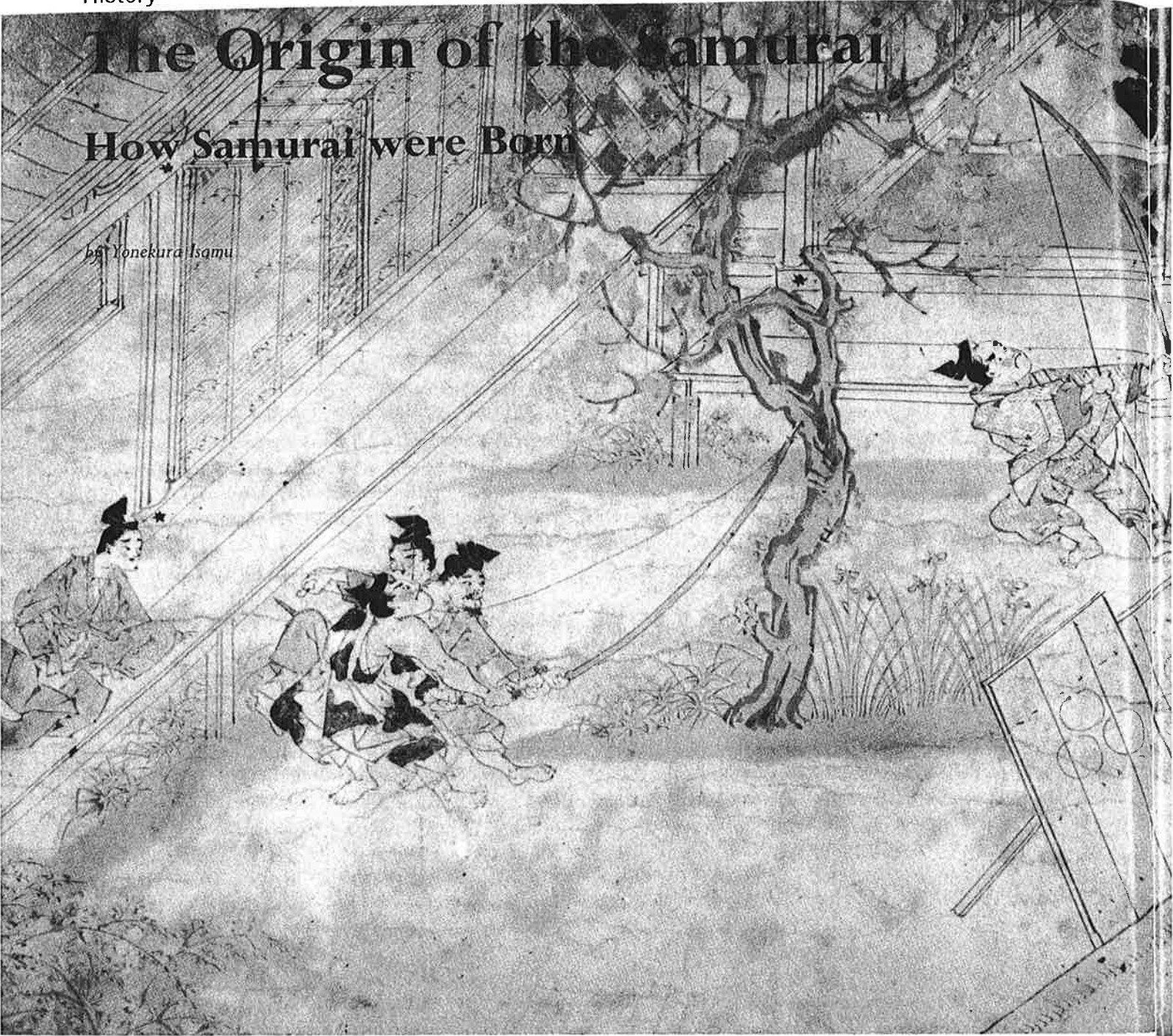


# The Origin of the Samurai

## How Samurai were Born

by Yonekura Isamu



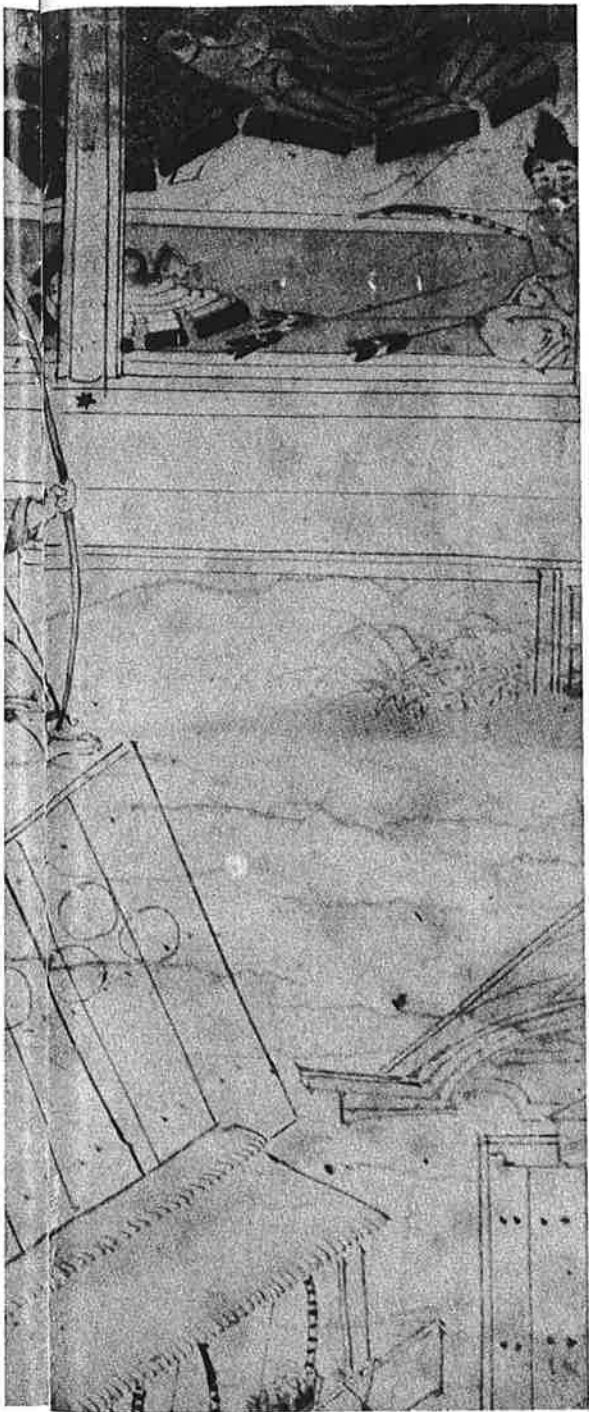
Samurai testing the strength of their bows, the symbol of a samurai's position. (From *Obusuma-saburō-ekotoba*, Agency for Cultural Affairs).

When Taira no Masakado (?-940), a warlord who lived in the middle of the Heian Period, rose in revolt against the Court and established his own "Kingdom" in the Kantō area calling himself Shin-nō, the New Emperor, his brother Masahira addressed a remonstrance to Masakado: "One can

arrogate the Imperial Throne neither by surpassing others in intellectual competitions nor by subjugating the nation by force. Since ancient times every emperor has been granted the throne by the Mandate of Heaven. Therefore, if you fail to act with circumspection, you will earn the censure

of future generations. I reprove you from behaving without discretion."

Masakado disdainfully dismissed his brother's admonitions, flatly stating: "Battles with bows and arrows have been waged since the most ancient times not only in this country but in China as well. To repel arrows aimed



at oneself by shooting arrows in self-defense is but securing one's own position. Not only have I established my renown as the supreme warrior who rules over the Bandō (Kantō) area but my reputation as an excellent general in battle has spread as far as the capital and indeed throughout all of the rural

districts of the nation. Our age dictates that those who are victorious become rulers. Although no precedent exists in the history of this country, such is the case in foreign lands. During the Enchō Era (923-930) when the King of Ch'itan conquered the country of Pohai, he called his new kingdom Tung-tan and ruled over it as king. This historical fact justifies subjugating land by force. Should the Imperial forces attempt to overcome the eight Bandō provinces under my control, I will garrison my two strongholds, Ashigara and Usui, and repel the Imperial forces to defend Bandō. Your counsels are absolutely meaningless."

This dialogue is recorded in the *Shōmon-ki*, a book which details Masakado's revolt in March 940 and was completed only three months after the Imperial army succeeded in suppressing the rebellion. Although there is no available means by which to verify the historical authenticity of the above dialogue, the fact remains that this book directly and clearly relates the birth of a new conception of the throne, a conception which propounds that he who is strongest becomes ruler. The traditional and reformist views of the throne are portrayed in the dialogue between Masahira and Masakado respectively.

The middle of the Heian Period (794-1191) was an age of two faces: one blossomed in the apex of the aristocratic culture in the capital, the other propelled the advent of a new class of samurai spreading throughout the rural districts. The most distinctive difference between the samurai class which was destined to finally grasp the reins of the government at the end of the twelfth century and the aristocrats was the emphasis samurai placed on valor and simplicity especially in the ethical norm defining the relationship between a lord and his retainers. What were the origins of this samurai class and how did it rise to become the new ruling class of the country?

## The Arming of the Peasants

AS I EXPLAINED in the last issue, the state ownership of land which had been enacted in the seventh century gradually collapsed until, by the end of the Heian Period (794-1191), most land was privately owned. In the middle of the Heian Period, vast manor lands privately owned by temples, shrines, noblemen and local clans had already arisen in various parts of the country. Land tenure during this period exhibited the eccentricities typical of transitional eras because two distinctly different land tenure systems existed simultaneously. The land owned by the state was worked by peasants who paid tax in the form of farm products and performed compulsory labor for the state. *Shōen*, privately-owned manor land, was completely free from state intervention and peasants working on manors paid taxation only to their manor lord at a figure much lower than that exacted by the state. In short, peasants were classified into two groups: *kōmin*, peasants who worked on state-owned land and *shōmin*, peasants whose names were deleted from civil registers because of their working on privately-owned manor lands. Because the status of the *shōmin* was less rigorous than that of *kōmin*, many *kōmin* fled to manor lands. This tendency became so widespread by the end of the Heian Period that in some provinces almost all *kōmin* changed their status to that of *shōmin*.

Although most land was owned by noblemen, temples, shrines and local clans, some provincial governors in active service, retired governors who had settled in the provinces they had formerly governed and their local descendants

come to possess deeds to private land. Noblemen who lived in the capital but possessed manors in local provinces appointed a *shōkan* to assume the position of supervisor over his manor. Almost all manor administration was left in the hands of these *shōkan* as noblemen seldom, if ever, visited their lands. Whatever advice or instructions they wanted implemented were written to the *shōkan*, from whom they received reports.

As the private ownership of land increased, conflicts between the manor owners themselves and between the governor and manor owners occurred with greater frequency. To protect their own interests, owners of manor lands, especially those of local clans, began to arm their *shōmin*. When conflicts broke out, *shōmin* would abandon their farm implements for bows, swords and spears in order to fight under the direction of their manor lord. These armed *shōmin* and their lords were the origin of the samurai. Although the police and precinct officials controlled by the provincial governors and the

soldiers administered by the national government without doubt contributed to the formation of the samurai, the group which composed the majority of what came to be called samurai were the local landowners with their *shōmin*.

These early samurai were trained in archery, hunting and equestrian skills in addition to having to fulfill their agricultural responsibilities. As the years passed, these "samurai" increased their influence until their military power and prowess finally exceeded even that of the government's army. Thereafter, when riots or rebellions broke out which the national army could not suppress themselves, owners with powerful private regiments would be called in as reinforcements. No longer able to ignore the power of the manor lords, the government began to appoint some of these men to such local governmental posts as governor of a province, deputy governor, police or judicial officials. The ranks of some of these positions were actually quite high in prestige, leading to the elevation in status of many local clans.

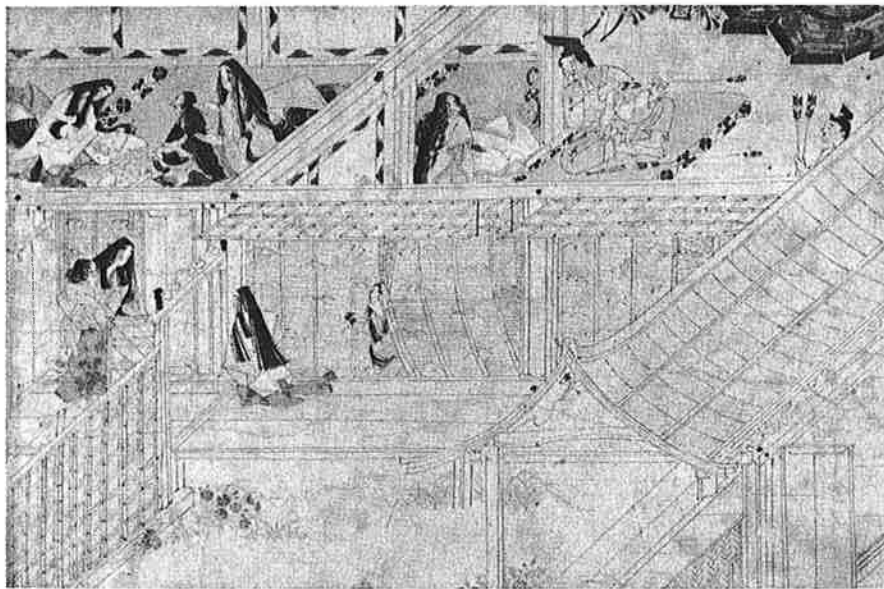
In the eleventh century, two major riots, the Zen-kunen-no-eki from 1051 to 1062 and Go-sannen-no-eki from 1083 to 1087, were instigated by local clans in the Ōu District (now Tōhoku). Since the "samurai" who had now become incorporated into the governmental army, especially those of the Minamoto clan, exhibited a valor and knowledge of military strategy which compared favorably with the Imperial forces in quelling these riots, the government was forced to realize the power of the Minamoto clan. Although the class of samurai still played only subordinate roles at this point, the stage was now set for the samurai class to rapidly elevate themselves to become the most important force in Japanese history over the next seven hundred years.

#### Loyalty to One's Lord Vs. Loyalty to the Government

LARGE LANDOWNERS during this early period could be easily divided into two groups: those who represented shrines, temples or noble families and those who were related to local clans and consequently more militant about defending their land. This basic character difference can be attributed to the two groups' foci of influence and prestige. Whereas the absentee landowners of the former group with their high social ranks and influential connections to the organs of power within the national government could rely on prestige and authority to control their domains, the heads of local clans had no such resources and were left with no alternative but to instil a sense of solidarity and loyalty among their *shōmin* whom they subsequently armed to protect mutual interests.

The unique relationship which

*This depicts the family life of a local samurai family. A menoto is holding a child of the samurai lord at the bottom left. (From Obusuma-saburō-ekotoba, Agency for Cultural Affairs.)*





Samurai mansion in Chikuzen Province (Fukuoka). (From *Ippen-shōnin-eden*, 1299, *Kankikōji Temple*, Kyōto).

evolved spontaneously between the *shōmin* and local clan lords was based on reciprocal benefits: the lord promised his *shōmin* security and protection and they, putting their trust in his honor and wisdom, repaid him with gratitude and absolute loyalty. *Shōmin* who saw their lord support their cause both against the state authorities and against members of other samurai clans who owned manors in the same province, were even prepared to sacrifice themselves and their families for their lord. The local clan lords of manors usually controlled two to three hundred *shōmin*, but in some exceptional cases as many as five hundred *shōmin* have been known to have been under his jurisdiction. Two types of *shōmin* were afforded

special privileges: the *ie-no-ko* who were related to the lord by blood and the *rōtō* whose families had served faithfully for successive generations. The tightly-knit communities of "samurai" forged by these ties, were sharply differentiated from the other manors where *kōmin* considered landowners merely as employers.

In the eleventh century some manorlords banded together to form larger communities under the direction of the most efficient and strongest lord in their area. In return for the protection and leadership offered by the local chieftain, the manorlords donated part of their land holdings. This "contract" between the manor lords and the local chieftain closely resembled the relationship between

the *shōmin* and their lord. From the viewpoint of the area chieftain, his clan relatives who were allied manor lords could be considered *ie-no-ko* and the other lords were his *rōtō*. Although the respect and allegiance accorded to samurai chieftains such as the Taira (Heiké) and the Minamoto (Genji) could partially be attributed to their lineage which could be traced back to a distant relative who had been a member of the Imperial family or of a high-ranking aristocratic clan, the major cause was the chieftain's unceasing efforts to secure their subordinate lords in a mutually beneficial relationship. Even when these leaders attended to duties in the capital, such as providing the garrisons for the Court or nobility, they felt their

first responsibility was to their samurai followers. This was in sharp contrast to the other absentee landlords who merely sent instructions to their manor supervisors and received reports in return.

The following episode related in the *Kojidan*, a collection of historical and legendary stories compiled in the thirteenth century, clearly illustrates the loyalty a samurai leader felt towards his allied lords. Minamoto no Yoshiie (1041-1108) was so renowned for his bravery and strength that he was known as Hachiman Tarō, the son of the God of War. When one of his *rōtō*, who owned a manor in Mino Province (Gifu Prefecture) passed a neighboring lord so closely that the rim of his straw hat brushed his neighbor's, a quarrel ensued which resulted in the neighbor cutting the string of the *rōtō*'s bow. Since a samurai's bow and his sword were symbolic of his position, the *rōtō* sent a messenger to his lord Yoshiie in Kyōto to inform him of this insult. Even though Yoshiie was attending a Buddhist mass held by his father Yoriyoshi when he received the message and even though the cause of the humiliation seemed quite trivial, he immediately left the service, returning to his lodging for armor and weapons to aid his ally. Hearing of his son's intrepid and rash reaction, Yoriyoshi sent his retainers to persuade his son from any foolhardy behavior, but Yoshiie rejected their advice and with three retainers sped to Mino Province. Hearing of Yoshiie's advance towards Mino, twenty-two allied samurai spontaneously set out to meet him at the manor of the enemy lord. Not expecting such immediate retaliation, the enemy had no garrisons protecting his property, so Yoshiie and his *rōtō* met no resistance when they



*A feudal lord surveying his manor, accompanied by his rōtō. (Ippen-shōnin-eden, Kankikōji Temple, Kyōto).*

set fire to the enemy's mansion. The enemy panicked, fleeing to the hills behind his mansion. When asked by his retainers if he would pursue the enemy into the hills and slay him, Yoshiie responded, "That coward has been sufficiently punished; let us return to the capital."

Such swift action on the part of Yoshiie avenging his ally's wrong on the day following the incident

shows that the ties between samurai chieftains and their allies were already well-formed by the eleventh century. Yoshiie may well be considered a paradigm example of early samurai leaders; many of his descendants revered him as the man who secured Minamoto power and influence in the Kantō district and tried to emulate his valor towards his allies and his compassion towards his enemies. Such

strong samurai spirit and allegiances were especially characteristic of the Minamoto who had their stronghold in the Kantō area. Without doubt, Yoshiié's example and determination laid the foundation for later Minamoto successes and ultimately for Minamoto no Yoritomo's establishment of the first samurai government in Kamakura (Kanagawa Prefecture) in the twelfth century.

Another distinctive imperative held by the class of samurai was that greater allegiance was owed to the lord than to any other authority including the national government. This value is vividly illustrated by the following episode, again taken from the *Kojidan*. Fujiwara no Motohira (see THE EAST, Vol. IX, No. 2), a twelfth century samurai who owned most of the land in Mutsu Province (Aomori and part of Iwaté Prefectures) had amassed so much influence and power that the Court-appointed governor of the province was merely a figurehead. One day the governor sent Imperial troops to investigate a piece of land claimed and occupied by the Fujiwara which he felt was in reality government-owned public land. To prohibit the government delegation from setting foot on the disputed land, Motohira's followers banded together under his direction. In the ensuing riot, many of the members of the government delegation were injured by Motohira's bowmen. After the government forces withdrew, Motohira became apprehensive of possible reprisals which might be inflicted on him and his allies for contravening government orders. When an assembly was held to discuss future action and Motohira's anxiety, one of his followers, Sueharu, decisively stated, "I have known throughout that countermeasures would be taken against us. Yet

despite this, I had no choice but to follow my lord's orders even if they are contrary to government dicta. Since we now face disaster, I will gladly offer my life to assist my lord. Please claim you had nothing to do with this incident; I will bear the blame. Deliver me to the governor and you will be secure."

Sueharu was duly handed over to the governor. It is said that when he was beheaded, he was serene. The loyalty shown by Sueharu to his lord represents the samurai ideal. The age of the samurai still inculcated the values of filial piety and duties to one's family, as can be seen from innumerable legends. Yet even if contrary to the law of the land and to the welfare and security of one's own kin, loyalty and service to the lord as an illustration of solidarity and affection was the utmost expression of the samurai spirit.

### The Education of the Samurai

THE WAY CHILDREN of samurai were raised and educated also contributed to strengthening the

alliance and loyalty between the feudal lords and their *kenin*, the manor lords who had sworn allegiance to him. When children of a lord were very young they were nursed and cared for by *menoto*, women who were the daughters of the lord's retainers, but their actual training was entrusted to *moriyaku*, preceptors who were chosen from among these retainers. *Menoto* were usually chosen from those families who had been loyal to the feudal lord for successive generations. Since her charges were children of the lord her family served, they received excessive affection and respect from their governess. By sparing no efforts in the performance of her duties, *menoto* could strengthen the bands of trust and loyalty between her own family and that of her lord. Since the *menoto*'s own children were often raised together with those of their lord, they felt not only loyal to their lord, but also felt the type of affection which usually characterizes the relationship between blood brothers and sisters.

The *Genpei-seisui-ki*, a war chronicle about the fluctuating destinies of the Taira and Minamoto clans written in the Kamakura Period

*Samurai and their rōtō setting out on a journey. (Ippen-shōnin-eden, Kankikōji Temple, Kyōto).*

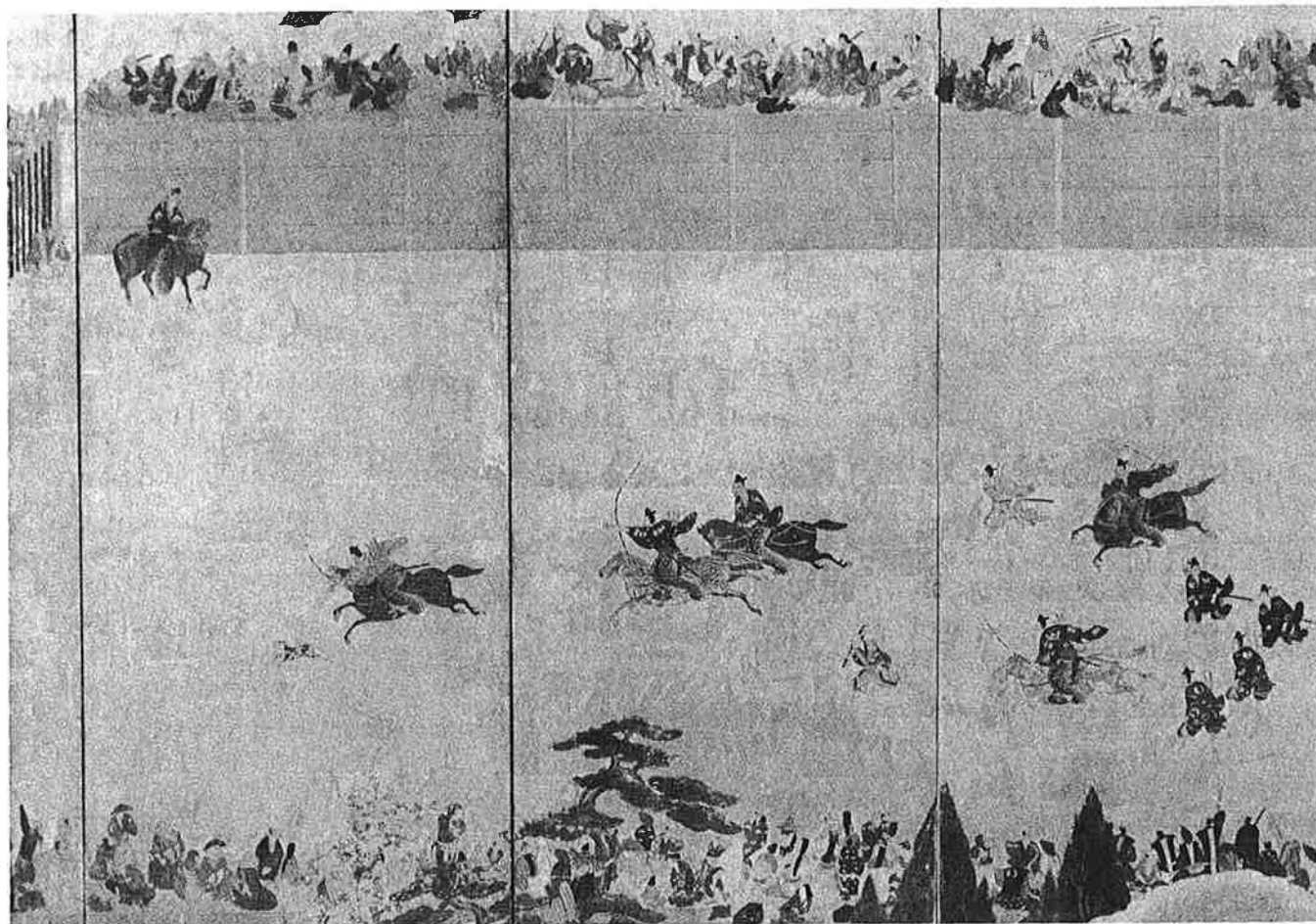


(1192-1333) describes many episodes about the relationship between feudal lords and *menotogo*, the natural children of the *menoto*. One such tells us of Minamoto no Yoshitsuné (1159-1189), the younger brother of the founder of the Kamakura Shōgunate whose childhood name was Ushiwaka (see THE EAST, Vol. XI, No. 3), on

had any dying request. Tsugunobu is said to have replied that dying for his lord was the way of bowmen (samurai). "Ever since I was born, I have known this to be my duty. I have no regrets at all for . . ."

Many of the stories written about the samurai of the late Heian Period express the willingness of loyal *menotogo* to serve their lords

wives served as *menoto*, were selected from among the most loyal retainers with long family histories of service to the lord's family. The feeling of paternal love which developed between the *moriyaku* and his charge further cemented the relationship between feudal lords and their retainers. According to the rendition related in the



In order to perfect their archery skills, samurai would aim at dogs from galloping horses. (From Inu-ou-monozu-byōbu folding screen, Tōkyō National Museum).

the Yashima battlefield in Shikoku in 1185. Just at the moment when an arrow shot by the enemy commander was about to pierce Yoshitsuné's breastplate, Satō Tsugunobu (1158-1185) threw himself in the path of the arrow, sacrificing himself for the welfare of his lord. Tsugunobu was both Yoshitsuné's *rōtō* and the son of his *menoto*. As Tsugunobu was about to breathe his last, Yoshitsuné asked him if he

faithfully and often die for their lords. Although many of these tales may be exaggerated, the action depicted in them, i.e. sacrificing oneself for one's lord, can definitely be regarded as an ethical ideal of samurai society.

When the son of a feudal lord was deemed ready for training in the martial arts, a *moriyaku* took over many of the duties of the *menoto*. These men, many of whose

*Genpei-seisui-ki*, when Sanada no Yoichi was about to lead the vanguard in attacking the Taira for his lord Yoritomo, his *moriyaku* said, "In your infancy I watched over you like a father, holding you in my arms at night and carrying you on my shoulders during the day. How I anticipated the day I would gaze on you and see a noble, valorous warrior. When you were five or six, I taught you how to shoot an

arrow at a target straight and true. I gave you detailed instructions on how to tame a horse and ride as one. Now you are twenty-five years of age, the flower of youth, and I have reached fifty-seven. Despite your young years, you have volunteered to die on the battlefield for our lord Yoritomo. My life would be meaningless if I survived you by not joining you on the battlefield."

The unique relationship which existed between lords and retainers and was maintained throughout successive generations can be attributed to various factors. Perhaps the most decisive of these was mutual reciprocity. In return for the lord's protection, retainers served him loyally and with a sense of gratitude. At the same time the communal life as represented by *menoto* and *moriyaku* engendered mutual affection between lords, lords' children and their guardian retainers.

### The Dawn of the World of Samurai

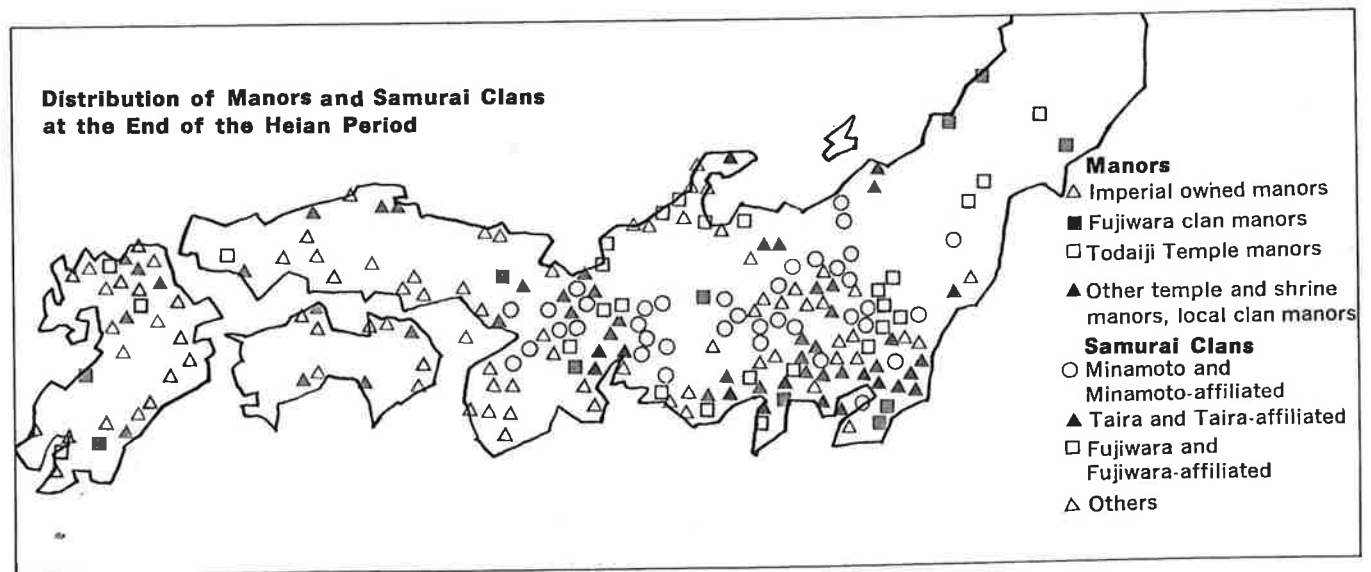
DESPITE THE power and influence samurai lords had amassed within their home districts in the eleventh century, they had not yet

realized their potential in playing a major substantial role on the national scene. During this early period samurai reflected the limitations indicated by the original meaning of the word samurai, "a man who is constantly on the alert to protect and guard his lord." The prestige and authority traditionally accorded the aristocracy to a great extent hindered the development of the samurai cause.

As the twelfth century unfolded, however, the country became more and more embroiled in social and institutional changes which impelled the samurai to greater heights of social status. The Imperial Court and aristocratic counselors guarded their prerogatives closely, yet in 1098, for the first time in history, the head of a samurai clan, Minamoto no Yoshiie, was granted the privilege called *shōden*, access to the special building in the Imperial Palace or in the detached villa of the retired Emperor where affairs of state were discussed and implemented. This milestone for the samurai class was attained by the dicta of the retired Emperor Shirakawa. In 1132 Taira no Tadamori (1096-1153), the head of the Minamoto's rival samurai clan, was granted the same privilege.

Despite the antagonism and jealousy generated among the aristocracy by the "upstart" samurai making inroads into their private domain and society, the nobles had little choice but to hide their contempt in the face of the overwhelming military power and influence held by the samurai. The rise of the samurai clans into privileged circles and their subsequent success in civil affairs was to a great degree, precipitated by the political institution known as the In. (The In is the term used to mean both the detached villa of the retired Emperor and the political system which sanctioned the retired Emperor taking an active role in civil affairs.) For centuries, the power of the aristocratic Fujiwara family had eclipsed even that of the Emperor. To try to break the stranglehold the Fujiwara held over national affairs, Emperors abdicated from their official duties in favor of their sons from the year 1086 to direct the administration from behind the scenes at the In. Since many of the aristocratic families were affiliated with the Fujiwara, the retired Emperor turned to the rising samurai class for his supporters.

At the turn of the eleventh century, the two most powerful samu-





## Chronology of Events

	A.D.	
	4th c.	National Unification under Yamato Court
	604	The 17-Article Constitution by Prince Shotoku
	645	Taika Reform
	672	Jinshin Revolt
Nara Period (710-784)	710	Capital set up in Nara
	794	Capital moved to Kyoto
Heian Period (794-1185)	1180-5	Battles between Genji and Heike clans
	1192	The Kamakura Shogunate of Minamoto no Yoritomo
Kamakura Period (1192-1333)	1274	Mongol Invasion
	1338	The Ashikaga Shogunate of Ashikaga Takauji
Muromachi Period (1336-1573)	1467-77	Onin Revolt
	1560	Battle at Okchazama
	1573	Oda Nobunaga unified the country
Momoyama Period (1568-1602)	1585	Oda Nobunaga replaced by Toyotomi Hideyoshi
	1592	Invasion of Korea
	1600	Battle at Sekigahara
Edo Period (1603-1867)	1603	The Tokugawa Shogunate by Tokugawa Ieyasu
	1637	Shimabara Revolt
	1639	Closure of the country to foreign commerce
	1702	Revenge by 47 loyal samurai for their master
	1837	Revolt of Oshio Heihachiro
	1853	American Commodore Perry visited Japan
	1858	Japan-U.S. Amity & Commerce Treaty
Meiji Period (1868-1912)	1868	Meiji Restoration

rai clans were the Minamoto and the Taira led by Yoshiie and Tadamori respectively. Although the Minamoto's power exceeded that of the Taira during the tenth and eleventh centuries, in 1108 when Tadamori's father defeated a son of Yoshiie on the battlefield near Izumo (Shimane Prefecture), the tide turned.

When the city of Kyoto was embroiled in the Hogen-no-ran conflict between the Imperial Court and the In in 1156, all of the members of the aristocracy and the samurai were forced to choose sides. Families and clans were separated in their allegiances and when the battle formations were actually drawn, the head of the Minamoto, Yoshitomo, and the head of the Taira, Kiyomori, found themselves both supporting the Emperor. Even though the victory of the Imperial forces could be attributed to the daring and valor of Yoshitomo (1123-1160), Kiyomori (1118-1181), who had played an inconsequential role in the conflict, was favored by the Emperor. Insulted by this biased treatment, Yoshitomo banded together the samurai and aristocrats who rejected the individuals who had gained power after the 1156 conflict and in 1159 attacked the government forces. Although seemingly a conflict between noblemen, in reality, this war was to determine which clan, the Taira or the Minamoto, would gain hegemony over all samurai clans. With the defeat of the anti-government forces, Yoshitomo was killed, his eldest son Yoritomo was banished to Izu Province (Shizuoka Prefecture) and the majority of Minamoto retainers sought obscurity in their home provinces. The Taira led by Kiyomori stood alone at the apex of the samurai clans.

Following his victory, Kiyomori's participation in state affairs

snowballed. In 1167 Kiyomori was promoted to the post of *Dajō-daijin*, the equivalent to being Prime Minister, and thereafter until his death assumed almost dictatorial powers over the nation.

How did the Taira, despite being weaker in military prowess, gain ascendancy over their rival clan, the Minamoto? The Minamoto had solidified the ties between their lords and their *kenin* and had spread their influence throughout the northern provinces, but the Taira were unsurpassed in reaping the greatest wealth possible from their well-managed manor lands in the western provinces. When allied with other wealthy samurai from the prosperous west, the Taira could easily outmatch the warriors from the still underdeveloped north.

Once in power, Kiyomori and his Taira followers modelled themselves after the Fujiwara: they made full use of their enormous wealth and connections to marry daughters into the Imperial family, thereby becoming quasi-aristocrats themselves. The Taira rule, coming fast on the downfall of the true aristocracy, therefore represents a transitional stage when samurai still honored the culture and customs of the former nobles sufficiently to ape them in all ways. Not only did the aristocrats represented by the Fujiwara, the In and the Emperor resent Kiyomori's airs and abrogations of their power, but the samurai as well reacted strongly against the Taira abandoning samurai ideals and the samurai moral code. Kiyomori further alienated his former allies by packing almost all official posts with kinsmen. These characteristics which were consciously forged by Kiyomori himself destined the Taira to face a final onslaught from the Minamoto, the paradigm example of the samurai spirit.

## The Downfall of the Taira

ACTING UNDER the orders of Prince Mochihito, a son of the retired Emperor Goshirakawa, Minamoto no Yorimasa plotted to raise an army in Kyōto to attack the Taira. When the Taira discovered this intrigue, they attacked Yorimasa before he had completely gathered his forces and easily defeated him in a battle fought near the River Uji. During this conflict both Yorimasa and Prince Mochihito forfeited their lives on the battlefield. But the die was already cast. Prince Mochihito's epistles to the anti-Taira samurai groups had incited them to finally take action.

Only three months after the battle at the River Uji, Yoritomo, the son of Yoshitomo, who had been banished to Izu, regimented a force composed of Minamoto and other samurai of the Bandō District for their ultimate move against their despised and long-standing foe. When the news of Yoritomo's northern army reached the ears of samurai throughout the rest of the country, the Minamoto forces swelled with new recruits.

The alacrity and willingness with which samurai responded to Yoritomo's request is vividly illustrated by Miura Yoshiaki (1092-1180) who, according to the *Genpei-sei-sui-ki*, exhorted his men with the words, "I am so aged that I might sleep the sleep of death even tomorrow. However, it is not only my great pleasure but also an honor to my clan to have received the circular from our lord Yoritomo requesting me to raise an army against the Taira. Unite yourselves and obey the orders of our lord. If Yoritomo, despite divine protection, were ever killed in battle, all

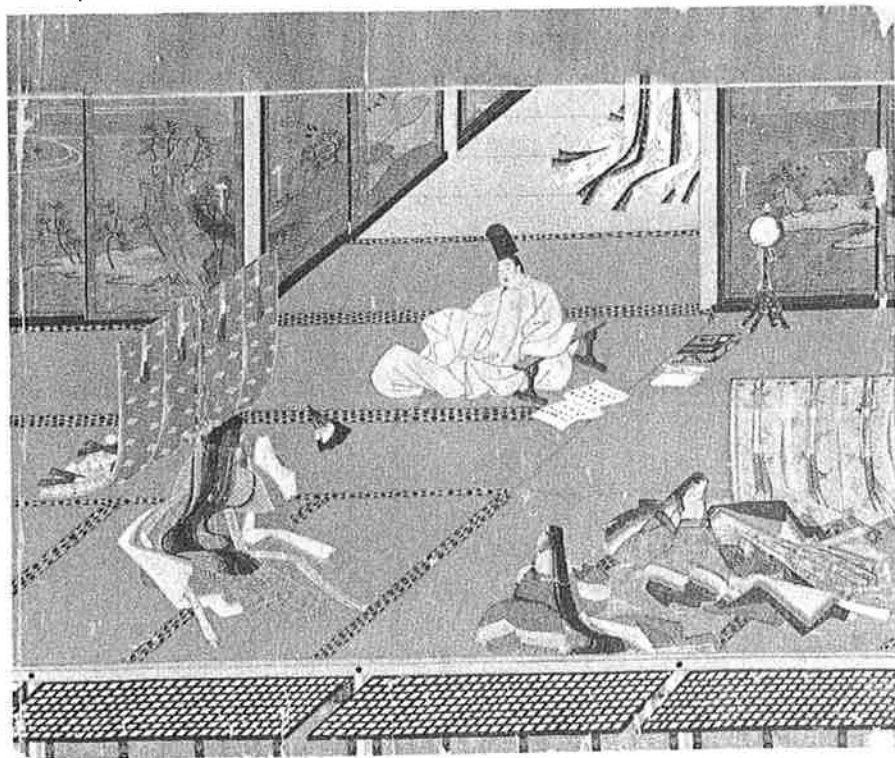
of you as well should fall fighting and become his companions on the journey to the nether world. . . . It is an eternal honor to both our clan and our lord Yoritomo to sacrifice our lives in the battle which pits the lord our clan has served through successive generations against the rebellious subjects of the In, the Taira. . . ."

When the army first called by Yorimasa and then by Yoritomo took the field in 1180, they fought furiously against the Taira in every nook and cranny of the country until March 1185 when the Taira forces were finally cornered at Dan-no-ura in the sea east of Shimonoseki (Yamaguchi Prefecture) and were annihilated. The series of battles between these two clans, the Gen-pei-gassen, are described vividly in the *Heiké Monogatari*, an epic which is well-known to every Japanese.

The victory which had eluded the Minamoto for so long was a direct result of the solid rela-

tionships which had been forged between the feudal lords and the samurai, especially those of the Bandō District, who exemplified the samurai code "to fight in a war for one's lord regardless of paternal or filial loyalty even if one's father or son were to be killed on the battlefield." Nurtured in the still undeveloped and semi-wild north, the Minamoto allegiance far exceeded the Taira who had abandoned much of their samurai heritage in favor of the mores of the aristocracy in the capital. Failing to fulfill much of the responsibility due its retainers, the Taira had to face the well-organized Minamoto with forces far less dedicated to the Taira cause. From Hokkaidō to Kyūshū, legends which were no doubt based on historical fact but have been embellished over hundreds of years relate that descendents of Taira refugees fled to remote villages to escape slaughter rather than die at the side of their lord.

*The life of a nobleman at the time of the dawn of the samurai. (From Kasuga-gongenkenki picture scroll, 14th century, Imperial Household Agency).*

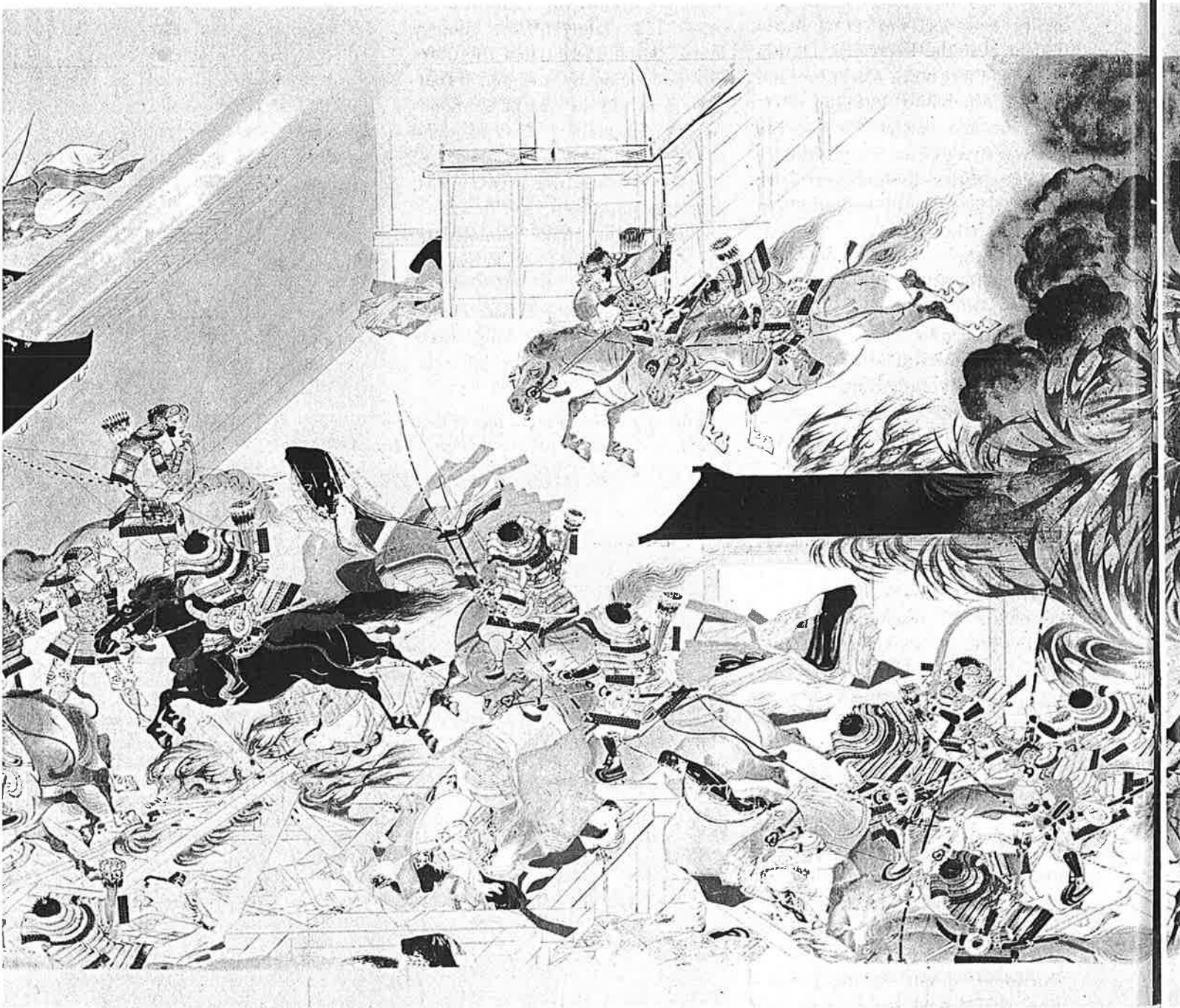


In 1192, seven years after the end of the furious war between the two clans, Yoritomo, the leader of the Minamoto, established the first samurai government, the

Kamakura Bakufu, far from the influence of the aristocrats in the capital in the city of Kamakura in the Bandō District. The choice of Kamakura as his capital reflects

Yoritomo's strong attachment to the district of his forefathers and his recognition of his duties towards his retainers with whom he had shared the trials and tribula-

*Minamoto no Yoshitomo's troops rushing the palace of the In during the Heiji Revolt (from the Heiji-monogatari-emaki picture scroll, original in the Boston Museum, copy in Tōkyō National Museum).*



tions of exile and victory.

When Yoritomo designed his governmental system and policies, he took full advantage of the samurai network which the Minamoto

had forged. He established the posts of *shugo* (investigators and judges of criminal cases) and *jitō* (tax officials for private and public domains, civil judges and manor overseers) in

every province in the land, appointing his most loyal Bandō *kenin* to fill the positions. As time passed, *shugo* took on the characteristics of feudal lords, ultimately developing into the institution called *daimyō* during the Edo Period (1603-1867).

Yet, even though Yoritomo amassed most of the governmental administrative and civil powers in his hands, the Court in Kyōto was not destroyed for it still "authorized" the shōgun to levy an army and "appointed" successive Shōguns. These were, however, merely rubberstamping operations. The dual system of the Heian Period now developed into a tripartite system: the nominal government, a figurehead regime, was led by the Court in Kyōto; the form of the In survived but without any power or influence; and the Shōgunate spearheaded all government action from Kamakura.

From 1192 to 1867, a period of more than six hundred fifty years, Japan was ruled by samurai. The class and accomplishments of the samurai did not remain stagnant for all of these years. During the Edo Period, although samurai were trained in the martial arts, the absence of battles enabled them to hone their administrative abilities. The ethical and moral code which demanded absolute loyalty to one's lord, however, did not change, as can be seen by the Incident of the Forty-Seven Loyal Rōnin who plotted together to avenge their lord's death in 1702. From the late Heian Period when samurai first appeared on the Japanese scene until the latter days of the Tokugawa Shōgunate, retainers continued to sacrifice themselves for their lord, if no longer on the battlefield then in the marketplace, if not in exchange for their lord's life then to regain his honor.

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