

Uncovering Doorways to the Conceptual World of Medieval Japan:

Comparing *Kanseki* in the Kakuichi and Engyō Variants of the *Heike Monogatari*

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Introduction

When the second lord of the Mito domain, Mito Mitsukuni (1628–1701), initiated the compilation of the *Dai Nihonshi* (Great History of Japan), one of the materials employed as a historical source were *gunki monogatari* (military tales). Mitsukuni and his compilers depended significantly on the *Genpei Jōsuiki* (Record of the Rise and Fall of the Genji and Heike), a lengthy variant of the medieval classic the *Heike Monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike).⁽¹⁾ As Yamashita Hiroaki has pointed out, the compilers regarded the text as an effective standpoint from which to examine the historical record, but they also deleted additional episodes

(1) The *Heike Monogatari* is a chronicle of the Genpei War, a struggle between the Minamoto (Genji) and Taira (Heishi or Heike) clans fought from 1180 to 1185. The chronicle itself emerged a century later, and was diffused throughout the country by *biwa hōshi* (*biwa*-playing monks, often blind), giving birth to a range of variants which were then written down. To avoid confusion, the text will consistently be referred to as the *Heike Monogatari*, while the Heike family will be referred to as the Taira.

and phrases inserted in-between the main *Heike Monogatari* episodes, retaining only those without which the original story would not have made sense.⁽²⁾ While it is difficult to ascertain precisely what editorial principles the compilers of the *Dai Nihonshi* employed, generally speaking they considered additional episodes and phrases to be unnecessary and eliminated them from the tale where possible.⁽³⁾ This included a large number of allusions to Chinese-language works, generally referred to as *kanseki*, which feature prominently in many variants of the *Heike Monogatari*.

However, within a historical framework concerned with separating and discarding anything considered false or unverifiable, which was ostensibly the approach of the Mito compilers, such episodes and phrases in the *Heike Monogatari* alluding to Chinese writings tended to be considered merely unnecessary embellishments. It is not surprising that many readers have continued to see such allusions in a similar light, down to the present. However, it is a mistake to so readily dismiss the *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari*. Firstly, even if not directly related to historical facts, the insertion of such elements indicates the perspective of the

(2) Yamashita Hiroaki, “Heike Monogatari ni okeru ‘Shiki’ no Kinō: Yoshinaka to Yoritomo no Fuwa wo Megutte,” in *Chusei Bungaku to Kanbun-gaku: Wakan Hikaku Bungaku Sōsho*, Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1987), 151–152. Yamashita’s article is a study of allusions to the *Shiki* (Records of the Grand Historian) of Sima Qian (c. 145–86 BC) in the *Heike*. Examples of elements retained by the compilers include a phrase concerning Zhu Mai Chen (朱買臣) as a model for the actions of Saitō Sanemori, or the old man episode which brought out Sanemori’s fame as a warrior.

(3) As Yamashita observes, “although they [the Mito compilers] stated that it was for [the purpose of] finding historical facts, what kind of principle they established in dealing with such old phrases is ambiguous” (ibid.)

authors or compilers of the variant in question, as well as the broader perspective of society at the time of the work's compilation. Furthermore, within the discourse of the tale itself, such elements often served a functional purpose: even the Mito scholars admitted that some of the *kanseki* were essential to the structure of the tale itself. The present study seeks to discuss the function and meaning of these *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari*, through considering leading perspectives on the topic, articulating a functional approach, and undertaking a textual analysis through comparison of examples taken from the Kakuichi and Engyō variants of the tale.⁽⁴⁾

Approaching “*Kanseki*” in the *Heike Monogatari*

A conventional definition of “*kanseki*” would be Chinese-language materials of Chinese origin, meaning simply works written in Classical Chinese within China itself (in contrast to materials written using Chinese characters but originating from other countries). However, as Nonaka Tesshō has pointed out, if one employs a broader definition from the perspective of the historiography of the *Heike Monogatari*, encompassing “Chinese” materials that illustrate the complexity of the tale, then one finds not only “pure Chinese” writings such as historical chronicles, but

(4) The Kakuichi variant of the *Heike Monogatari* has been the basis for several translations of the tale into English, notably: A. L. Sadler, *The Heike Monogatari*, in *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, XLVI, Part II (1918); Hiroshi Kitagawa and Bruce T. Scuchida, *The Tale of the Heike*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975, 1977); Helen C. McCullough, *The Tale of the Heike* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); and Royall Tyler, *The Tale of the Heike* (New York: Viking Adult, 2012). The Engyōbon has yet, to the author's knowledge, to be translated.

also writings by Japanese, collections of extracts from texts, commentaries on Japanese-style Chinese poetry, and “Japanized” Chinese books.⁽⁵⁾

There is no single text of the *Heike Monogatari* that predominates, but instead a range of variants, some of which are quite dissimilar in many respects.⁽⁶⁾ Accordingly, the variants also make use of *kanseki* in varying

(5) Nonaka Tesshō, “Heike Monogatari Kanseki no Juyō,” in *Heike Monogatari Juyō to Henyō: Anata ga Yomu Heike Monogatari*, Vol. 4 (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1993), 109.

(6) There is a large body of scholarship concerning differences among the variants. For example, Matsuo Ashie discusses the differences between the Yashiro variant and Kakuichi variant; she believes that this helps us to understand various fundamental questions regarding the *Tale of the Heike*, such as its original form and its achievements (Matsuo Ashie, “Yaichi-bon to Kakuichi-bon no Aida: Heike Monogatari no Kanbunteki Yōso kara,” in *Gunki to Kanbungaku: Wakan Hikaku Bungaku Sōsho*, Vol. 15 (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1993), 145).

There has also been something of a tendency to essentialize variants and treat them in set ways, which is something newer scholarship has criticized. For example, in terms of the evaluation of the Engyō variant, Kobayashi Yoshikazu argues that “There has been a general trend where the Engyō variant, as a later edited volume, is evaluated apart from the scope of the discourse of the *Heike* as a literary work. Conversely, in scholarship which asserts the oldness of the Engyō variant, the shallowness of the variant as a literary work is pointed out,” (*Heike Monogatari Seisei-ron* (Tokyo: Miyai Shoten, 1986), 111).

English-language scholarship on the *Heike Monogatari* has tended to be overwhelmingly focused on the Kakuichi variant, as evidenced by the translations of this variant, and only this variant, into English (see note 4 above). However, David T. Bialock has criticized this approach and demonstrated the value of considering other variants in *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories: Narrative, Ritual, and Royal Authority from The Chronicles of Japan to the Tale of the Heike* (Stanford: Stanford Univer-

degrees and ways. The major division in variants of the *Heike Monogatari* is between those variants intended to be read (written variants), and those intended to be recited (recited variants). This distinction is also significant for *kanseki*. Many of the written variants have a strongly “Chinese” character, utilizing Chinese-style writing or making substantial use of Chinese words, while this is much less pronounced in the recited variants, a distinction upon which Matsuo Ashie has commented.⁽⁷⁾

In spite of this significant difference, studies of *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari* have been overwhelmingly focused on the Kakuichi variant, a situation Nonaka described two decades ago that has yet to be rectified.⁽⁸⁾ The development of the field has nonetheless witnessed the emergence of several distinct perspectives that warrant brief attention. Research on *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari* began with a quest for origins—scholars focused on finding the origins of words, phrases, and episodes which appeared in the tale. This was largely born from the field of annotation, with the publication of annotated works begun by the Kokugaku (nativist studies) scholars in the Edo Period. More specifically, the study of the origins of various rhetorical elements in the *Heike Monogatari* was begun in 1926 by Ōhashi in an article listing as many as 167 examples of sentences based on Chinese poetry or prose written in China or Japan, a number much larger than that of sentences related to mat-

sity Press, 2007). Recently some English-language scholars have taken up the challenge, such as Vyjayanthi R. Selinger, whose *Authorizing the Shogunate: Ritual and Material Symbolism in the Literary Construction of Warrior Order* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) incorporates an analysis of the *Genpei Jōsuiki* variant.

(7) Matsuo, 146.

(8) Nonaka, 119.

ters such as Buddhism.⁽⁹⁾

While early studies depended primarily on tracing the influence of conventional Chinese sources, newer work revealed that many “non-traditional” *kanseki* were also utilized in the *Heike Monogatari*. In this regard, the works of Kuroda Akira and Makino Kazuo are most notable. Kuroda, in particular, paid attention to the books used for education in medieval Japan, and the commentaries thereon, and emphasized a distinct Japanese tradition of reception of Chinese writings. His work is particularly significant in terms of expanding the field from the search for origins to inquiring into how people understood those texts in medieval Japan.⁽¹⁰⁾ Makino took a similar approach, discussing the situation of education and the tale-production sphere, especially as pertaining to the Engyō variant.⁽¹¹⁾ As Nonaka observed, it soon became standard practice to approach the *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari* from the perspective of education in medieval Japan, reflecting how the field had moved towards articulating how *kanseki* were incorporated into the texts in relation to broader trends in medieval society.⁽¹²⁾

This approach can be applied not only to particular phrases and rhetoric, but also to long episodes in themselves. Kobayashi Yoshikazu proved that even some episodes which appeared to have been following histori-

(9) Ibid., 110.

(10) Kuroda refers to this in many of his works as the “world of ‘medieval Japanese Shiki’.” See, for example, *Chūsei Setsuwa no Bungakushiteki Kankyō Zoku* (Tokyo: Izumi Shoin, 1996), and *Sōbu Oboegaki: Chūsei Shiki no Sekai kara*, in *Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Shiryō Shinshū*, Vol. 7: *Heike Monogatari Katari to Gentai* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1987).

(11) See, for example, Makino Kazuo, *Chūsei no Setsuwa to Gakumon* (Tokyo: Izumi Shoin, 1991).

(12) Nonaka, 120–122.

cal fact were actually based on elaborated combinations of various military records.⁽¹³⁾ It is then not surprising that there are expressions from *kanseki* present in the tale; rather, their usage reflects the circumstances of education and knowledge at the time, along the lines of what Kuroda demonstrated. This is just one example of how the field of study has moved from a search for the origins of the *kanseki* elements in the *Heike Monogatari* to the study of the reception of those *kanseki* at the time.

Another new sphere of inquiry, also suggested by Nonaka, is a functional approach, considering the functions served by quotations, or *koji*, from *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari*.⁽¹⁴⁾ This approach works backwards, considering what kind of effect the allusion was intended to induce in the reader. There are already several works concerning this issue, and this approach too sees differences in *kanseki* usage between variants as clues to the perspective of the compilers. Saeki Shin'ichi, for example, discussed the differences in *koji* quotations between recited variants and the Engyō variant, and found that the latter contained stronger criticism of Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), while the recited variants were comparatively lighter in this aspect.⁽¹⁵⁾

Finally, yet another approach Nonaka suggested was the discussion of intellectual aspects of *kanseki*, meaning employing *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari* as a clue to help access and understand the ideologies and intellectual frameworks of the time when the work was produced.⁽¹⁶⁾ On one level, this sort of thinking is not entirely new—Ozaki Isamu, for

(13) As stated by Takehisa Tsuyoshi, in *Heike Monogatari no Zentaizō* (Tokyo: Izumi Shoin, 1996), 67.

(14) Nonaka, 123.

(15) As summarized by Nonaka, 123.

(16) Nonaka, 123–127.

example, has pointed out that the dream of a young warrior in the “Strange Occurrences” episode has always been taken to indicate the intellectual relations between the *Heike Monogatari* and the *Gukanshō* of Jien.⁽¹⁷⁾ However, it is entirely possible to focus on the *kanseki* specifically as a path to approach the intellectual world that gave birth to the *Heike Monogatari*. While many works have touched on these aspects, there remains no scholarship dealing specifically with this issue.

Broadly speaking then, studies on the *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari* have moved from a search for origins to a broader concern with aspects of the medieval Japanese world from which the *Heike Monogatari* emerged. The emphasis is no longer on the ‘original’ Chinese texts themselves, but instead on how those texts were understood by the contemporary Japanese audience, who may have been more familiar with various Japanese commentaries on those texts, and most certainly would have read them through the lens of the intellectual and political concerns of their own time.

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- (17) Ozaki Isamu, “Shisō to shitenō Heike Monogatari,” in *Heike Monogatari to Rekishi* (Tokyo: Yūseido, 1994), 149. Kobayashi Yoshikazu reflects on this issue as well, and provides some comparisons between the two works. In one example, she shows how the exile of a subject is portrayed both in the *Gukanshō*, where it is recorded as historical fact with details, and in the Engyō variant of the *Heike Monogatari*, where, in line with the theme of the poor relationship between the sovereign and the retired sovereign, extraneous information is cut and the crisis of the time is brought forward (Kobayashi, *Heike Monogatari Seisei-ron*, 67). Behind the different modes of operation, the two works reveal a common intellectual base which indicates, for Kobayashi, the possibility of a common sphere of production. We can thus go further than Kobayashi and suggest, then, that particular elements of these works can be clues that provide insight into the intellectual climate of the time that produced them.

Comparing *Kanseki* as a Doorway to the Contemporary Intellectual World

Drawing on the insights of the newer scholarship just discussed, the present study seeks to consider *kanseki* in light of what they can tell us about the perspective of the compilers and the contemporary intellectual world they inhabited. The analysis below draws upon a comparison of two texts chosen from among the many variants of the *Heike Monogatari*, namely the Kakuichi variant,⁽¹⁸⁾ which is representative of recited variants, and the Engyō variant, which is known for containing many Chinese allusions.⁽¹⁹⁾ The comparison will consider certain episodes and how they are treated in each variant, to ascertain what perspective towards these episodes is conveyed and the role that the *kanseki* allusions play in facilitating that understanding. Consequently, the focus will be on extended *kanseki* episodes rather than phrases or particular words.

One of the basic differences between the Kakuichi and Engyō variants is the recited-written dichotomy, although this is not the only aspect to keep in mind when comparing them. Kobayashi Yoshikazu emphasizes how the Engyō variant is a particularly complex text, necessitating its being approached from various perspectives.⁽²⁰⁾ Of greater significance

(18) In this paper, Kakuichi variant chapter titles and quotations are taken from Helen C. McCullough's translation. The Engyō variant translations are the author's own.

(19) Kobayashi argues that the Engyō variant contains large numbers of sentences or phrases based on Chinese classics, and that they all convey the morals of governance or related topics, which clearly reveal the underpinnings of the author's perspective (*Heike Monogatari Seisei-ron*, 90).

(20) Kobayashi Yoshikazu, "Engyōbon Heike Monogatari no Hensan Ito to sono Kenseiken ni tsuite," in *Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Taisei: Heike Monogatari*, Vol. I (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1990), 292.

for the current project, however, is not the variants' relative complexity, but rather the different perspectives being presented in them, reflecting the different compilers and times of composition. There have been studies comparing the two variants in question, such as a thought-provoking article by Nakamura Aya, who focused on aspects of *Waka*.⁽²¹⁾ Examining the episodes concerned with the Taira leaving the capital, particularly Tadamori because he is a representative poet among the Taira, she reveals how poetry functions in the *Heike Monogatari*. For example, the episode "Tadanori's Flight from the Capital," she argues, can be analyzed in the Kakuichi variant as conveying the sadness of the fate facing a once-flourishing people in decline, whereas in the Engyō variant it is but one more example of a sad episode during battle or an episode about a warrior poet.⁽²²⁾ In a similar way, the current study seeks to draw out the significance of the differences between the variants through focusing on their *kanseki*.

It is vital to first move away from perspectives that consider the *kanseki* to be merely added components or extraneous details that contribute little to the work. While the *kanseki* episodes are clearly important for what they can tell us about the intellectual life of the medieval Japanese compilers, these *kanseki* were not just included for the sake of form, but served a particular meaning in the work itself, and should be considered as important in their own right. As Kobayashi points out, the Engyō variant contains numerous collateral episodes which appear to be irrelevant to the storyline, and tend to give the impression of disturbing the

(21) Nakamura Aya, "Heike Monogatari to Waka: Heike Miyakoochi no Shodan wo Megutte," in *Heike Monogatari Juyō to Henyō: Anata ga Yomu Heike Monogatari*, Vol. 4 (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1993).

(22) Ibid., 91.

structure of the tale when compared to the major recited variants.⁽²³⁾ However, she finds that these supposedly “collateral” episodes were actually listed and carefully arranged in the work with a clear structure in mind, and significantly, most of them are located in a core part of the variant.⁽²⁴⁾ The same is true for instances where *koji* episodes are quoted; in each case, she argues, after the episode is quoted the work always returns to the dimensions of the basic (framing) episode.⁽²⁵⁾ Kobayashi explains how this style of writing is a fundamental characteristic of the work, and that therefore the *koji* in the Engyō variant are not merely collateral or extended episodes, but rather a central element which convey the structure and style of this variant.⁽²⁶⁾ Her argument holds true for the *kanseki* in particular, which were inserted for an intended purpose and should be analyzed as an intrinsic part of the text. Furthermore, it is important to note that although the episodes with Chinese *koji* do return to the basic storyline, they leave the reader with a different impression of the framing episode. Their presence is thus an integral part of the experience of the text.

This returns us to the matter of how the usage of *kanseki* differs between the two variants, and how the episodes change due to their presence as well as their form.⁽²⁷⁾ By analyzing the meaning and func-

(23) Kobayashi, *Heike Monogatari Seisei-ron*, 111–112.

(24) Ibid.

(25) Ibid., 120–122.

(26) Ibid. Although Kobayashi does not distinguish between Japanese *koji* and Chinese *koji*, treating them collectively, the present study instead focuses on Chinese *koji*, given that they are one of the major characteristics of the Engyō variant and are thus a helpful point of departure.

(27) The first episodes we can think of as *kanseki* are most likely the Sōbu or Kanyokyu episodes since these are quite long and form one section by

tions of such *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari*, it becomes possible to better locate the Engyō variant in relation to other *Heike Monogatari* variants. Various differences between the texts are established or reinforced through the presence of *kanseki*. For example, consider the “Thrush Monster” episode, which will be discussed in more detail below: while in the Kakuichi variant this episode is presented as a celebration of warriors, or at least of the warrior spirit of Yorimasa, in the Engyō variant, an additional *kanseki* concerning an iron monster is included. How does the presence of this *kanseki* change the framing episode? What insights into the intellectual world of the compiler and their era can be gleaned from analyzing this? In fact, a different textual world situated both within and behind the *Heike Monogatari* is shaped in each variant, so that alternative readings of one variant emerge more clearly through comparison with another variant.

It is not the intention of the current study to formulate a single cohesive argument about the role of *kanseki* in either variant, since it may depend on the framing episode and other factors, but rather to demonstrate how analyzing the function and meaning of *kanseki* within their respective framing episodes can prompt us to consider issues about the compiler’s concerns, and thereby not only gain a new appreciation of the text but also insight into the intellectual perspectives of the world that produced it.⁽²⁸⁾

themselves. However, the present study focuses on other episodes which do not in and of themselves constitute sections, in order to see the differences between, and functions of, *kanseki* within the framing episodes of the *Heike Monogatari*.

- (28) It is essential to avoid collapsing the complexities of a variant into an essentialized form, which is why the present study foregoes constructing

Textual Analysis

The textual analysis is divided into two sections. The first concerns episodes from the *Heike Monogatari* where both the Kakuichi and Engyō variants use the same *kanseki* in the episode, but due to the length of the *kanseki* used, the emphasis and/or meaning differs between the variants. The second concerns *Heike Monogatari* episodes in which no *kanseki* episode appears in the Kakuichi variant, whereas the Engyō variant contains a lengthy *kanseki* episode.

Same Episode, But Different Extent of *Kanseki*

1. Twice an Imperial Consort

One of the most obvious examples of this pattern can be found in the episode entitled, “Twice an Imperial Consort.” This *Heike Monogatari* episode is well-known for showing the characteristics of Nijō Tennō (1143–1165) and depicting the despair of the time. The *kanseki* appears in the part of the episode when the court is discussing the issue of whether a woman (Fujiwara no Tashi) can serve as the *kisaki* (queen consort, empress) of two sovereigns.⁽²⁹⁾ It is quite short in the Kakuichi

a strong argument around a particular variant in general. Yamashita Hiroaki also warns us of the risks of simplistically systemizing various *Heike* variants, when we should consider the differences of each variant and the individual intentions behind them (Nonaka, 120).

- (29) Fujiwara no Tashi (or Masaruko, 1149–1201) was a daughter of Tokudaiji Kinyoshi, and was adopted by Fujiwara no Yorinaga at the age of 3. In 1150 she entered the back palace of Konoe Tennō and became his consort, but did not have a fortunate life at court. Konoe passed away in 1155, and Tashi lost her adopted father Yorinaga in 1156. In 1160, Tashi

variant, as can be seen below:

Upon investigation of foreign precedents, we find that the Chinese Empress Zetian, consort to Taizong of Tang and stepmother to Gaozong, became Gaozong's Empress after Taizong's death. However, that example from a foreign country is not applicable here. In Japan, no woman has ever been the Empress of two sovereigns in all the more than seventy human reigns since Emperor Jinmu.⁽³⁰⁾

The *kanseki* mentions only that there was a precedent for such a phenomenon in a foreign country—that is, Tang China—but stresses that this should not be applicable to Japan; note that it does not even mention the reason for such a precedent. The impression given the audience is only that this precedent is not applicable since it occurred in another land, while no parallel Japanese precedent could be found. As Hirano Satsuki argues in her study of the usage of words employed to describe China, in this episode this *kanseki* appears to play the role of highlighting the greatness of Japan by demeaning China.⁽³¹⁾

How, then, does this *kanseki* function in the Engyō variant? The Engyō variant gives us the following:

entered the back palace of Nijō Tennō, and after his death in 1165, she became a nun.

(30) McCullough, 38.

(31) Hirano argues that the character “異” (different, another) is a term which basically emphasizes Japan by dissimilating China; that is to say, China serves as a foil for Japan (Hirano Satsuki, “Engyōbon Heike Monogatari no Tai-Chūgoku Ishiki nit suite,” in *Gunki to Kanbungaku: Wakan Hikaku Bungaku Sōsho*, Vol. 15 (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1993), 110. This is the character which is used in this episode.

Upon the investigation of foreign precedents, we find that the Chinese Empress Zetian had become consort to both Taizong and Gaozong. The Empress Zetian was a consort to Taizong and the stepmother of Gaozong. She outlived Taizong and was confined to the Kangyo convert as a nun. Gaozong requested she enter his court and assist him in governing. Imperial messengers visited her five times, but she was not willing to follow [the request]. Then, the Emperor paid an imperial visit to the Kangyo convert, and told her, "I am not asking this only for myself. This is just for the nation." Even upon this imperial remark, the Empress did not say anything positive, but said "I have entered Buddhist practice for the deceased former Emperor; I shall not expect to return to the secular world." Upon these words, the Emperor and his subjects calmly investigated old books, and strongly requested that she return to the palace; however, the Empress resolutely did not alter her decision. Then, the followers [subjects] of the Emperor brought her back to the capital by force.

Emperor Gaozong reigned for thirty-four years, while the nation was calm and people enjoyed peace. Since both the Emperor and Empress ruled the nation together, the reign was called "the era of two peaces." After Gaozong's passing, the Empress took the throne as a female sovereign. The era name was changed to "Two-Peace Reign." Since she was a granddaughter of the king of Zhou, she changed the name of the dynasty and called herself Great Sovereign Zetian of Great Zhou.

In lament the subjects said, "The way the previous Emperor

Gaozong ruled the county should be said to have been without parallel in history. It is not the case that no son of Gaozong exists. We request that the throne be given to the crown prince, and so have the achievements of Gaozong endure.” Thus, in the twenty-first year of her reign, she gave the throne to Chongzong, a son of Gaozong. The era [name] changed, and it came to be called the first year of the Great Tang Divine Dragon: that is the second year of Keiun, in the reign of Monmu Tennō, in our country.

Although there was a precedent for a woman to be Empress to two sovereigns in a foreign country, investigating the precedents in our own country, such a precedent has never been heard of in more than seventy human reigns from the time of Jinmu Tennō. All of the courtiers said this in a meeting.⁽³²⁾

As we can see at a glance, the *kanseki* in the Engyō variant is without question much longer in length. This characteristic is, however, not unique to the Engyō variant alone. The Yashiro variant and other variants also quote the detailed *kanseki* in “Twice as Imperial Consort,” and in this regard variants which include a much shorter version, such as the Kakuichi variant, are in fact in the minority. Matsuo Ashie, who has studied this issue, argues that this episode conveys a perspective more critical of Nijō Tennō in the Yashiro variant.⁽³³⁾ Matsuo points out that

(32) Kitahara Yasuo and Eiichi Ogawa, eds, *Engyōbon Heike Monogatari: Honbun hen* (Jō) (Tokyo, Benseisha, 1990), 48. Hereafter, *Engyōbon*. Empress Wu Zetian (625–705) was the only woman in Chinese history to rule as an empress regnant rather than deriving her authority through a husband or son nominally occupying the throne.

when the courtiers take a position against a woman serving as consort twice, they raise two issues: first, that Japan differs from other lands, and that by inference the customs of the latter may not necessarily apply to the former, and second, that the case during Gaozong's era was exceptional in character. While the Kakuichi variant includes the former reasoning, the second is completely absent.⁽³⁴⁾

Interestingly, while the *Heike Monogatari* framing episode explains that it was the beauty of Tashi which prompted Nijō Tennō's decision to take her into his back palace, the *kanseki* does not mention the beauty of the Empress at all. Taking this into account together with the reason for the Empress becoming an imperial consort twice, the *kanseki* in the Engyō variant causes the image of Nijō Tennō to shift from that of a mistaken sovereign on the wrong path to that of a more thoughtful sovereign who put the needs of the state before his own desires.

Another issue to consider is how in the *kanseki* Emperor Gaozong's decision to take the Empress into his court is supported by his courtiers, in contrast to the framing episode in which everyone is against Nijō Tennō's decision. It is only with the death of Gaozong that the Chinese courtiers lament. Notably, so long as she was co-ruling with Gaozong the background of the Empress was not a matter of serious concern. However, her decision to become sovereign herself, and change the name of the dynasty, were deeds which caused her courtiers to become upset. Putting the issues behind the ascension and rule of the historical Empress Wu aside, the function of the episode within the *Heike Monogatari* likely reflected the situation in Japanese society at the time, criticiz-

(33) Matsuo, 152.

(34) Ibid.

ing a woman taking on a more powerful position than she was deemed fit to hold. Historically, although there was no such woman connected to Nijō Tennō, his father, Go-Shirakawa, had a favorite consort, Tango-no-Tsubone. Emperor Gaozong is clearly paralleled to Nijō, and not Go-Shirakawa, and this episode tends to be understood as a critique of Nijō given that Go-Shirakawa himself was against Nijō's decision to take Tashi as his consort. However, a careful reading of the longer *kanseki* in the Engyō variant actually suggests a critique of Go-Shirakawa coming to the forefront. One of the characteristics of the Engyō variant in general, as Kobayashi has pointed out, is its critical attitude towards Go-Shirakawa.⁽³⁵⁾ The *kanseki* in this episode is one example of this tendency, while serving more generally as a warning against the emergence of such women into the corridors of power.

It warrants mention here that the Engyō variant is generally believed to have quoted directly from the original Chinese texts in most cases, without employing subsequent editing to make the *kanseki* suit the framing *Heike Monogatari* episode. This makes for a particularly strong contrast with the Kakuichi variant. As Matsuo observes,

While the Engyō variant normally quotes from the original text directly, although sometimes implying the existence of other sources, the Kakuichi variant digests *kanseki* very well, and transforms them in order to make them suitable for the organization of the Kakuichi variant.⁽³⁶⁾

(35) Kobayashi, "Engyōbon Heike Monogatari no Hensan Ito to sono Kens-eiken ni tsuite," 279–280.

(36) Matsuo, 158.

However, as Kuroda Akio has revealed in his scholarship, most of the *kanseki* quoted in the *Heike Monogatari* variants are not taken directly from the original Chinese texts, but rather from their “Japanized” versions.⁽³⁷⁾ Therefore, even if such “direct quotation” from the work does not appear at a glance to be highly effective, the fact that the source text had already been ‘processed’ into the Japanese intellectual sphere suggests that the *kanseki* and their method of incorporation into the *Heike Monogatari* texts may be more relevant than is often assumed.

2. The Matter of the Signal Fires

As another type of example of the Kakuichi and Engyō variants using the same *kanseki* but to a different degree, we can consider the episode entitled “The Matter of the Signal Fires.” This episode is a sequel to the preceding episode, “The Admonition,” in which Shigemori (1138–1179), Kiyomori (1118–1181)’s first son who is often understood to be a figure representing loyalty and filiality in the Taira family, attempts to convince Kiyomori not to confine the retired sovereign Go-Shirakawa, by using the logic of rendering loyalty to one’s lord. In this episode, Shigemori bemoans the pain of being caught in a limbo between loyalty and filial duty.⁽³⁸⁾ He calls for his warriors, and many come to his mansion, where-

(37) This is an ongoing theme in Kuroda’s work.

(38) The historicity of this characteristic of Shigemori is in question; however, at least in the *Heike Monogatari*, he suffers being in this limbo due to his idealistic personality. This is clearly illustrated by this famous remark of his: “How grievous that I must instantly forget my father’s kindnesses, which tower higher than the eighty-thousand-league summit of Mount Sumeru, in order to render loyal service to my lord! How painful that I must become a disloyal traitor to my lord in order to avoid the sin of unfilial conduct!” (McCullough, 76).

upon follows a *kanseki*, framed within the scene in which he makes a speech to them. In the Kakuichi variant, this scene unfolds as follows:

“It is admirable that you have come here in obedience to our long-standing covenant,” he said. “Something of the sort happened in another land. King You of Zhou possessed a beloved consort, Baosi, who was the greatest beauty in the country. The King’s only complaint was her excessive solemnity; no smile ever appeared on her face. Now it was the Chinese custom, in times of military alarm, to assemble soldiers by lighting fires in various places and beating drums. Such fires were known as signal fires. An emergency arose one day, and the signal fires were lit. When the royal consort saw them, she said, ‘My goodness! Look at all those fires!’ A smile touched her lips for the first time, and ‘the single smile cast a hundred spells.’ After that, the delighted King You constantly ordered signal fires when there was no emergency. Upon arriving, the vassals would find no enemy; finding no enemy, they would go off again. After the same thing had happened many times, they all stopped coming. One day, raiders from a neighboring state attacked King You’s capital. The signal fires were lit, but the warriors stayed home because they thought the king was merely entertaining his consort as usual. The capital fell, and King You was overthrown. Most horrifyingly, the consort turned into a fox, ran off, and was never seen again.”⁽³⁹⁾

(39) McCullough, 77. King You (795–771 BC) was the last ruler of the Western Zhou Dynasty, his defeat ushering in the Spring and Autumn Period (771–446 BC). Historically he was defeated not by barbarians but by the deposed queen and her supporters.

Here, the *kanseki* is used to illustrate the importance of the warriors coming to Shigemori no matter what happens, even if, as in the story, they have reason to believe they are not really required when summoned. The *kanseki* thus serves to instruct the warriors in how they should serve Shigemori, and it does so through negative example. Tad-amori is paralleled to King You, in that both occupy a position that requires them to summon their warriors, but Shigemori is clearly not so fickle a person as King You. By demanding that the samurai respond to his summons, Shigemori's authority and greatness is emphasized through obvious parallelization with a king, while serving to distinguish him at the same time—unlike King You, Shigemori has warriors who respond loyally time and time again, the subtle implication being that, also unlike King You, Shigemori is a good lord. The *kanseki* thus plays a key role within its framing episode: it suggests that King You was a bad ruler who to indulge his consort led the country to ruin, and who was served by disloyal men who came only when they believed there was cause to do so; whereas Shigemori, being the inverse in that he has loyal men who come when they are called regardless of the reason, is also presumed to be the inverse of King You in that he is a good lord. The *kanseki* clearly places strong emphasis on the relationship between a lord and his warriors. Note that while the *kanseki* ends with the nature of the consort being revealed to be, in fact, a fox, a revelation which is described as a “most horrifying” thing, the association between this fact and the episode is obscure.

How, then, does the *kanseki* function in the Engyō variant? The title of the corresponding Engyō variant framing episode is “Shigemori Collects His Force. Appendix: Regarding King You.” In this account, the basic story about Baosi, the beloved consort of King You, is the same. The sig-

nificant difference between the account of this episode given in the two variants is the ending, which in the Engyō variant runs as follows:

“[...] One day, a barbarian army attacked the country to destroy King You. Then the king had the signal fires lit and had the drums beat; however, soldiers all over the country thought this was done to make the consort smile, and no one came. As a result, King You was immediately overthrown. The barbarian army took the consort Baosi with them and returned to their own state. Since then, a beauty came to be called “endangerer of the state.” It is also read as “ruining a capital.” This reading had been admonished at that time; however, now it is still called “endangerer of the state” in the capital. The consort turned into a fox with three tails, and ran off to an old cave. There is indeed a source [to the effect] that a fox takes the shape of a woman and deceives human minds. Take that into consideration.” Shigemori spoke thus.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Although the storyline is the same, the additional sentences at the end of this *kanseki* give us a different impression. In the Kakuichi variant, the emphasis is more strongly placed on the ties between Shigemori and the warriors, but in the Engyō variant, the consort comes to hold more meaning. The consort being in reality a fox is an element shared by both versions; however, in the Engyō variant the fox has three tails, indicating that it was much more than just a normal fox, but more likely a trickster spirit, unlike the fox in the Kakuichi variant. As if in response to this, the meaning of the consort having been a fox is made clear in that the text

(40) *Engyōbon*, 153–154.

explains that she deceived King You. The emphasis on the king having been deceived by an other-worldly being conveys a different perspective than that found in the Kakuichi account. Thus, the reason why this fact was “most horrifying,” which was left rather unclear in the Kakuichi variant, is made clear by reading the extended episode given in the Engyō variant—the episode implies, in fact, the weakness of the human mind which can so easily be deceived into bringing about the ruin of the state itself.

In this case, then, the question arises of who is the deceived person Shigemori had in mind when he was making the speech arises. Given that Shigemori was trying to stop Kiyomori in this episode of the *Heike Monogatari*, we can understand that it is in fact Kiyomori who has been deceived by a fox, and that this deception then served as a reason for Kiyomori’s actions, which were not acceptable for Shigemori.

However, if we take the episode literally and take the meaning of the term “endangerer of the state” into serious consideration, then surely the “fox” which deceives the human mind would be an imperial consort, and here again the name that comes to mind is that of Go-Shirakawa’s consort Tango-no-Tsubone. As mentioned above, Shigemori suffered from being caught in a limbo between his father and his royal lord; however, he is normally understood as having been closer to the court side.⁽⁴¹⁾ When the last few words of Shigemori’s remarks in this episode are combined with the possibility that the “fox” was an imperial consort, however, although Shigemori appeared to have been closer to the court (in this case, Retired Sovereign Go-Shirakawa), he comes instead to appear

(41) Such a view on his part can be found in his argument in the “Admonition” episode.

a severe critic of Go-Shirakawa. Moreover, by introducing the term “endangerer of the state,” he portrays himself as being critical of such women as well, since from his perspective they contribute to leading the court astray, and even to the ruination of the country itself.⁽⁴²⁾ In this episode, then, as Kobayashi mentioned, we can see not only a critical attitude toward Go-Shirakawa, but also a critique of the turbulent times of the Engyō variant itself.⁽⁴³⁾

Episodes in Which *Kanseki* are Present Only in the Engyō Variant

This section considers a selection of episodes where no *kanseki* appears in the Kakuichi variant, but does in the Engyō variant. The analysis here is more thorough than in the previous section, which for the sake of length had to be limited in scope.

1. Page-Boy Cuts

The episode entitled “Page-Boy Cuts” relates both the authority and the outrageous actions of Kiyomori. This episode, detailing Kiyomori’s use of a group of page boys to enforce his will, is normally understood as one of the early episodes that portray the reasons for the decline of the Taira family. While some variants feature a *kanseki* relating to the page boys, none exists in the Kakuichi variant. That variant gives the follow-

(42) These negative views of women, which become clear in both “Twice an Imperial Consort” and “The Matter of Signal Fires,” probably reflect the change in the position of women in the medieval era.

(43) Kobayashi, “Engyōbon Heike Monogatari no Hensan Ito to sono Kenseiken ni tsuite,” 279–280.

ing description of the page boys:

Kiyomori had hit on the notion of recruiting three hundred messenger boys, from fourteen to sixteen years of age, whom he sent ranging over the city in page-boy haircuts and red *hitatare*. If anyone chanced to speak against the Heike, nothing happened if none of those youths heard him. Otherwise, the boy would alert his comrades, and a gang of them would burst into the person's house, confiscate his belongings, and march him off under arrest to Rokuhara. So people did not discuss the Heike, regardless of what they might see or know. The very words "the Rokuhara Lord's page-boy cuts" were enough to make horsemen and carriages swerve from their paths. There was no question of demanding a boy's name if he went in and out of the imperial palace gates; the officials seemed to avert their eyes.⁽⁴⁴⁾

In the Engyō variant, on the other hand, after the section describing the page boys, the following *kanseki* is inserted to explain the reason for their hair style, and why they numbered precisely three hundred:

Around this time, someone said, "In the first place, this 'page-boy cut' is incomprehensible. Even if they were hired to pick up information from all over Kyoto, they could just be regular boys. What is the reason that they all have "*kaburo*"? If one of them is missed from the group, a replacement is made and the number limited to 300; which is also suspicious. There must be some detailed reason."

(44) McCullough, 28.

Upon [hearing] this, a Confucian scholar said, "I hear that there was such a precedent in a foreign country. In the reign of a Han Emperor, there was a minister called Wang Mang, whose intelligence was commendable. In order to seize the rank of sovereign, he made a plot as follows. He went to a beach and captured turtles, [numbering] more than several hundred thousand. Then, he set them free to the various seas, after having drawn the character "victory" on their shells. Furthermore, he made horses and humans from copper, and put them through knots in bamboo. In the bamboo forests in nearby countries, he placed many of these. After that, he collected three hundred women who were in their seventh month of pregnancy, and had them to take things which were made from red cinnabar and a medicine called Man'yaku. At the fullness of time, they gave birth to their babies. They were all colored red and wholly looked like demons. He had those children shut in a deep mountain and raised without acknowledging this to anyone. When they had somehow grown up, he composed a song and had them to sing it. The song was, "The character "victory" is on the turtle shells. There are copper-made horses and human figures in the bamboo forests. These are signs that Wang Mang should rule the country." When those children reached around 14 or 15 years of age, he cut their hair at the shoulder and let them go to the capital. They all sang this song.

Since this was not normal, people wondered about it and reported it to the sovereign. The court summoned the boys to the southern garden. They came while singing the song, as well as counting the cadence as before. The sovereign's doubt was substantial. Thus, the

courtiers had a meeting. In order to verify if the song was right or wrong, they had fishermen at various seashores to capture turtles. Among them, there were many turtles which had the character “victory” on their shells. Also, the investigation of nearby bamboo forests also led to the discovery of a lot of copper-made horses and men. The sovereign was very surprised at this, and left the throne to give it to Wang Mang. He ruled for eighteen years, I hear. So, it must be because the Buddhist Novice [i.e. Kiyomori] followed this incident that he takes three hundred boys into his service. Whether or not he is aiming at the throne is hard to know.”⁽⁴⁵⁾

If the purpose of this *kanseki* was merely, as stated, to answer the questions posed, then it would function just as a reference. To ascertain if this is really the case, let us now consider the presentation of the page boys in terms of the *Heike Monogatari* episode alone, as in the Kakuichi variant, and with the *kanseki* incorporated, as in the Engyō variant.

1a. Images of Page Boys: The Fear of “Sameness”

In the *Heike Monogatari* episode by itself, the page boys play the role of reporting things to Kiyomori. They are, needless to say, a symbol of Kiyomori’s overbearing attitude, and they frighten and intimidate people. Even though they are hired by Kiyomori, they are described as if they are acting on their own will, terrifying the population of the capital. In the *kanseki*, however, the boys are just tools of Wang Mang like the tur-

(45) *Engyōbon*, 32–33. While the account is fictionalized, the historical Wang Mang did engage in all manner of conspiracies during his rise to power, including trying to convince people Heaven favored him to rule through creating auspicious signs and the like.

tles or copper images, their role being limited to that of proclaiming these other supposed “miracles.” They are not depicted as having their own wills, and even though their existence itself inspired great wonder among the populace, they do not frighten people by spying on them. Rather, they are passive figures, performing the simple role of proclamation for which they were created by Wang Mang. In this regard, they are no different from dolls, which possess the potential to cause fear through the absence of discernible difference from other members of their group, not only in terms of identical hair style or clothing, but in their total appearance and behavior. The page boys’ marked difference from the rest of the population, while at the same time, their identical appearance amongst themselves, can be disturbing.

If we re-read the *Heike Monogatari* episode based on this understanding of the page boys, this disturbing feeling is further heightened to the point of becoming overbearing. Much as is the case with observing a modern military, one may be left with an impression of awe but also a lingering fear that those who become so thoroughly uniform no longer possess a voice of their own, and are doomed, like the page boys of Wang Mang, to be nothing but the mouth piece and hands of those who control them. It becomes understandable why people questioned why the page boys were abnormal not in the sense of them being different from others, but in the sense of them, as a group, being all the same.

A key element of this uniformity is the red *hitatare*, which the page boys wear like a uniform. In the Kakuichi variant, which lacks the *kanseki*, there is no explanatory reference or even question concerning the color, and as a result, the meaning may be missed altogether. It is possible to think about the *hitatare* in association with the battle colors of the Heike and Genji, being red and white, respectively. From this perspec-

tive, the color of the *hitatare* could be taken as meaning that the page boys are clearly indicating that they serve the Heike. However, one has to ask whether it was really necessary to indicate their camp by color, particularly off the battlefield.

The *kanseki* included in the Engyō variant, on the other hand, provides a different possibility for the meaning of the color. Here, the page boys which were used by Wang Mang all had red faces due to a medicinal concoction that he forced their mothers to drink before they gave birth. Although the purpose of Wang Mang's doing this is not directly explained in the episode, it is not hard to speculate that he intentionally tried to make them look different—that is, to deliberately separate them from normal human beings in order to increase their effectiveness as a tool to evoke fear or wonder—from some of the sentences in the account.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The boys thus appear otherworldly, but uniformly so, like a race of demons, and are therefore particularly frightening since they are not a freak occurrence, which might explain one or two cases of such children, but rather an entire group uniform in appearance and purpose. While their presence was apparently intended by Wang Mang to appear miraculous, they can just as easily appear monstrous; either way, there is a sense of the natural order being upset or overturned, which is a particularly suitable image for someone attempting to seize the throne and therefore upset the political order. When understood in the context of the *kanseki* provided in variants such as the Engyō variant, the color of the page boys' clothes reminds us of the red demon-like boys of Wang

(46) The most obvious example being, "Their bodies were red, so they all looked like demons" (*Engyōbon*, 33). While the color red was associated with the Han Dynasty in five-phase theory, it is unlikely that this was the association at which Wang Mang was aiming.

Mang, and also suggests a parallel, then, between him and Kiyomori, an important issue that will be considered next.

1b. Images of Kiyomori: Power and Japanese Kingship

If this *kanseki* is the origin of the *Heike Monogatari* episode, as is suggested by the Engyō variant, then Wang Mang is clearly being paralleled with Kiyomori. Since Wang Mang undertook his plot in order to make himself sovereign, then just as the Engyō variant suggests at the end of this episode, it could be understood that Kiyomori too might be aiming at seizing the Japanese throne. This certainly appears to be one of the images that this particular *kanseki* creates when it is combined with the details of the *Heike Monogatari* episode in which it is set, wherein Kiyomori's assertion of power over people through the use of the page boys is emphasized. The *kanseki* thus builds on the imagery already established in the framing episode to suggest the possibility that Kiyomori's rise to power poses a threat to the political, or even natural, order.

This, needless to say, contributes to a negative image of Kiyomori. The Heike lord ends up depicted as a person who cannot be satisfied with having power and the ability to oppress people; rather, he wants to go so far as to become the sovereign, a goal which is simply not permitted to him. Such a representation of him, characterized by something of a 'vaulting ambition' as it were, naturally helps the reader understand why the Taira declined, and further gives the impression that this decline was well-deserved. This is one reading that emerges from the *kanseki*; however, it is by no means the only one. If we read the *kanseki* carefully and reflect upon it alongside its *Heike Monogatari* frame, then an alternative perspective emerges. Wang Mang carefully created a long-range plan to convince people, including the sovereign himself, that the throne should

be handed to him.⁽⁴⁷⁾ This plot was carefully developed in the shadows, to await the right time for its implementation. If Wang Mang is reflected in the creation of Kiyomori's image, then we can see from this not an outrageous person who suppressed people as the *Heike Monogatari* episode presents by itself, but rather an ingenious person who acts behind the curtain to pursue his own ambitions.

The historicity of such an image of Kiyomori is, of course, questionable. However, at least we see that the *Heike Monogatari* presents, especially in the Kakuichi variant of the "Page-Boy Cuts" episode which lacks any *kanseki*, a Kiyomori almost completely opposite from Wang Mang in character. What, then, is the meaning of this *kanseki* here? Was it included merely for the page boy reference? Not even the Engyō variant actually states that Kiyomori wanted to be sovereign. Rather, it only suggests such an implication based on the *kanseki*. Kiyomori, as the *Heike Monogatari* framing episode shows, already possessed actual power which could reach beyond that of the sovereign and control people. Furthermore, the Engyō variant indicates that Kiyomori knew about the Wang Mang episode, and apparently adopted one of the latter's strategies (namely, the 300 page boys). However, unlike Wang Mang, who in the *kanseki* account formed a long-range plan aimed at gaining the

(47) We should also note that while the *Heike Monogatari* page boys use violence to assert their control over people and create a climate of fear, the demonic boys of Wang Mang do not even threaten violence. Wang Mang's seizure of the throne is brought about through the use of trickery to convince others that he is supported by divine elements, and he gains this position without having to hurt others (although one can argue, perhaps in a particularly modern vein, that his creation of the boys is itself doing violence to them as it makes them monstrous).

throne, and then proceeded with this plan in order to receive the throne ‘naturally’ without causing anyone to become antagonistic, Kiyomori’s actions can be understood as being almost totally the opposite. From this perspective, then, the *kanseki* here may also function to gently indicate that Kiyomori did not actually intend to aim at the throne (for he did not do as Wang Mang did), to the contrary of the immediate impression one might have.

Here, it is crucial to recall the differences in the concept of sovereignty between Japan and China. In China, it was understood that the dynasty could (and occasionally should) change, and royal succession was not limited to members of one royal family. While just an idealized situation, the theoretical framework—the notion of “virtuous rulership” legitimated by a mandate from Heaven—was in place to enable the possibility that a truly virtuous individual could receive the throne if recognized as more worthy to rule than the sitting monarch. In Japan, on the contrary, this was not even a theoretical possibility, for it was not permitted for anyone outside of the royal family to take the throne, irrespective of how virtuous or powerful he may have been.⁽⁴⁸⁾

The absence of an ideological framework permitting dynastic change did not prevent those outside of the royal family from amassing enor-

(48) That being said, Imatani Akira’s work revealed how Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, the third shogun of the Muromachi Bakufu, attempted to put his favorite son on the throne and establish himself in the position of a retired sovereign. His attempt failed, most obviously due to his sudden death; however, Imatani argues that Yoshimitsu was actually very close to making his idea a reality, and that this situation represented the gravest threat to the royal family of losing the throne to a non-royal family member. For further details, refer to Imatani’s *Muromachi no ōken* (Tokyo, Chūōkōronsha, 1988).

mous power and influence. By any standard of actual power, Kiyomori occupied a higher position than did the Japanese sovereign. Although people may have been displeased with his outrageous behavior, the description that they averted their eyes suggests that they either could not oppose him, or were unwilling to risk their own status by doing so. Rather than attempt to seize the throne himself, Kiyomori can be understood as working around it within the framework of the time. By comparing Kiyomori in Japan with Wang Mang in China, then, this *kanseki* helps shed light on the established concepts and system of sovereignty in Japan.

2. The Thrush Monsters

The episode entitled “The Thrush Monsters” celebrates Minamoto no Yorimasa (1106–1180) as an expert in both martial and literary skills, by relating his twin successes at shooting monsters which bothered sovereigns, and his skill at poetry exchanges between himself and high-ranking courtiers, before lamenting his death due to defeat in a revolt. The Engyō variant treatment of the episode is almost the same as that of the Kakuichi variant, except for the *kanseki* below, which in the Engyō variant follows the end of the narrative of Yorimasa and the monsters. Although it is quite long, I have translated the entire *kanseki* from the Engyō variant “Thrush Monsters” episode here, since this is one of the most interesting examples to consider when studying the function of *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari*:

In the past, there was a king during the Han Dynasty. This king had been excessively enjoying pleasure, so that he said, “What kind of thing is misfortune? I would very much like to see.” Upon this impe-

rial request, the ministers and courtiers looked for a thing called misfortune, but could not find [such a thing]. One day, a boy came down from Heaven, and told a minister, “This is what is called misfortune. Raise it.” And the boy returned [to Heaven].

Taking [that which the boy had given], it was [revealed to be] a small bug. The king was very pleased to hear this, and he looked after it. Wondering what it ate, he gave it various kinds of food, but it did not eat at all. One day, because it was too mysterious, he gave it various kinds of stones or metals. Among these, it ate iron. As days passed, it greatly grew in size. Gradually, it came to grow as big as a dog, and reached even the size of a lion; however, it did not eat anything aside from iron. After it consumed the entire stock of iron, it sucked up the nails of the people’s houses, starting from the imperial palace, and ate them. After that, there came to be no place, from the imperial palace to a house, which was complete. It indeed appeared to be a misfortune of the nation. This monster had been growing day by day, and there did not seem to be any limit [to its growth].

Even at that time [the size was very big], so there was worrying about how big it could be later, and so the court summoned the warriors from all parts of the country, and had them to shoot the monster. However, since the monster’s body was made of iron, no arrow stuck in it at all. Even trying to cut it with a sword did not work. Since iron [from which a sword is made] was the monster’s favorite, it ate the swords as well. Thus, they eventually piled up wood and put the monster into the pile and burned it with fire: it lasted for

seven days and seven nights. It was thought that the monster had disappeared; however, burning iron emerged from the fire, and everything which it touched burned down completely. The places in the mountains and fields which it passed produced smoke, and some of those places burned: there were too many to express with words.

Since it had become difficult for people to live in this country, and they had no other ideas about what to do, the court called together experienced monks and had them to perform the Tendō [heavenly boy] ritual for twenty-one days. On the seventeenth day, the monster left the borders of the country, and never appeared thereafter. Everyone, the king and his people, were highly delighted. The heavenly boy had conquered the monster, (I wonder); it left for another country and died in the mountains there. After death, it was transformed into a stone called a magnet. Since it liked eating iron while it was alive, even after it turned into a stone after its death, it remained a thing which took iron, which is frightening. This is what we call a “mountain of magnets” now.

The monster [consisted of] seven animal parts, I heard. Its nose was [that of an] elephant, its forehead and stomach were [those of a] dragon, its neck was [that of a] lion, its back was [that of a] fabulous dolphin/killer whale, its skin was [that of a] panther, its tail was [that of a] cow, and its legs were [those of a] cat, they say. It is this animal which is called “Baku,” and people have [used] its drawing as a charm even until the present day. The thrush monster which the Lord Yorimasa shot was also, although not as much as this monster, a mysterious beast.⁽⁴⁹⁾

As we can see, this extended allusion appears to venture quite far from the original *Heike Monogatari* episode, which focuses on Yorimasa. In the Engyō version of the episode, the *kanseki* does not quite fit into the categories which Yamashita suggested as the functions of *kanseki*—an analogy that provides either, 1) a deepening of the understanding of the story, 2) an illustration of the story, or 3) the conformity of a character to a model.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The only similarity between the “Thrush Monsters” episode and that of the Chinese story is the presence of a bizarre monster. The last line in the *kanseki* makes one question whether, in fact, this entire episode might have been inserted just to emphasize the strangeness of the thrush monster. However, this is not really the case. A careful analysis actually reveals that there are numerous meaningful issues to consider here.

2a. Monsters and Humans

First, the Kakuichi variant ends with the celebration of Yorimasa for his excellence at martial skills and poetry, an emphasis on warriors’ skills in general to some extent, and a concluding sentence expressing regret that Yorimasa revolted, all of which reveals the clear intention of this episode. By contrast, the Engyō variant shifts the meaning of this episode from that of the Kakuichi variant by adding a *kanseki* that then presents the meaning of the episode as an encounter with strange things. What is emphasized is no longer Yorimasa, but rather, the monster.

Interestingly, the title of this episode in the Kakuichi variant is “The Thrush Monsters,” while in the Engyō variant it is entitled “About Yori-

(49) *Engyōbon*, 403–405.

(50) Yamashita, 153.

masa Shooting the Thrush Monsters.” Considering the titles, one might expect the Kakuichi variant to focus on the monster, but as we have seen, by having an extensive *kanseki* at the end of the framing episode, it is instead the Engyō variant that emphasizes the monster. This peculiar situation, where the titles almost appear reversed across the variants, might have been the result of the compiler(s) of the Kakuichi variant (reputedly the newer of the two) recognizing the pattern in the Engyō variant—that is, that the focus was originally on the thrush monster itself, and not Yorimasa—and titling the Kakuichi episode accordingly, despite editing out the *kanseki* that gave the episode that meaning. In the absence of clear textual evidence this can only remain speculation; however, the possibility does prompt us to think of what Saeki called the “creation” of the Kakuichi variant from a different perspective.

The thrush monster itself does not seem to appear in any other works of literature, making it exclusive to the world of the *Heike Monogatari*. The description of the monster is quite bizarre, but the overall appearance itself is described as resembling a bird⁽⁵¹⁾ in the Kakuichi variant, while the creature in the Engyō variant’s *kanseki* appears to more closely resemble a beast. The animal parts which comprise the thrush monster and the iron monster in the *kanseki* are also completely different. While the thrush monster is described as “an unspeakably fearsome apparition with a monkey’s head, a badger’s body, a snake’s tail, and a tiger’s legs, and which uttered a cry like that of the golden mountain thrush,”⁽⁵²⁾ the monster in the *kanseki* is comprised of parts from a larger number of animals, most of which do not correlate to those comprising the thrush

(51) “A grotesque bird that was said to be a thrush monster,” (McCullough, 162–163).

(52) McCullough, 162.

monster.⁽⁵³⁾

Another point deserving attention in the description of the monsters is that the head of the Kakuichi thrush monster is that of a monkey, which is rather close in form to that of a human being (and indeed, in folklore monkeys are depicted as interacting with humans or even engaging in marriage, while the same cannot be said of most of the animals that comprise the iron monster). Although the thrush monster is still a “monster,” when compared to the monster in the *kanseki*, it is comparably closer to a human in appearance (notably in appearing to be a mammal and possessing a monkey’s head and a badger’s body). On the other hand, the Engyō variant attempts to emphasize the strange, otherworldly nature of the thrush monster by using the *kanseki*, featuring a monster that has an overall appearance which is anything but human-like (the creature itself, after all, consists of iron, suggesting it would be cold-blooded and making its imagery more reptilian, although we are told that it grew from an insect). Of the two variants, then, the Engyō variant rendering of this episode reveals a stronger tendency to maintain a distance between humans and monsters.

2b. Warriors or Buddhism?

Due to the presence of this lengthy *kanseki*, the emphasis on the greatness of Yorimasa as a warrior is necessarily lessened. In the core “Thrush Monsters” episode, he is selected to face the monster due to his martial prowess, and because there was a precedent for a warrior’s contribution to the court, while it was considered a warrior’s responsibility

(53) Note that another characteristic of the thrush monster is its crying voice.

Contrast this with the monster in the *kanseki*, which does not make a sound even once.

to protect the court from rebels or violators of imperial commands.⁽⁵⁴⁾ A celebration of warriors and their martial valor thus appears to be a key theme in this episode.

In the *kanseki*, however, the warriors prove to be useless. Although they are summoned, like Yorimasa, specifically to destroy a monster, everything they try results in failure. One cannot expect a scene resembling the one where, “In an excess of admiration, His Majesty granted Yorimasa the gift of a sword called Shishio [Lion King].”⁽⁵⁵⁾ In the *kanseki*, even swords—which in the framing *Heike Monogatari* episode symbolize warrior prowess and through their bestowal by a sovereign function as a tool to recognize the greatness of a warrior and his high status—merely result in revealing the inadequacy of the warriors, for the monster simply consumes the weapons drawn against it. The inability of the warriors to do anything without their weapons, and the very act of being disarmed by the creature they are attempting to destroy, is utterly humiliating.

Instead, it is Buddhism which saves the state from great misfortune. What makes this particularly noteworthy is that in the framing *Heike Monogatari* episode (i.e. in both the Kakuichi and Engyō variants), Buddhist monks explicitly *fail* to eliminate the trouble from the sovereign:

Yorimasa had performed his greatest exploit during the reign of Emperor Konoe. Around the Ninpei era, the sovereign was being frightened almost senseless night after night. Able monks of high

(54) Yorimasa himself makes a remark that, “From of old, the mission of warriors posted to the court has been to repulse rebels and destroy violators of imperial commands,” (McCullough, 161).

(55) Ibid., 162.

status had been commissioned to conduct large rituals and secret rituals, but their exertions had proved ineffective.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Against the thrush monster, it is not Buddhist rituals, but martial skill that triumphs. The status of the warriors and the Buddhist monks are thus reversed: while Buddhist rituals and not warriors prove effective against the iron monster in the Engyō variant's *kanseki*, the precise opposite is true in the framing episode. In other words, as we move from China back to Japan, the role of protecting the state completely shifts from Buddhist monks to warriors.

In the sense of the “destroying a monster” pattern employed by both the framing episode and the *kanseki*, Yorimasa can be called a hero because of his success in shooting the thrush monster. We have to recognize, however, that it is not the livelihood of the entire populace, but rather just that of the sovereign, which he saved. In the *kanseki*, by contrast, the entire population is endangered due to the emergence of the monster from a different world. While the sovereign is troubled by the monster, the focus does not rest on him but on the suffering of the state as a whole. In this regard, Yorimasa is a hero only in association with the sovereign. This is an important distinction to make. While in their respective episodes the Buddhist monks and warriors triumph over their monstrous opponents, Buddhism is clearly presented as a protector of the state in its entirety. Warriors, on the other hand, as represented by Yorimasa, cannot protect the entire state, but rather serve to protect the sovereign and the court.

(56) Ibid., 161.

2c. The Sovereign

Following on from the issue above, let us consider the role of the sovereign in the framing *Heike Monogatari* episode and in the *kanseki*. In the framing “Thrush Monsters” episode, the sovereign is presented as having a passive existence. Two individual sovereigns appear, Konoe and Nijō; however, their function in the episode is merely to serve as a target for the monster and to grant a sword to Yorimasa in recognition of his martial skill. In the *kanseki*, however, the sovereign plays a far more important, and far more negative, role, since it is he who thoughtlessly invites “misfortune” upon himself and his state. Rather than being the victim of a monster’s attention like the sovereign in the framing episode, here the sovereign foolishly brings such suffering upon himself. This image of a sovereign as depicted in the *kanseki* is far from ideal; he is so sheltered that he has never known “misfortune,” and has no idea what may transpire should such a thing befall the state. Despite occupying the position of sovereign, he is naïve and does not realize his shortcomings until they bring forth a far larger problem for all concerned. He is therefore also a far less sympathetic character than is the Japanese sovereign in the framing episode.

Kobayashi argues that the Engyō variant displays the royal lineage, or the court centered on the sovereign, and adopts an attitude of celebrating it.⁽⁵⁷⁾ However, even taking only this episode as an example, it is evident that with such a negative view of the sovereign given in the *kanseki*, the “Thrush Monsters” episode ultimately creates a more negative image of sovereigns through this parallelism in the Engyō variant than it does in the Kakuichi variant which lacks the *kanseki*. A more critical

(57) Kobayashi, *Heike Monogatari Seisei-ron*, 86.

view of the Japanese sovereign can thus be located here.

On a related note, another aspect worthy of attention is the fact that although it is not at all clear why the sovereigns are attacked by monsters in the Kakuichi variant, the Noh play version portrays it as a punishment from Heaven.⁽⁵⁸⁾ There is no guarantee, of course, that the Noh Play “Thrush Monster” is based on the Engyō version of this episode; however, the *kanseki* surely presents us with a different image of the sovereign than that which appears in the “Thrush Monsters” episode alone. Although the framing episode remains the same, re-reading the episode based on the *kanseki* provides the reader with a completely different impression.

Conclusion

This study has sought to examine a range of interpretations of episodes of the *Heike Monogatari* in the Kakuichi and Engyō variants by focusing on the usage of *kanseki*. It is well-known that the *Heike Monogatari* contains a large number of *kanseki* in many forms, including words, phrases, and longer episodes, and that the Engyō variant is particularly notable for its amount in this regard, but more than that, these *kanseki* alter the impression of the framing episodes in which they are set. They are not mere superfluous details, but rather add to the work in their own right.

Through comparing the *kanseki* in the two different variants, several

(58) *Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* 59: *Yōkyōkushū* (2), (Tokyo: Shōgakusan, 1998), 457. The line runs: “思えば頼政が[§], 矢先よりは, 君の天罰を当たりけるよと, 今こそ思ひ知られたれ.” Since most of the sentences in Noh plays retain ambiguity, other interpretations may also be possible.

perspectives emerged that are essential in understanding medieval Japan; these included Buddhism, conceptions of the human and non-human (i.e. the monstrous), kingship, warriors, and women.

Although it is not the intention of the present study to formulate an argument about comparing the variants more broadly, it is nevertheless clear that the *kanseki* present a different enough view in the Engyō variant from that of the Kakuichi variant to enable us to draw some conclusions about the intellectual concerns and perspectives of the compilers of both. For example, many of the *kanseki* in the Engyō variant serve to introduce more mysterious elements, such as monsters, than are found in the Kakuichi variant, offering an alternative viewpoint on the world of medieval Japan from that offered by the Kakuichi variant alone. While amongst the framing *Heike Monogatari* episodes discussed only the “Thrush Monsters” episode clearly contains a monster, even among the other framing episodes covered in this study we can sense, when these episodes are read alongside the *kanseki* from the Engyō variant with consideration given to the latter’s function, the presence of shadows of monster life and activity in medieval society. For instance, we can conceive of Kiyomori’s page boys as “social monsters” that appear human but behave in a more bestial way than do their demon-colored counterparts of Wang Mang.

Such a consideration then enables us to step beyond broad generalizations and conceive of medieval Japan in its myriad aspects. It is for this reason that the importance of the function of *kanseki* in the *Heike Monogatari* should be better understood, for as this study has attempted to demonstrate, they are useful not only for studying the *Heike Monogatari* itself, but also as a departure point to approach some of the issues that comprised the medieval Japanese world.

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