearts they were brave, even so
 262. as for their wounds, many did they bear.
 263. Their bodies too being exhausted
 264. in the end they were killed.
 265. In such a situation
 266. as for the noble Great Prince
 267. he eyed the Hōjō [looking for an opponent] and
 268. in seeing the opportunity [he saw]
 269. [it was] a man the height reaching seven feet
 270. in armour laced with black in the Kurokawa pattern
 271. a single warrior met only once in a half moon
 272. carrying a drawn sword of five feet three inches
 273. raising up a great voice this is the gist of what he shouted:
 274. “A vassal serving the Hōjō
 275. as for this man called Andō, even with your pardon
 276. I will come as the noble Prince’s opponent,” so [saying] without waiting for an
 answer

⁶⁸ Hurl oneself into the midst of the enemy while slashing away with one’s sword.

277. he had come hurrying in front of the lord.
 278. As for Yoshiaki, seeing him
 279. “This is the conduct of a brave man, indeed,” so [saying]
 280. shortly meeting with him
 281. he broke the middle of his helmet right into two and when he did
 282. he [Andō] disappeared like the morning dew.
 283. As for the enemy soldiers, seeing this
 284. becoming afraid they did not draw near.
 285. From among the great numbers [of men]
 286. a man announcing himself as Yokoi Shinsuke
 287. taking a bundle of thirteen [arrows] to his three-man bow, he fixed [arrow to bow]
 until none remained and
 288. he shot for an hour.
 289. These arrows flying across [at Yoshiaki]
 290. were what sealed his fate.
 291. Completely through the armor the noble Prince was wearing
 292. they stuck right out of his back.
 293. Valiant as the prince was even so
 294. while he was distracted
 295. struggling to keep his eyes open
 296. glaring [suddenly] at the direct vassals of the Hōjō right in the eyes
 297. using his seven-foot three-inch sword as a support he died on his feet.
 298. “Well!” they said, even so
 299. there was no one who would come near him.
 300. In such a situation
 301. a resident of Sōshū⁶⁹
 302. announcing himself as Matsuda Yajirō
 303. drawing his three-foot one-inch [sword]
 304. he came hurrying in front of the lord.
 305. He probed under the flap of his armor twice with his sword and when he did
 306. as well you know, his soul had departed and because it had
 307. suddenly he fell down to the bow hand.
 308. Matsuda saw this sight and
 309. he took his head.
 310. As for the end of that prince, it simply astounded the eye.
 311. At this time, this was most moving.
 312. The Prince’s mount called Onitsukige [Devil Moon Coat]
 313. was a treasure of a horse.
 314. He saw the end of the prince and
 315. [he reared] folding up his forelegs
 316. two times three times he neighed and
 317. he galloped ‘round the enemy camp and
 318. away from the battle site

⁶⁹ A Sagami (province) man, a formula meaning a man with a stipend of land based on service in the government.

319. down the road more than fifty leagues all the way to Oyumi
 320. running in barely an hour into the palace
 321. at the end of the garden he completely collapsed.
 322. He snorted
 323. and indeed he neighed on high.
 324. Just then, as for the ladies of the Inner Palace
 325. gathered in the moon viewing pavilion
 326. they were just in the course of viewing the moon.
 327. However, they heard the whinnying voice of that horse and
 328. the ladies high [ranking] and low
 329. at once left the reception room and
 330. upon seeing this horse [they saw]
 331. here and there bearing wounds
 332. while it shed tears of blood
 333. it seemed to be trying to speak, however
 334. it was a being not equipped with the six senses [and] therefore
 335. it could only neigh.
 336. In ancient times at Yoshitsune's battle at the beach of Yashima
 337. Satō Tsuginobu took an arrow meant for him and when he did
 338. [the horse] he gave, Black Captain,⁷⁰
 339. this horse having circled Tsuginobu's corpse three times
 340. in the end dying
 341. he went to the underworld, so I have heard.
 342. "That was the age of wisdom
 343. this the world of the end of Buddhist teachings and of fools of which these are
 even the proofs," so [saying]
 344. all the people high [ranking] and low generally
 345. there was not one person who did not soak his sleeves [with tears].
 346. In such a situation
 347. Sasaki Shirō [and] Henmi no Hachirō
 348. Sano Tōzō and Machino no Jirō
 349. as for them they were pushed back by the enemy and cut off [from their lord] and
 350. they could not be with the prince at his end, this they may well have thought was
 regretful.
 351. They regrouped their horses and [and forces] and
 352. they charged the enemy lines and
 353. they were about to die in battle each in his own way, however
 354. just then from a slight elevation
 355. a shouting voice was heard
 356. they got a clear look and when they did [they saw]
 357. Henmi Governor of Yamashiro bearing wounds had been [trying to retreat]
 without being noticed.
 358. They leapt from their horses and
 359. "Now, now [how do you fare]!" they said and when they did
 360. this is the gist of what Yamashiro said:

⁷⁰ To a priest to pay for services for Tsuginobu's soul.

361. “Now, listen, all of you!
 362. I was cut off by great numbers and
 363. I was delayed at the prince’s decease, how regretful it was!
 364. Moreover, [here and] now I shall cut my stomach and
 365. I shall presently be with the prince.
 366. Quickly all of you hurry to Oyumi and
 367. attend upon the young prince the younger brother and
 368. fall back to whatever place and
 369. wait [to see] what he intends to do,” Yamashiro said this
 and when he did
 370. being stunned by these words
 371. “See here, as for Yamashiro, there is surely a mistake.
 372. Isn’t it so that loyalty to others is loyalty to oneself?
 373. Each in his own way dying in battle
 374. we too will accompany the prince
 375. and this until the end of time will [bestow] fame [on us].”
 376. They were just about to charge, however
 377. Yamashiro seeing this sight
 378. “Come now, my people, listen a moment to what [I have to say].
 379. ‘Seeing the fall of the old king
 380. be loyal to the new,’ so [saying]
 381. Kōsekikō⁷¹ left [these words to us].
 382. The elder princes have just been destroyed and when they were
 383. they left the young prince the younger brother and
 384. [we] wait for the time of the phoenix [to rise] and
 385. when [the house] rises for the second time in the world
 386. our princes too who are in the underworld
 387. surely they will rejoice.
 388. When that time comes,
 389. my colleagues, pray for my after life and act as my substitute,” so [saying] he
 lamented and when he did
 390. valiant as even these men were
 391. brought to a standstill by his reasoning
 392. their farewells at death to each other
 393. truly moving they seemed.
 394. Thus, the Governor of Yamashiro drew a fan from his waist and
 395. he beckoned the side of the enemy
 396. a vassal serving lord Hōjō
 397. Yamanaka Shūrinosuke (Assistant Director in the Office of Palace Repairs) as
 soon as he saw this sight
 398. two or three hundred horsemen had come hurrying up [to him].
 399. “Yamanaka am I and
 400. who might you be?
 401. Announce your name,” so [saying] he attacked and when he did
 402. Yamashiro hearing this

⁷¹ Warring States strategist of the Jin dynasty.

403. “As for me, [I am] of the Prince’s side, Henmi, [Governor of] Yamashiro, hearing
this
404. you might know [of me] already.
405. Since I am an aged warrior
406. I was cut off by great numbers and
407. I was delayed [in attending] the prince [at his death].
408. I pray you, act as my second,” so [say]ing
409. he slipped out the sword at his waist and
410. he cut a cross into his stomach and
411. he took out his entrails by the handful and
412. he had just bade farewell [to this world] and when he did
413. as soon as Yamanaka saw this sight
414. since he was a person of [delicate] sensibility
415. under his breath was heard a single line of poetry:
416. “I who struck and the man struck together within the same [lotus] calyx may we
not be born?”
417. [so saying], he swung his sword in a flash⁷² and
418. as for the head, it fell away.
419. The manner of the end of that person
420. there was indeed not a single person who did not praise [it].
421. Thus, Sano
422. [and] Machino, most importantly,
423. they quickly hurried to the Inner Palace and
424. this is the gist of what they said to the young prince:
425. “Well, our prince was surrounded by the Hōjō and
426. he is truly dead.
427. We wished to accompany him but
428. this is the gist of what Yamashiro the lay priest said:
429. ‘You shall accompany our young prince and
430. remove him somewhere!’ so [saying] this
431. he expressed his decision without reserve and because he did
432. as useless as we are in the life we are living
433. we are come to serve our lord.
434. Please quickly fall back,” so [saying]
435. one after the other said and when they did
436. the young prince heard and
437. “Wherever we go
438. what person is there who will offer protection?
439. Immediately will I cut my stomach,” so [saying] this
440. he put his hand to his sword and when he did
441. they saw this sight and
442. earnestly did they console him and
443. in the direction of Bōshū they had him fall back and this
444. was thought right and proper indeed.

⁷² It appeared too fast to be seen.

445. In the meantime the ladies of the Inner Palace
 446. high [ranking] and low more than two hundred and eighty persons cried out all at
 once and when they did
 447. surely even the state of the shrieks in hell
 448. was thus.
 449. Until yesterday this being a place of fame and honor
 450. they played with the ball of fortune and
 451. in the morning, [things] having changed, down the road of ignoring the law of
 karma
 452. they retreated to their destinations and when they did
 453. they hurried along on rough stones and
 454. the blood flowing from their feet
 455. stained the grass on the wayside this
 456. must surely be like the road to the netherworld.
 457. Some were stuck by horses' hooves and
 458. and they died and
 459. some passed to the hands of the peasants and
 460. they came to an unhappy end and
 461. indeed even the retreat from the capital of the Heike general Munemori
 462. how could it have been worse than this?
 463. At this time, most moving indeed [was the case of]
 464. a person exceedingly beloved of the noble great prince called Aisu no kimi and
 465. she retreated far and away from the gate but
 466. "A wise man does not follow two princes
 467. nor a virtuous woman serve two husbands" she remembered it was said and
 468. she withdrew into the Inner Palace and
 469. entering her apartments
 470. next to her skin she put on a white, lined garment and
 471. over that she layered a robe of figured silk and
 472. she tied on her long crimson culottes and
 473. her disheveled hair she bound high and
 474. she dyed black her long brush in an inkstone and
 475. the traces of her hand inscribed on fine crepe paper [the color] of turning leaves
 she saw and when she did [she had written]
 476. "How interesting, now I even from the age of seventeen years
 477. until the end of my twenty-first autumn
 478. not even for a moment did I leave the side of the prince.
 479. His love surpassing in beauty like the chrysanthemum
 480. even in the poem on the season of the dew on the leaves of the chrysanthemum at
 Narumi
 481. this which was pledged by that Emperor Xuanzong to Yang Gueifei
 482. even this pledge of the seventh day of the seventh month
 483. 'If in the sky a bird with wings abreast
 484. if on the earth one branch joined to another,' so [saying]
 485. he declared in lover's talk.
 486. Now at the point of my life [standing before] the crescent moon [like a bridge to
 the next world]

487. my decision is not to return [but]
 488. together with you [my prince] [crossing] the river of death
 489. let us surmount the waves of the pools and shoals,” so writing
 490. even the brush was shaking as she wrote and
 491. the season being the end of autumn
 492. remembering [this she wrote] as follows:
 493. “As for me, lost in thought [of you] I am like the autumn mist [suspended] in the
 deep grass; as for you [my prince], on whom I relied, the wind that tears through
 the trees [has torn me from you],”
 494. so [saying], together with her tears she folded [the paper on which she had been
 writing] and
 495. while she put it in her scented sleeve
 496. facing the west, she pressed her hands together and
 497. finally in a loud voice she said the invocation of Amida’s name and
 498. she bit off her tongue and when she did, spitting it out
 499. she lay down with her head to the north.
 500. The manner of the end of that lady
 501. as truly admirable it is remembered.
 502. At this time, the noble young prince’s wet nurse
 503. was a lady called Rensei and
 504. as soon as she heard of the prince’s death
 505. she raised her face up to heaven and
 506. casting herself down on the ground
 507. she lamented and she grieved and
 508. “At least I will go to view the body of our prince,” so [saying] this
 509. since she was in the public glare
 510. departing Oyumi in the middle of night
 511. when she went, in the waves on the shore of Yūki
 512. she wrung out her sleeves and skirt.
 513. She indeed she was reminded too of the river of death at the border of the
 netherworld.
 514. She passed beyond Mikawa and when she did
 515. “Indeed this must be [the famous] Matsuyama at Inage,” [she thought.]
 516. The wind blowing through the pines piercing her body
 517. how uneasily the plovers call
 518. on the rapids of the Kemi River
 519. wondering whether they might have met you [my prince]
 520. putting her faith in the buddhas and the gods she passed through the thick-grown
 bamboo of Funabashi.
 521. When she had gone as far as her feet would lead her
 522. the ferry man of the Ichi River boat
 523. she asked whether or not the prince she thought of was there and when she did [he
 said]
 524. “For whom do you wait in the area of the hills at Matsudo?”
 525. She arrived too at Sagami Hill and when she did
 526. while going to the noble young prince’s grave
 527. while she plucked the flowers of the various grasses

528. the tears flowing from her sleeve
 529. imitating a libation of water
 530. this is the gist of her lament:
 531. “Yesterday the form of the [young] shogun’s heavenly robes
 532. —how beautiful [his face with its] sidelocks—
 533. he swung his long sleeves [like] snow swirling in the wind,
 534. as for the morning [all] changing again
 535. at the base of this mugwort in the deep grass he has made his dwelling, oh.
 536. In ancient times Saigyō, I think it might be,
 537. [going] to the grave of the Sanuki former emperor [Sutoku]
 538. remembering that he had chanted a poem, [wrote] as follows:
 539. ‘Good prince, even though you think on your resplendent palace of old, after what
 has happened, what does it avail you?’”
 540. so [saying] when she chanted this to herself
 541. suddenly from the base of the mound the answer of the noble young prince—what
 she thought it might be
 542. “As for the traces of the harbor plovers even though they fly back and forth to
 Oyumi, as for me in this field of grass there is not even a sound,”
 543. so he sang and when he did
 544. Rensei shed even more tears, however
 545. even from within the grave
 546. what she thought to be the ghost of the noble young prince
 547. wearing helmet and armor
 548. approaching where Rensei lay her head
 549. “[That having come] all the way here you pray for my afterlife
 550. makes me so happy.
 551. As for myself, while being in the hell of the realm of fighting Asuras
 552. as for my soul, being in heaven
 553. it appears as a star called Daikunshō and
 554. I shall receive a second life in this world and
 555. I shall become the master of the eight provinces [of the Kantō].
 556. You, do not grieve too much for me.
 557. Relate in detail to the young prince my younger brother
 558. this time his father the great prince
 559. for his destruction there are three mistakes to blame and
 560. as for the first: although his spirits were high
 561. his martial spirit not consulting the omens
 562. he did not know the fear of heaven [and]
 563. as for the second: he bypassed the main house and
 564. thinking he would become master of the eight provinces
 565. because he thought [of this] deep in his heart
 566. he made the way of heaven [government] a matter of private interest and
 567. as for the third: Mariyatsu Jōkan had served him as a follower but
 568. not long after [Yoshiaki] disowned him and because he did
 569. suddenly [Jōkan] died.
 570. His resentment becoming an evil spirit
 571. it bore a grudge against his prince.

572. Because of these mistakes
 573. the gods and the buddhas may well have deserted him.
 574. Fate quickly spends its allotted span,” so [saying] he was unable to speak more
 and
 575. and he was drowned in tears, however
 576. from the direction of the north a great wind suddenly blowing
 577. in the south a great bell sounded and
 578. in the west a drum was struck with a great boom
 579. in the middle of a square
 580. too from among the [voices] all shrieking at the same time
 581. the honorable Motoyori’s voice being there
 582. “As for [you] young prince
 583. why do you delay?
 584. Now indeed the time for the fighting Asuras,” so saying he shouted.
 585. The young prince too, “Understood,” so saying
 586. he ran out.
 587. Rensei too as she tried to follow after him
 588. dawn broke and when it did
 589. the grass being everywhere
 590. only the mound remained.
 591. Rensei feeling she had wakened from a dream
 592. weeping weeping departing there
 593. she hurried to a certain mountain temple and
 594. at the [age] of thirty-one
 595. she shaved [her head] and
 596. clad herself ill in [a robe] of inky black and
 597. while she wandered the many provinces and the seven highways
 598. at holy Buddhist temples
 599. at holy Shintō shrines she made her obeisances and
 600. prayed to become a buddha, how moving it was!
 601. How moving it was!
 602. third year of Tenshō [1575] year of the junior brother of the wood, year of the
 boar, twelfth day of the eighth month.