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**Japanese Didactic *Gunsho*  
Commentaries in the Edo Period:  
A Study of the 17th c. Commentary  
on the *Heike Monogatari***

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*Abstract:* The *Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō* is an anonymous 17th c. commentary on the medieval *Heike monogatari*. As a military studies text (*gunsho*) written for Edo-period warriors, the commentary differs substantially from the *Heike monogatari* in content and purpose. It consists of didactic essays that critically evaluate passages from the *Heike monogatari* and also includes fictional stories that expand and reinterpret the content of the *Heike monogatari*. The commentary's content focuses on topics of governance, strategy, and ethics. In the 17th c., such *gunsho* commentaries functioned as educational texts with advice and admonition addressed to daimyo lords and warriors in general. As a didactic military studies text, the *Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō* reveals a new facet of reception of the *Heike monogatari* in the Edo period.

*Key words:* Japan, Edo period, *gunsho*, didactic commentaries, *gunki monogatari*, *Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō*, intellectual history, education

## Introduction

The *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari* 平家物語, 13th c. CE), a well-known medieval Japanese “war tale” (*gunki monogatari* 軍記物語), narrates events of the late 12th c. with a focus on the Genpei 源平 conflict (1180–1185 CE) and the rise and fall of the Heike 平家 clan. For many centuries this major historical and literary text has influenced Japanese arts and culture. Studies of reception history of this text tend to examine visual arts, theatrical performances, and literary texts intended for entertainment. In this article,

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I investigate a different kind of reception of the *Tale of the Heike* that has not attracted much attention: didactic commentaries mainly intended for warriors in the Edo period (1603–1868). I briefly describe the *Commentary with Evaluations and Secret Transmissions about the Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō* 平家物語評判秘伝抄, 1650), explain its background related to the intellectual history of the 17th c., and examine several passages from this commentary.

### “Military Studies” (*gungaku* 軍学) and Military Texts (*gunsho* 軍書)

Ancient Chinese works known as the *Seven Military Classics* (Jp. *Shi-chisho* 七書, Chn. *Qishu*), one of which is the *Art of War* (Jp. *Sonshi* 孫子, Chn. *Sunzi*) by Sun zi, have been translated and studied worldwide. Less known are later developments of this school of thought in China, and research on similar texts produced in Japan is scarce.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese term for such texts is *gunsho* 軍書, or military texts, and they were actively produced in Japan, especially in the Edo period.<sup>2</sup> Although the military component is definitely present in these texts, their content is mostly a mix of political, military, and ethical advice and analysis. In other words, their subject matter is leadership, governance, and strategy in the widest sense of the word.<sup>3</sup> These texts are an inherent part of military studies (*gungaku* 軍学, *hyōgaku/heigaku* 兵学) instituted and developed as the scholarship of warrior rulers and officials. This field and its texts are especially important for understanding the medieval and Edo periods of Japanese history when warriors held power. As

<sup>1</sup> The only exception is a group of Japanese martial arts texts some of which have been studied in detail. Martial arts and other physical skills were, indeed, an important part of warrior education in Japan, but they constitute physical training, whereas “military studies” deal mostly with strategy, governance, and ethics.

<sup>2</sup> The most comprehensive research on military studies in Japan is the two-volume pioneer study *The History of Japanese Military Studies* (*Nihon heihōshi* 日本兵法史) published in 1972 by historian Ishioka Hisao 石岡久夫, and the seven-volume *Anthology of Japanese Military Studies Texts* (*Nihon heihō zenshū* 日本兵法全集) published by Ishioka Hisao as general editor in 1967.

<sup>3</sup> In my doctoral thesis, I suggested that *gunsho* are a Japanese equivalent of so-called “mirrors for princes,” numerous guides to governance and ethics produced in premodern Europe, Near East, India, and other regions. See Chapter 8 in “Discussing the *Tale of the Heike* in the Edo period: didactic commentaries as guides to wise rule for warrior-officials,” PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2018. <http://hdl.handle.net/2429/65735>.

noted by Japanese historian Ishioka Hisao, the military studies played the role of a “system of education” (*kyōiku taikai* 教育体系) or “educational scholarship” (*kyōikuteki gakumon* 教育的学問) for warrior officials of various levels.<sup>4</sup>

During the era of so-called Tokugawa peace that gradually formed since 1615, warrior society looked back on events of the medieval age, studied its military ways as well as administrative policies, and sought to formulate useful principles for contemporary politics and society. Both central and local leaders of the newly unified Japan were interested in recording their status and authority based on lineage and distinguished service, maintaining them by power, skill, and reputation, and perpetuating them by educating heirs, vassals, and commoners. Historical writings about the past of families and domains proliferated in the 17th c. and they often had a didactic character. In addition to legendary figures of the ancient and Kamakura periods (*Kamakura jidai* 鎌倉時代, 1185–1333), much attention was given to more recent heroes of the 14th c., such as Kusunoki no Masashige 楠木正成 (1294–1336) described in the *Taiheiki* 太平記 (14th c.), and prominent regional lords of the 16th c. such as Takeda Shingen 武田信玄 (1521–1573) and Uesugi Kenshin 上杉謙信 (1530–1578). This retrospective trend coincided with the overall Edo-period rise in education and textual production that served as the background for the creation of numerous schools of military studies, especially in the 17th c. In addition to five major schools active in the Edo period across Japan (*Kōshū-ryū* 甲州流, *Echigo-ryū* 越後流, *Hōjō-ryū* 北条流, *Naganuma-ryū* 長沼流, and *Yamaga-ryū* 山鹿流), there existed about a hundred smaller schools and branches. Military studies were organized as an educational system managing secretly transmitted esoteric knowledge (*hiden* 秘伝). Major and minor schools had own texts (printed books and manuscripts) for different levels of initiation, and also secret teachings (*kuden* 口伝) in the form of unwritten secrets transmitted in person by a master to a disciple (sometimes recorded as more or less enigmatic manuscript notes). In terms of time, advancing from one level of initiation to another usually took several years, although full transmission in some cases took decades and was intended only for one or several disciples who continued the transmission. Thus, similar to many fields of knowledge in premodern Japan, military studies were made up of a complicated network of people (masters and disciples) and diverse sets of teachings in written or spoken form.

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<sup>4</sup> ISHIOKA 1972: 2.

It is evident that military studies in Japan were not merely a passive reception of ancient Chinese texts on the military, but a dynamic and creative production of new texts and commentaries by authors with diverse opinions and approaches regarding governance and ethics. Military studies may be described as a platform for critical discussion of history, statecraft, military strategy, duties and social norms, qualities of warriors, etc.

### **Didactic *gunsho***

Since at least the Warring States period (*Sengoku jidai* 戦国時代, 16th c.), military studies were given an impetus by competition of many *daimyo* lords who invited experts in strategy and statecraft, so-called *gunshi* 軍師, to act as lecturers and advisors. The establishment of the Tokugawa *bakufu* 幕府 in the early decades of the 17th c. brought about social mobility for some members of the warrior society and, at the same time, created a serious social problem of unemployed warriors (*rōnin* 浪人 or 牢人) who had lost land, posts, and status. Many of the educated ones made effort to obtain a position in the service of a *daimyo* lord by means of scholarship related to Confucian classics, history, medicine, or literary arts. By compiling historical and military texts they showcased their scholarly potential as prospective teachers, advisors, and historians. Some of them were invited by *daimyo* lords to deliver didactic lectures, compile family genealogies, write local histories for edification and enlightenment of *daimyo* family members, vassals, and officials. These writers were likely the most active group that developed military studies in the 17th c.

*Gunsho*, texts related to military studies, were commonly seen as historical and didactic writings in the Edo period. It is important, however, that “history” was defined in highly practical terms and linked with present-day practical concerns. Japanese scholar Saeki Shin’ichi notes:

[In the Edo period] history was a model with which to compare the present situation, it was meant to give an example for living in the present. <...> It is understandable that texts about practical military studies and ethical teachings, as well as historical texts and *gunki monogatari*, seen as works giving knowledge and teachings necessary for warriors’ life, that is, texts of enlightenment and admonition, were all put together into the “*gunsho*” category.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> SAEKI 2011: 616.

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This understanding of history also means that warriors approached *gunsho* texts — a diverse category that included war tales (*gunki monogatari*), histories, and texts of military studies about stratagems, castles, statecraft, and ethics — with a practical purpose of acquiring knowledge and gaining aptitude in dealing with contemporary problems in one’s state, domain, and village. Throughout the Edo period, *gunsho* texts remained a didactically useful corpus of practical knowledge to be applied in the present.

Leading Japanese scholar of Edo-period *gunsho*, Inoue Yasushi, classifies them into four categories by time period:

1) 1558–1615 — mostly anonymous manuscripts about exploits by members of a specific family; private records about several battles written for descendants and vassals of a family;

2) 1615–1674 — published works and also manuscripts (in many cases written by *rōnin* scholars) primarily concerned with warrior education and new warrior role as rulers and officials; retrospection with praise of “sage rulers” to be emulated by warriors and also criticism of past figures and their misdeeds that led to the fall of states or families; combination of historical, military, didactic, and entertaining elements;

3) 1675–1698 — long works on Japanese history including compilations of “historically true” verified editions of historical works based on analysis of different manuscripts; criticism of unreliable and fictional content of earlier *gunsho*; reduced entertainment content;

4) 1699–1722 — historical, military, didactic, and entertaining elements of *gunsho* separated as each of them came to dominate in different kinds of literary and historical works; production of local histories and didactic compilations from earlier *gunsho* works.<sup>6</sup>

This approximate classification is mostly based on printed works. Much more numerous *gunsho* manuscripts, however, remain understudied and difficult to categorize. Inoue Yasushi notes that *gunsho* texts were kept in large numbers in *daimyo* libraries enhancing martial authority and status of their owners and serving as family records that defined the position of a *daimyo* among other warrior houses. *Gunsho* texts with diverse illustrative examples and historical evaluations influenced the creation of didactic manuscripts such as family precepts (*kakun* 家訓) and teachings (*kyōkun* 教訓).

<sup>6</sup> INOUE 2014b: 29–33.

Cautionary admonitions and discussions of rise and fall of states or families make up a large part of *gunsho* content highlighting that maintenance of order and harmony in domains and families was the primary concern of warrior houses.<sup>7</sup>

### **The *Heike hyōban* Commentary: Format, Style, and Content**

One trend of the early Edo period that affected military studies was attention to Japanese medieval martial history, such as Genpei events of the late 12th c. and the Nambokuchō 南北朝 conflict of the 14th c. Schools of military studies often relied on popularity of figures such as Minamoto no Yoshitsune 源義経 (1159–1189). In general, scholars affiliated with military studies were one of the most active groups engaging with medieval war tales (*gunki*) in the Edo period. They used known earlier works, such as the *Taiheiki*, as material for creating didactic commentaries discussing strategy, governance, and ethics. As a result, medieval texts with historical content were brought into the sphere of military studies and used for production of derivative *gunsho* texts.

The *Taiheiki*, seen primarily as a work of history, was supplemented with a set of various *gunsho* texts that discussed politics and military matters. The most influential and known one is the *Selection of Secret Commentaries on the Chronicles of the Great Peace* (*Taiheiki hyōban hiden rijinshō* 太平記評判秘伝理尽鈔), published in 1645 in 40 volumes, with detailed evaluation and criticism of people and events described in the *Taiheiki*.<sup>8</sup> This commentary had a wide circulation among warriors and officials of different levels and, as shown by Japanese scholar Wakao Masaki, influenced the formation of a political common sense and shared political discourse in the Tokugawa society.<sup>9</sup> This representative text which became the model for later works known as “evaluative commentaries on war tales” (*gunki hyōban* 軍記評判) consists of two kinds of commentaries, “evaluations” (*hyō* 評) and “transmissions” (*den* 伝). “Evaluations” are critical commentaries assessing specific actions of *Taiheiki* characters from the point of view of military studies and ethics,

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<sup>7</sup> INOUE 2014a: 2–11.

<sup>8</sup> IMAI 2012. This monograph is the most detailed study of the commentary and related texts.

<sup>9</sup> WAKAO 2014: 53.

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whereas “transmissions” present rumors, legends, and plausible explanations of unclear points in the original *Taiheiki*. Both types are mostly fiction, but it is important that their didactic value outweighs historical veracity. Moreover, in the Edo period, these commentaries were often viewed as a kind of serious historical investigation complementing the *Taiheiki*.

In general terms, the *hyōban* (evaluative commentary) is grafted onto the medieval war tale (*gunki*) to produce a didactic work with military studies teachings mixing politics, strategy, and ethics. In the case of the *Taiheiki*, this commentarial task can be seen as a more or less natural extension of the original work because a sizable part of the *Taiheiki* is devoted to discussion of martial and political issues such as causes of disorder or analyses of battles. As for *hyōban* commentaries on other medieval works, a greater difference exists between the original and the commentary. In this respect, the commentary on the *Heike monogatari*, for example, presents an interesting case of reception, appropriation, and reinterpretation.

The *Heike monogatari* throughout the premodern period (until as late as 1890s) had a dual nature as a literary text related to popular entertainment, such as musical and performing arts, and a historical text used for scholarly purposes. It started out in the 13th c. as a work closely tied with courtly and Buddhist circles, and much of its content was written from the perspective of courtiers and monks.<sup>10</sup> In the late medieval and Edo period, it was widely used as a source for new works of literature, art, and theatre. In parallel, its use as a historical work worthy of scholarly study reached full extent in the Edo period, in particular when scholars of military studies and history created commentaries, thereby drawing the work into the category of *gunsho* texts aimed primarily at edification of warriors. In other words, the *Heike monogatari* was not considered a *gunki* (military record) before the Edo period, but it became one in the early Edo period through scholarly efforts of *gunsho* writers.

The *Commentary with Evaluations and Secret Transmissions about the Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō* 平家物語評判秘伝抄, 1650), a long didactic commentary in 24 volumes (henceforth, *Heike hyōban*), is not meant for clarifying comprehension of the original text of the *Heike monogatari*. Instead of short explanatory notes it consists of long didactic essays on a variety of topics related to leadership and ethics. Anonymous commentator(s) use specific episodes of the *Heike monogatari* as a starting point for developing didactic essays on a wide range of topics. The *Heike*

<sup>10</sup> ŌTSU 2013: 14.



*monogatari*, known for its panoramic depiction of different social contexts, makes it possible to discuss such topics as appointments, corruption, battle tactics, exiles, Buddhist monks, and duties of women. Addressed primarily to rulers, such as daimyo and high-level warriors, comments in the *Heike hyōban* discuss events of the late 12th c., the rise and fall of the Taira 平 (or Heike 平家) house, to caution about negative qualities of rulers, incompetence, and lack of foresight leading to disorder in a family or state and inevitable loss of power. Comments often take the form of warnings, admonitions, and direct advice to rulers. The emphasis is placed on knowledge and prevention of troubles before they take place. Another focus is on the priority of harmony and order in state and society over private self-interest. Assessment and judgments are made from the position of military studies combined with Confucian, Buddhist, and Shinto teachings. The basic judgment scale places wisdom and precedents of various “ancient sages” as the ideal model which contrasts with the so-called “Latter Age” (*mappō* 末法, *masse* 末世) of immorality and decline spanning from the Heian 平安 period (794–1185) to later times including the Edo period. Some characters in the *Heike monogatari* are criticized more than others, but in general, the *Heike hyōban*, perhaps under the influence of Confucian approaches to history, does not evaluate any character, including imperial figures and generals, as consistently ideal in all contexts. The work is openly critical of corruption and human weaknesses, and the tone is often pessimistic and frustrated, which likely resonated not only with discontent of some *daimyo* lords and *rōnin* warriors, but also with anxiety of Edo-period warriors about the loss of warrior identity and leadership skills in the process of bureaucratization and under the influence of peaceful lifestyle. Next, I show several passages from the *Heike hyōban* illustrating its style, commentarial approach, and content.

In the *Heike monogatari*, the topic of exile is treated from the standpoint of exiled people, such as courtier Fujiwara no Narichika 藤原成親 (1138–1178) or priest Shunkan 俊寛 (1143–1179). In the larger framework of the rise and fall of the Heike, the Shishi-no-tani plot and subsequent exiles are meant to illustrate “evil deeds” and suffering caused by arrogance and unrestrained power of the Heike leader, Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛 (1118–1181). Although the *Heike monogatari* also includes some criticism of exiled people who planned a failed coup against Kiyomori, the overall focus is on their misery and anguish. Their emotions are described with a clear tone of sympathy.

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In the following passage from the *Heike hyōban*, the approach to the same events is completely different. The commentator discusses the issue of exile not from the position of the exiled, but from that of an ideal ruler who should exile wisely. The Heike are criticized for carrying out exiles using a wrong approach.

評曰。(…)平氏の成敗理にあたらざる誤あり。かゝる謀叛人を。程ちかく流し置事。大なる非也。若時至て謀をめぐらさんには。ほど近き時は其便安し。故に讐有者を流す時は。杳に所をへだて流すべきもの也。東国の人ならば西国。南方の人ならば北国へ流すべき事也。其上左様の者をながすに。其国其所の地頭目代によく / \ 故有。彼流人と。其所の地頭と。遺恨有へきものゝ国郡へながす時は。禍なきもの也。次に配所の。所なくして。同所に流すべきもの。多き時は。人の智を鑑て。智の愚なるものと。智有べき者と組合て流すべし。才智有もの斗。一所にあつまる時は。身の詮方なきまゝに。却て又はからぬ禍をたくみ出すもの也。さうして。罪有て人を遠流するといふとも。妄に捨置。是をむなしくする事なかれ。人の讒言と云事。世になきものにあらず。罪なきものを流しをき。徒に殺時は。必其報。一度その身に有物也。又遠き島に流し置たればとて。妄に心をゆるす事もすべからず。故に謀をめぐらし。其流人の心ねを勘て。其ものゝ心ねに。未たくむ事有とらば。速に殺すべし。古より。流をきたる者に心を緩して。却て害せられたる事とも。異国は申に及ず。日本においても幾数多し。故に後世の人主。心をめぐらし給ひ。人を遠流し給へ

Evaluation says: [...] Punishment given by the Heike has faults that do not match reason. Exiling such rebels to a nearby place is a great mistake. If at some time or other they devise a scheme, it will be easy for

them to take advantage of the situation when they are close. So, when exiling people who feel enmity, one should exile them far, to a distant place. If a person is from an eastern province, [one exiles him] to a western province, and if a person is from the south, one should exile him to the north. Moreover, when one exiles such a person, he [may have] close connection with the estate steward and governor's deputy of that province or place. There will not be any trouble when one exiles to a province or district in which there will be animosity between the exiled person and the estate steward of that place. Next, in case one lacks [several] places for exile and has to exile many people to the same place, one should think about people's wisdom and exile foolish ones together with those that have wisdom. When only talented and wise people gather at the same place, unavoidably they will again plot unexpected trouble. Overall, one exiles to a distant place those who have committed a crime, but do not banish arbitrarily and negligently. People's slander does exist in the world. When one exiles an innocent person and kills in vain, one certainly gets [the same] retribution once himself. Also, thinking that exiling to a distant island [is enough], one should not let down one's guard recklessly. So, one devises a scheme, finds out that exiled person's true feelings, and if one knows that the person still plans something, one should execute him quickly. Since ancient times, cases of somebody letting his guard down against exiled people and getting harmed have been numerous in foreign countries, of course, and also in Japan. Thus, rulers of the later age, exile people to distant islands thinking over this matter [carefully]!<sup>11</sup>

This critical commentary emphasizes that exiles carried out by the Heike, or specifically by Kiyomori, were mistakes. The correct way of exiling, discussed in detail, is presented as a form of advice or instruction for rulers. Many factors are taken into account, for example, the distance to the place of exile, relations between an exiled person and local governors, and the grouping of wise and foolish people. Moreover, rulers are warned about dangers of slander and the harm caused by exiling innocent people. At the same time, rulers should not be naïve and negligent, and the advice is to regularly check the attitude of exiled people and even execute those who continue to make dangerous plans.

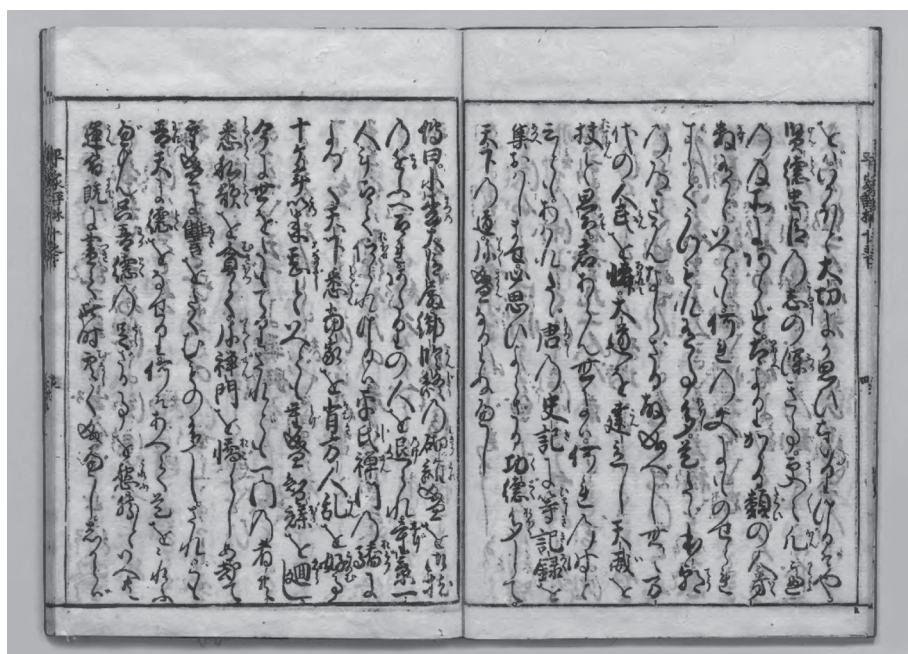
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<sup>11</sup> *Heike hyōban*, vol. 4 (comment on the *Heike*, Ch. 2:9 “The Akoya Pine”).

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The contrast between the *Heike monogatari* and the *Heike hyōban* is great and it highlights the difference between the original medieval work and the Edo-period commentary based on its content. The medieval work, created by members of Buddhist and noble circles to pray, lament, and make sense of the great political and social transformation of the late 12th c., differs sharply from the 17th c. commentary produced by scholars of military studies to give advice on leadership and wise governance to daimyo lords, their retainers, and warrior officials of various levels.

In a well-known episode in the *Heike monogatari* Taira no Shigemori's 平重盛 (1138–1179) son Koremori 維盛 (1159–1184) leaves Heike camp, takes tonsure, and drowns himself in the sea near Kumano. The story fits well into the depiction of Heike clan's futile escape from the capital to seek refuge in the western region. The Heike are described as refined and helpless courtiers who resign themselves to tragic fate.



A comment about Koremori  
from the *Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō* (volume 20)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Image from the website of the National Archives of Japan, Digital Archive, <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/das/image-j/M2015071311020357031>.

The *Heike hyōban*, being a military studies commentary, takes a different approach. Not limiting its content to the information presented in the original *Heike monogatari*, it freely adds fictional legends (*den* 伝) that are presented as rumors or stories presumably passed down for centuries and recorded in anonymous, obscure sources. The following passage is one such legend:

傳日小松大臣殿。御臨終の砌。維盛を御枕の近ふへ召れ。あ  
 たりの人を退られ。重景一人斗召て仰られけるは。平氏禪門  
 の驕によつて。天下悉當家を背。万人乱を好事十ヶ年以  
 来甚といへども。重盛智謀を廻し。今に世をたもてり。さ  
 れども一門の者共。悉私欲を貪て。弥禪門を僑らしめ  
 却て重盛に讐をたくむもの多し。されども吾天に徳をなせり。  
 何ぞあへて是をうれふべけん。只吾徳の足ざる事を愁。然と  
 いへ共運命既に尽て。此時空く成べし。しからは必天下の大  
 乱三年を出べからず。終汝等も帝都を去。西海に流浪すべし。  
 然らば汝は智をめぐらし。紀伊国に兼て拵たる所有。此所  
 へしのび。世上には自害の軀をみせて。時を得て運をひらき。  
 父が名を天下に再顕べし。始をよくする者はあれども終  
 を守る者稀也。天下を知べきものは源氏の輩たるべし。木曾  
 義仲は不徳不道の者也。一旦事を得たりと云とも。終久かる  
 べからず。頼朝尤強敵たるべし。されども彼必後に僑生ず  
 べし。時に苙で義兵を挙よ。是は是兵法の深意たり。此巻を  
 もつて兵道の自在を悟れとて。一卷の書を傳られけり。時に  
 重景を召て仰られける事は。汝が父景康より。代々相傳の忠士  
 たり。殊に汝千万人秀て忠勇尤他異也。天下の始終今吾  
 鑑処。少も違べからず。殊に汝は維盛と同年にして。  
 未若年也。存あらば必時に応ずべし。偏に草のかけにて

も。汝を頼と宣て重代の御劔を下されけると云々。是によつて熊野山中に落忍給ひて。世上には自害の躰にもてなし給と云々。殊に瀧口は。小松殿の御恩深蒙たる者也。故に良将は。三世を鑑。いかなる山中の者。又は賤隠者等にも。義恩を施し置。終の大事を計と見えたり。

Transmission says: When Lord Minister Komatsu [Shigemori] was dying, he called Koremori close to his side, removed other people except for Shigekage,<sup>13</sup> and said: “Due to arrogance of Lord Kiyomori, the whole empire turned away from the Heike and everyone has been fond of disorder for the last ten years. Although this [situation] has been extreme, I devised various strategies and kept the [Heike’s] rule up to now. Members of the Heike clan, however, indulged in selfish desires, made Kiyomori more and more arrogant, and many of them plan to harm me. I, however, acted virtuously to Heaven. Why should one lament about this? I only lament that my virtue was not sufficient. Nevertheless, [favorable] destiny has come to its end, and at this time I will die. The great disorder in the empire will not continue for more than three years. Eventually you will also leave the imperial capital and wander in the Western Sea. So, think wisely, hide in the place prepared in advance in the Kii Province, pretend that you have killed yourself, and when you have an opportunity, raise your fortune and reveal your father’s name once again in the empire. There are people who are good at the start, but few keep [good results until] the end. Those who will rule the empire will be the Genji fellows. Kiso no Yoshinaka<sup>14</sup> is a person without virtue and the Way. Although he will hold power for a while, but eventually he will not last long. Yoritomo will be the strongest enemy, though later he will inevitably grow arrogant. At the right moment, raise righteous forces! This is the deep meaning of strategy. Use this scroll to

<sup>13</sup> Shigekage 重景, son of Yosōzaemon Kageyasu 与三左衛門景康, was raised by Taira no Shigemori. He took tonsure with Shigemori’s son Koremori when both were twenty-seven years old.

<sup>14</sup> Kiso no Yoshinaka 木曾義仲 or Minamoto no Yoshinaka 源義仲 (1154–1184), a prominent Minamoto general who fought against the Heike and was a rival of Minamoto no Yoritomo.

attain mastery of the Military Way!” With these words he gave him a text in one scroll. Calling Shigekage he said: “You are a warrior inheriting loyalty for generations from your father Kageyasu. You are especially superior to many others in loyalty and bravery. The situation in the empire, as I think about it now, will not change in the least. Moreover, you are of the same age as Koremori, still young. If you live a long time, there will certainly be an [appropriate] occasion. Although only from the other world, I will rely on you.” Saying this, he gave him a heirloom sword, they say. For this reason, they were hiding in Kumano mountains and made it appear in the world that they committed suicide, it is said. Also, Takiguchi was a person who had been greatly favored by Lord Komatsu [Shigemori]. Thus, it seems that a good general thinks about three worlds [i.e. generations], and he plans an eventual great matter [of state] when he bestows favors on some person in the mountains or even on humble hermits.<sup>15</sup>

Shigemori, shown as an almost ideal person in the commentary, makes a forecast of the situation in the upcoming years and instructs as his last will about the plot that Koremori has to carry out. Takiguchi,<sup>16</sup> mentioned in the end, is a monk at Kumano who had been favored by Shigemori and can help Koremori. Thus, the commentator takes the opportunity to develop a convincing story about a complicated plot behind Koremori’s drowning. Instead of a highly passive and resigned attitude in the *Heike monogatari*, here Koremori is given an active role. In this entertaining way, the commentator teaches how to concoct plots even in desperate situations and also to expect them from one’s opponents. In general, wise planning, considered an important attribute of a ruler and general, is one of the key themes in the commentary.

Heike generals are depicted in the *Heike monogatari* as refined, incompetent, and resigned to their tragic fate. Therefore, they are a convenient negative example for teaching how not to be a general or a ruler. Their mistakes, idleness, and unpreparedness are used to warn and admonish warrior rulers as follows:

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<sup>15</sup> *Heike hyōban*, vol. 20 (comment on the *Heike*, Ch. 10:10 “Koremori Renounces the World”).

<sup>16</sup> Takiguchi 滝口 is a monk at Kumano who earlier served Taira no Shigemori as a warrior.

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評曰 (...) 然に平氏の諸將。時の武將に備りながら明暮安き  
 にのみみて危あやうきを忘れ。をのれが今日の威勢を頼として。天下  
 の万人をかるんず。 (...) この故に後の世の人主。かゝる処を  
 かゞみとして。其身をいましめ。大徳とくを行ひおはしませ。一天  
 下のあるじなどならせ給ふうへにては。世々末代まつに至るまで。  
 聖君せいくんの名をのこし給はざる事は。是代をしり給ふ本意いにはあら  
 ず。愚將ぐもしばらくは世をしるためし有。いかんぞ是のみを本  
 懐くはいとは思ふべけんや。聖賢せいけんの法を心となし給ふ時は其代のしる  
 し天地の有間ろんは。はんじやう有べし。つゝしんで此事を論じお  
 はしませ

Evaluation says: [...] However, various Heike generals, although appointed as generals of the time, spent all the days in ease and forgot about dangers. Relying on today's power they slighted all the people in the state. [...] Thus, rulers of the later age, take this matter as an example, admonish yourselves, and act with great virtue! Being a master of the state and not leaving the reputation of a sage ruler for all ages to come, is not the real purpose of ruling. There are cases of foolish generals also ruling for a while. How can one think of this as being one's greatest ambition? When one has sage and wise teachings in one's heart/mind, the manifestation of that rule will prosper while the heaven and earth exist. Carefully discuss this matter!<sup>17</sup>

Careless attitude of the Heike resulted in their inability to foresee trouble and to bring order. Commentator(s) use this opportunity to address rulers directly and remind them about the benefits of wise rule. The point is made that in order to avoid the shame and disgrace suffered by the Heike, one should strive to become a sage ruler who governs wisely and achieves prosperity and fame.

<sup>17</sup> *Heike hyōban*, vol. 1 (comment on the *Heike*, Ch. 1:9 “The Burning of Kiyomizudera”).



The criticism of the Heike, viewed as weak rulers, is one of the main topics of the *Heike hyōban* commentary. The next commentary develops a critical discussion of warrior lifestyle using the Heike as a negative example.

評曰(…)末世<sup>まつ</sup>の武士。常に無芸<sup>げい</sup>を事<sup>こと</sup>として。一度の大事<sup>しよさふらひ</sup>を心<sup>もうめう</sup>が  
 け給へ。されば末世<sup>しよさふらひ</sup>に至ぬれば。平家の諸<sup>くはん</sup>侍<sup>ろく</sup>の有様<sup>ちや</sup>は。盲猫<sup>おなじ</sup>  
 にひとしくして。用なき事ども多し。或は高官<sup>くはん</sup>大禄<sup>ろく</sup>有人<sup>ちや</sup>は。か  
 こひ数奇屋<sup>すき</sup>をあまた造<sup>つく</sup>り。こゝの手書<sup>てい</sup>かしこの法師<sup>ほうし</sup>をかたらひ  
 ては。所々の茶屋<sup>ちや</sup>に額<sup>かく</sup>をうたせ。けふはいづれの茶屋<sup>ちや</sup>にていづ  
 れの会<sup>くはい</sup>有<sup>あす</sup>。明日<sup>あす</sup>はそこのちや屋<sup>ちや</sup>にてたれの御申<sup>ごんしん</sup>有<sup>あす</sup>。其日<sup>あす</sup>はそこ  
 へ。いづれの白拍子<sup>しらびやうし</sup>来れり。明日<sup>あす</sup>はこなたへ傀儡師<sup>くわいらい</sup>こそめせ  
 とて。様々の遊興<sup>けうぐご</sup>供御<sup>くわいらい</sup>をもふけ。明暮<sup>あきと</sup>是<sup>あきと</sup>にいとまなき(…)適<sup>たま</sup>  
 武士<sup>あきと</sup>に似たる人も。馬<sup>あきと</sup>を愛<sup>あきと</sup>するとは。馬商人<sup>あきと</sup>の様<sup>あきと</sup>になり。太  
 刀<sup>あきと</sup>かたなを愛<sup>あきと</sup>しては。利銭<sup>あきと</sup>の道<sup>あきと</sup>にかゝはりぬれば。是も同<sup>あきと</sup>き類<sup>あきと</sup>  
 に成ぬ。此故<sup>あきと</sup>に幾内<sup>あきと</sup>の武士<sup>あきと</sup>。東国<sup>あきと</sup>武士<sup>あきと</sup>にかけ立<sup>あきと</sup>られ。あまたの  
 恥<sup>あきと</sup>をとりける事<sup>あきと</sup>有<sup>あきと</sup>。されば此<sup>あきと</sup>誤<sup>あきと</sup>。何<sup>あきと</sup>の世<sup>あきと</sup>といふともあらじと  
 は申<sup>あきと</sup>がたし。能<sup>あきと</sup>々つゝしむべき事<sup>あきと</sup>也<sup>あきと</sup>。(…)匹夫<sup>あきと</sup>の勇<sup>あきと</sup>を貪<sup>あきと</sup>事<sup>あきと</sup>  
 なく。天下<sup>あきと</sup>に其名<sup>あきと</sup>を擧<sup>あきと</sup>べき事<sup>あきと</sup>を常<sup>あきと</sup>々心<sup>あきと</sup>となし給<sup>あきと</sup>へ。(…)

Evaluation says: [...] Warriors of the Latter Age, constantly pay attention to lack of accomplishments and aim at [achieving] a great matter once! In the Latter Age, the condition of Heike warriors is like that of blind cats and they are often busy with useless matters. Those who have high posts and big stipends build many enclosed tea-ceremony huts, invite this calligrapher and that master, and [talk about] having framed pictures put up in various tea huts, having some meeting in some tea hut today and having a talk with somebody in that tea hut tomorrow, a visit of some *shirabyōshi* dancer on that day in such a place, and inviting a puppeteer to this place tomorrow. They hold various diversions with food and drink without stop all day long. [...] Occasionally there are also people resembling warriors who say that they love horses, but they become like horse

merchants. When, loving swords, they get involved in the way of profit and money, they also end up in the same category [of merchants]. For this reason, Kinai [capital area] warriors, being opposed by warriors of the East [Kantō], suffered much shame. However, it is hard to say that these faults are not found in any age. One has to be very prudent about this. [...] Without coveting bravery of a common man, constantly set your mind on raising your name in the world! [...] <sup>18</sup>

This critical description of a lifestyle of carefree warriors is aimed both at the Heike and at Edo-period warriors. It is evident that author(s) of this commentary, and many *gunsho* works in general, felt dissatisfaction with the situation when members of the warrior class lose their identity and no longer have the ambition or ability to live frugally, cultivating civil and martial administrative skills. The fall of the Heike was tied with a clear didactic message for contemporary warriors: excessive preoccupation with amusements leads to shame and disaster. Such cautionary comments reveal the great anxiety of Edo-period warriors about losing their idealized qualities that distinguish them from merchants and other commoners. One of the main purposes of *gunsho* texts was to motivate, remind, and educate warriors about their way of life and proper duties.

In accordance with the overall approach that gives priority to didactic points rather than historical accuracy, the content of the *Heike hyōban* includes stories featuring behind-the-scenes discussions of military leaders who analyze some current situation and suggest different courses of action. These discussions of plans, presented as legends transmitted since distant past, teach Edo-period readers various useful stratagems. To stimulate readers' curiosity, these legends are placed in the context of the famous Genpei war and usually involve well-known figures such as Yoritomo or Yoshitsune. The following passage is an example of such a discussion.

傳じゆ曰つるがをかの寿永二年正月十五日まんくうに。頼朝けい鶴岡八幡宮へ参詣まし / \  
て。還くはんぎよ御みざりの砌でうのたちに。北條とひの館へ入らせ給ひ。土肥さね次郎實平。北  
條でう時政まさ。以上三人。軍用ぐんの評談ひやうだんおはしましける時。頼朝よし宣ひ  
けるは。先今年は春の間に。木曾よし義仲を討べしとおもふはいか

<sup>18</sup> *Heike hyōban*, vol. 8 (comment on the *Heike*, Ch. 4:11 “The Battle on the Bridge”).

にと仰られたりければ。實平 暫 思案して申上げるは。義仲を  
 亡 さるべき事。尤安しといへども。義仲の兵数。鋭士三千には  
 近く候べし。殊に北国は。山けはしくして。地難所多し。急に  
 戦 を決せば。人多 亡 べく候。若又ながく軍を張時は。平家  
 其 費 を 窺 候べし。但又。平家を亡され候はんも安しといへど  
 も。東国 未 静 ならず。故先今年北国に 軍 をいさるべし。  
 其心 全 戦 を思召事なく。只義仲の威勢を呑べき 謀 をめぐ  
 らされ。和睦を入て人質を出すごとくに 謀 。さて其次に先義  
 仲を以平家のあらぎりをなさしめ 給 。其 費 に乗じて兵を登せ  
 られ候はゞ。闘 龍 勞 にのるにてこそ候べけれ。必爰に実否を  
 決せらるべく候らはんやと申上たりければ。頼朝感涙を御袖に  
 て 押 させ給ひ。神なる哉実平。吾を 助 る人也と仰られ。即  
 御 劔 を給ると云り。是をもつてみるに。いま義仲との計 略 。  
 其始終よく相通せり。兵法曰。善兵を用るものは。よく當 変 を  
 察して。事理に通ずと云り。

Transmission says: On the fifteenth day of the first month of the year Juei 2 (1183), Yoritomo visited the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū shrine and on his way back entered the Hōjō mansion. When three of them, with Doi no Jirō Sanehira and Hōjō Tokimasa,<sup>19</sup> were discussing military matters, Yoritomo said: “Well, I think that we should strike Kiso no Yoshinaka this year in spring. How is it?” When he said this, Sanehira considered it for some time and said: “One can say that destroying Yoshinaka is very easy, but the number of excellent warriors in Yoshinaka’s army is close to three thousand. Moreover, mountains in the northern provinces are steep and the terrain is difficult in many places. If we fight swiftly, many

<sup>19</sup> Doi Sanehira 土肥実平 (?–1191), a general of the late Heian and early Kamakura periods. Hōjō Tokimasa 北条時政 (1138–1215), supporter of Minamoto no Yoritomo since 1180. He became the governor of Kyoto in 1185, and after Yoritomo’s death he was the *shikken* 執権 (shogun’s regent) and the de facto ruler of Japan..

men will perish. In case the fighting will continue for a long time, the Heike will find out about [their enemies] growing weak. Also, one can say that destroying the Heike is easy, too, but eastern provinces are not yet calm, and thus this year, first, we should fight against the northern provinces. I do not mean at all that we fight battles, but we should just devise a scheme that will reduce Yoshinaka's power. We plan something like making peace with him and sending him hostages, and then we first use Yoshinaka as the striking force against the Heike. Then, if we take advantage of their weakness and send our army to the capital, it will certainly be like using fatigue of fighting dragons. This will certainly be decisive, right?" When he said it, Yoritomo stopped tears of gratitude with his sleeve and said: "Outstanding, Sanehira! You saved me." And he presented him with his sword, it is said. Considering it like this, this scheme involving Yoshinaka becomes completely meaningful. The *Military Strategy* says: "One who uses troops well, skillfully perceives what stays the same and what changes, and understands facts and principles".<sup>20</sup>

In the early 1183, Minamoto no Yoritomo discusses future plans with two advisors and associates, Doi no Jirō Sanehira and Hōjō Tokimasa. Yoritomo's proposal to attack Kiso no Yoshinaka leads to analysis of the situation by Sanehira who assesses the situation taking into account such factors as the number of troops, geographical features, available resources, and time. Then Sanehira, as Yoritomo's advisor, suggests a plan to weaken Yoshinaka by making him fight with the Heike.

Texts of the late Heian and Kamakura periods rarely include background details of planning and decision-making by warrior leaders. Activities of numerous military advisors (*gunshi* 軍師) in the service of daimyo lords are usually associated with the 15th and 16th cc. Compilers and readers of the *Heike hyōban* in the 17th c. apparently projected these recent *gunshi* and their functions back to the times of the Genpei war. Despite their fictional and perhaps anachronistic character, discussions similar to the one in the above example seem plausible and they skillfully mix entertainment with military studies teachings. Also, this example fits well with one of the overall themes of the entire work: analysis and planning before action. The final quote is not found in the *Seven Military Classics*, but appears to be inspired by their style and content.

<sup>20</sup> *Heike hyōban*, vol. 13 (comment on the *Heike*, Ch. 7:2 "The Northern Campaign").

## Conclusion

The *Heike hyōban* is an important commentarial work showing how the *Heike monogatari* was linked with the field of military studies in the early Edo period. Unlike the *Heike monogatari* that was written by courtiers and monks for various audiences including warriors, the *Heike hyōban* and *gunsho* texts in general were primarily written by warriors to educate and admonish warrior rulers and officials. The *Heike hyōban* may be described as a collection of didactic essays on the topics of governance, leadership, and ethics containing advice and admonition addressed to warrior rulers. Its ideological background is a mix of military studies with Confucian, Buddhist, and Shinto teachings. Priority is given to cultivating one's "heart/mind," attaining wisdom, following the "Great Way" of ancient sages, being well-versed both in civil and martial matters, and having foresight to prevent troubles before they arise. The *Heike hyōban* and *gunsho* works exemplify the political and ethical discourse cultivated among Edo-period warriors.

## Abbreviations

*Heike*: *Heike monogatari* (13th c.)

*Heike hyōban*: *Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō* (1650)

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- Heike monogatari hyōban hidenshō* 1650: 平家物語評判秘伝抄 [Commentary with Evaluations and Secret Transmissions about the Tale of the Heike]. 1650. Volumes 1–24. National Archives of Japan, <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/das/meta/F100000000000042995>.
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