



Tale of the Heike:
Taira Clan

Note from the In-Room Director

Hi Delegates!

My name is Lauren Creed, and I could not be more excited to be your director at &MUN this year! I am a sophomore studying International Relations and Finance at William & Mary! I began participating in Model UN this year, with my first conference being DawgMUN at the University of Georgia this past fall. I had so much fun competing in the conference, and decided to continue with Model UN! This will be my first time directing, but I was recently a chair for our high school conference, WMHSMUN. I am looking forward to listening to all your creative perspectives at our conference, Tale of the Heike: Taira Clan! Outside of Model UN, I have been a theater kid since I was in 4th grade. This past semester I stage managed our mainstage production, Romeo & Juliet. I also love tennis, and have been trying to play whenever I get the chance here at school!

I can't wait to meet you all in April, and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about the committee. I am looking forward to all the inevitable twists and turns of this committee and I know you all are going to be awesome! Again, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out through my email, lcreed@wm.edu. See you in April!

Lauren Creed (She/Her)



Note from the Crisis Director

Dear Delegates,

I am so excited to welcome you to &MUN XII and the world of wartorn Japan! My name is Victoria Baltes, your crisis director for the *Tale of the Heike: Taira Clan* committee. I am a senior at William & Mary, originally from Stafford, Virginia, double-majoring in Global Studies and History. I've been an avid fan of Model UN ever since my first-ever committee in my own middle school years, which just so happened to be the long-bygone era of WMIDMUN XIII. This is my third and last time running a committee at the middle school level, an experience I'm very glad to share with you all. Outside of MUN, I spend my time not rushing between classes on the Sunken Gardens attending various campus social clubs, writing, volunteering with the German department and the Reeves Center for International Studies, working on various artistic projects, and dabbling in a variety of things I'm truthfully not very good at.

I'm incredibly excited to be your crisis director this year with a topic so historically fascinating as the one we have prepared for you all. The Taira Clan finds itself in its gravest threat yet: the beginnings of a full-blown revolt against the ruling dynasty in Japan, led by a former Emperor and the resurgent Minamoto Clan. It will have to navigate through internal division, external pressures, and the ever-changing landscape of twelfth-century Japan if it hopes to keep its position and its members hope to keep their heads. While the Taira clan was unsuccessful in real life, you now have the opportunity to rewrite history, utilizing every tool at your disposal to keep the old masters of Japan and the Heian Period alive for another century.

Of course, as with nearly every committee that deals with sensitive topics, past or present, it never hurts to place a disclaimer at the front of our planned documentation for you. Bigotry and intolerance of any sort will not be tolerated, to make an enjoyable simulation for every member of our merry band of warriors and statesmen. While themes of war and regionalism will be a central part of our discussion, prejudice or hateful remarks are strictly off-limits, both within the committee, crisis, and discussions, as well as without. Any form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other form of discrimination has no place in the halls of diplomacy as much as it has no place elsewhere.

I'm looking forward to meeting every one of you soon, and can't wait to see what each of you brings to the table to chart a new course through the past into the future.

Sincerely,

Victoria Baltes (She/Her)
jtbaltes@email.wm.edu



Background

At many points in this guide, we use the posthumous names of the emperors (such as using Antoku instead of Tokohito-shinno), even if they were not in contemporary use. This is because most emperors are more well-known by their posthumous names.

The Heian period

The Heian period was Japan's classical golden age, defined by the superiority of court culture and the elite aristocracy over Japanese society. It began with the construction of the new capital of Heian-kyo in 794, later known as Kyoto. Japan was ruled by a powerful emperor at the head of his centralized bureaucracy, consisting of a small caste of aristocrats, nobles, and bureaucrats under his leadership. Cultural traditions like Buddhism, literature, and art flourished, inspired by similar contemporary developments in Tang-era China. It was a golden age in Japanese history, but eventually, all golden ages come to an end.



A 16th century depiction of the Emperor Kanmul/Kammu, one of the most famous Heian-period emperors.

Originally, all land in Japan was administered as public, government owned land, loaned out to local landlords by the central government. However, land and offices were sold and privatized under the shoen system to certain organizations and families, resulting in the rise of new social classes across the nation. Various groups were able to consolidate their control of land across the country, carving the nation up into feudal estates. Among these groups were the royal courtiers (*kuge*), religious institutions (*jisha*), and the warrior class (*buke / samurai*). As time went on, these groups began to grow their own power bases, independent of the emperor: religious institutions such as monasteries became increasingly militarized and organized, warrior families became more influential as hired mercenaries, and etc. The Taira and Minamoto clans were two samurai families who became important at this time, using their former imperial heritage to gain positions as provincial governors and important military commanders. Whenever the government attempted to enforce its control to tax land, both peasants and nobles alike resisted, choosing to hide their wealth rather than pay the central government. Japan even began to regress from a monetary economy, with taxes being usually collected in rice, rather than in coin, as they were in the past.

However, the state was still run from the center: all appointments to military and government offices were decided by the imperial court. Therefore, the samurai were not an independent social group of warrior-lords who sought to seize power for themselves as a class, but

important lords who happened to have warriors and who wanted to use their individual clans to control the government. Japanese society was intensely stratified at this time, with a rigid class system preventing any sort of social mobility: powerful provincial lords were unable to easily join the court bureaucracy, just as lower level imperial bureaucrats could not drop down into the nobility. Therefore, these lords would make allies within the bureaucracy to control the government from the outside, rather than trying to insert themselves into the imperial court.

Meanwhile, the power of the emperor himself was on the decline. There was constant conflict between the ruling emperors and various regents, chancellor, and “prime minister” positions open to those outside the imperial family. Clans like the Fujiwara dominated the court by marrying their daughters to the emperors, and using their power and connections to influence their decisions. By the mid-Heian period, the emperors were basically powerless to go against the commands of their regents. However, during the *Insei* period (1068-1185), this regent position was held by retired emperors. These individuals would retire from the imperial office to the Buddhist priesthood, using the holy nature of their office to protect themselves from assassination, and ruling the nation through their successors, usually a young son or grandson. The first of these regents (referred to as *daijo-tenno* emperors), emperor Go-Sanjo (elevated in 1068), was able to retake imperial power from the Fujiwara, and began to favor the Minamoto clan, bringing them into core imperial politics.

The Taira-Minamoto power struggle

In 1156, violence erupted between the Taira and Minamoto clans for the first time. The death of the *daijo-tenno* emperor Toba led to the Hogen Disturbance, a power struggle between another *daijo-tenno* emperor, Sutoku, and the reigning emperor, Go-Shirakawa. While the Fujiwara backed the former, and the Taira the latter, the Minamoto clan was split down the middle, leading to a chaotic civil war. In the end, Go-Shirakawa won, bringing the victorious Taira and Minamoto into power, and ousting the Fujiwara, splitting their house up into numerous smaller branches. Military factions like the *samurai* families now held direct power over the imperial government for the first time.



*Depiction of Minamoto
no Yoshitomo*



*Depiction of Emperor
Go-Shirakawa*



*Depiction of Taira no
Kiyomori*

However, the Minamoto were not pleased with the result of this conflict. Clan leader Minamoto no Yoshitomo had been forced to kill his own father in the fighting, and was angered by the rich rewards given to the Taira. In the Heiji Disturbance, he attempted to place his own candidate on the imperial throne when Taira was away from Kyoto. However, Kiyomori was soon able to crush the rebellion, killing Yoshitomo and his two oldest sons, and solidifying his control over Japan. By 1177, he ruled the nation as the Grand Minister of State (daijo-daijin), and was even attempting to place a Taira on the imperial throne through the marriage of a Taira princess to the emperor Takakura. Even his old ally, Go-Shirakawa was forced out of his daijo-tenno status after an attempted assassination on Kiyomori, and was stripped of his power. The remaining Minamoto, led by Minamoto no Yoritomo, a son of Yoshitomo, were largely exiled to remote parts of Japan. It seemed like the Taira would control the empire for centuries, just like the Fujiwara before them.

Buildup to war

At the beginning of 1178, the imperial consort, Taira no Tokuko, daughter of Kiyomori, fell ill. Across the country, both noble and common folk are saddened, leading many temples, shrines, and physicians across the nation to work and pray for her recovery. However, it turns out that Tokuko is pregnant. Kiyomori and the Taira are overjoyed, as a son will help them solidify their power over the throne for years to come. Meanwhile, the Minamoto realize the extent of the power that the Taira will gain from having Kiyomori's grandson on the throne, and begin to plot against their rivals once again. Kiyomori then summons all high-ranking priests to appeal to the heavens for a son.

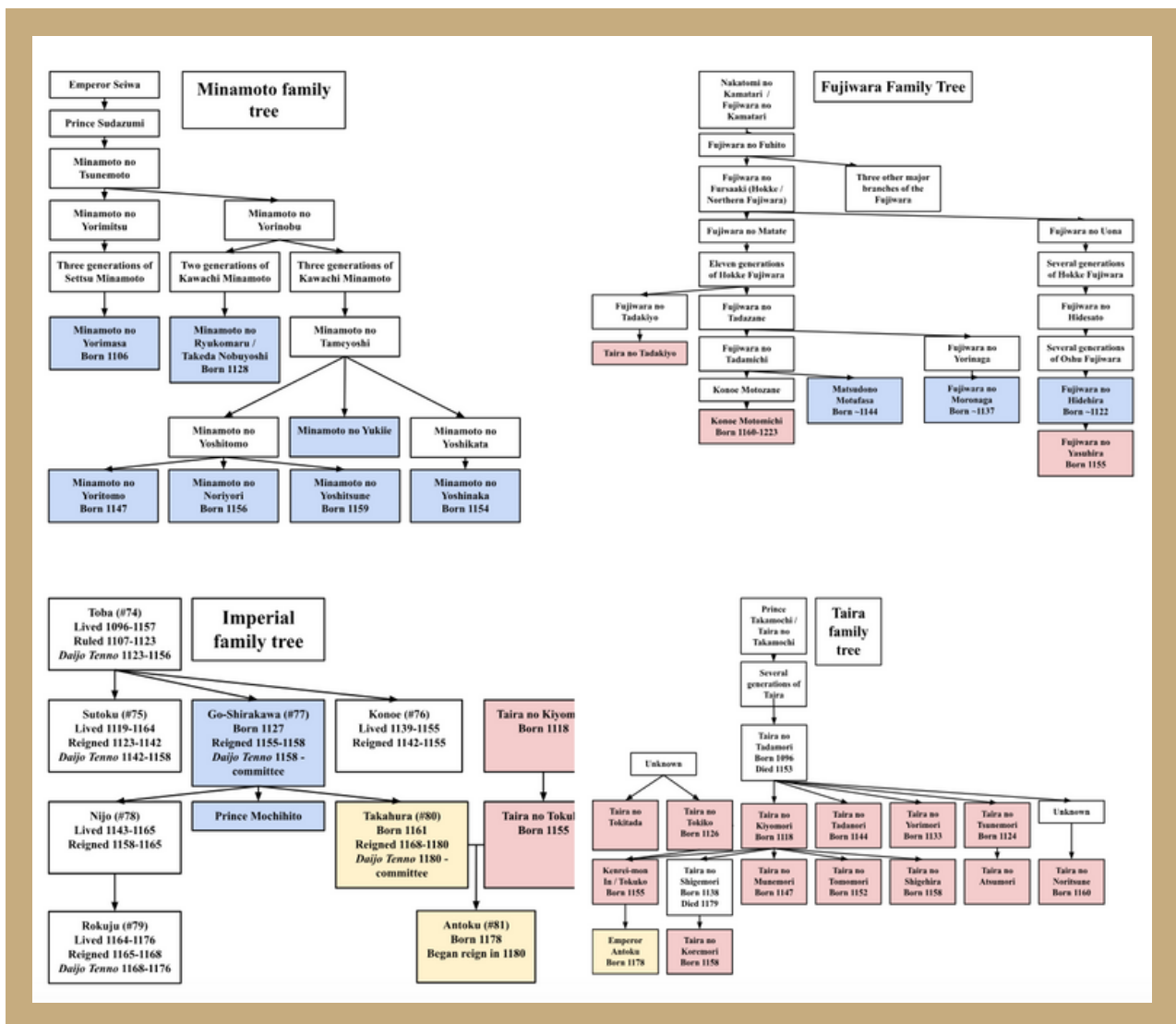
However, months later, the Consort again becomes gravely ill and Kiyomori begins to worry about the effects of malicious spirits. It is very important to appease angry spirits, for they are believed to hold much power: the deposition of a previous emperor was said to be the work of a vengeful spirit, as well as the illness of two other emperors. In an attempt to placate both the living and the dead, he restores a variety of religious and court positions that he had previously taken. Kiyomori is convinced that pardoning many of the previously exiled monks will help his daughter recover from her illness and have an easy delivery.

At the end of 1178, he organized a ceremonial visit to the place of the Consort. Possessions of nobles attend, bringing gifts of swords, horses, and garments. Attendees included the current Kampaku, Daijo-daijin, Sadajin, Udaijin, and various other ministers, counselors, and warlords. All courtiers, officials, and anyone hoping to regain office attends, leading to a very extensive pardon (except for a few specific political enemies like the monk Shunkwan).

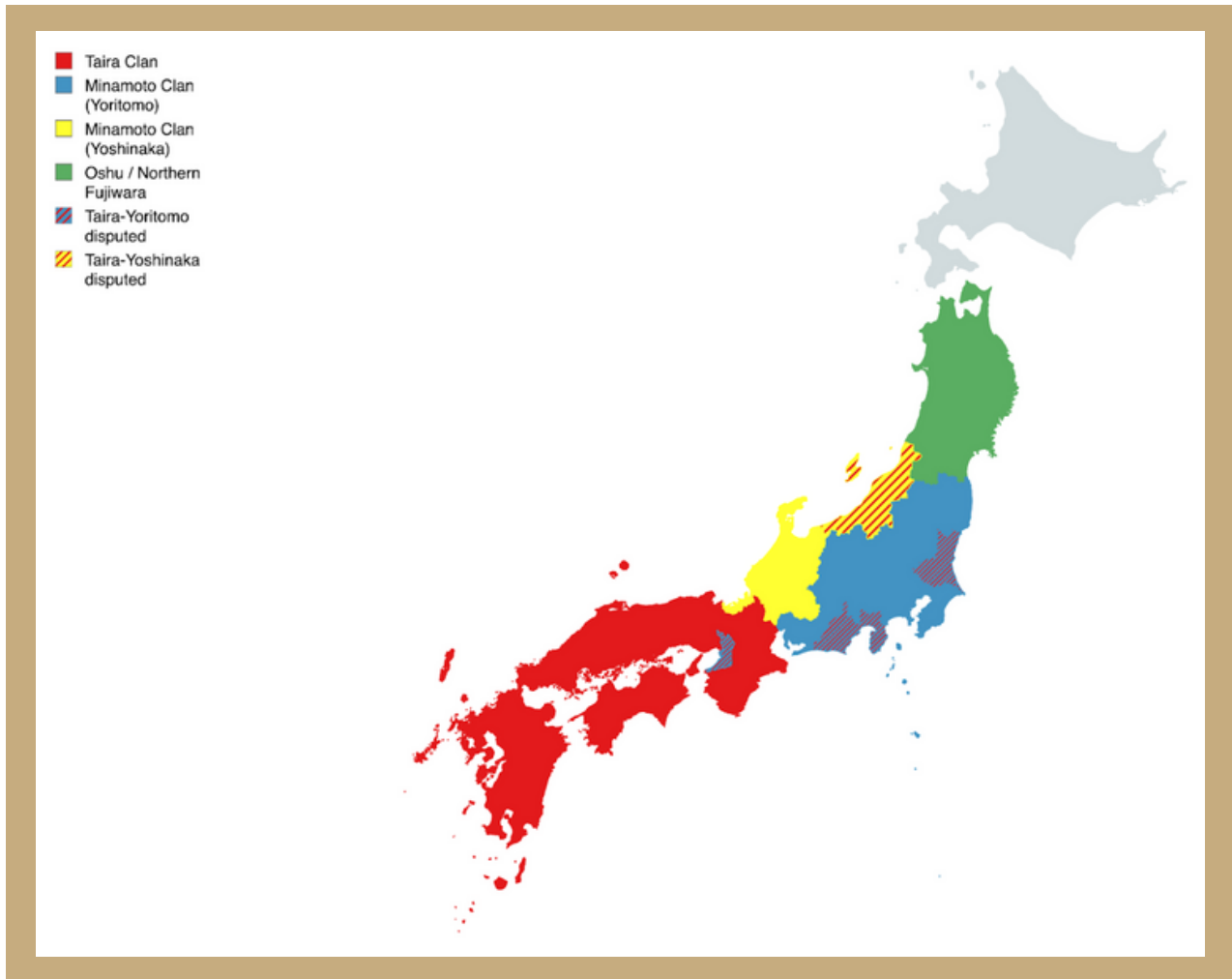
Promises are made to a plethora of temples that they will be visited by the Empress and the Crown Prince if the birth goes easily. Despite the prayers, sutras, and appeals from dozens of temples, the delivery of the royal baby is not easy. However, the prince, named Antoku, is born safely and the nobles rejoice. The temples are rewarded for their prayers with a plethora of promotions, ranks, and temple repairs, as well as numerous other various rewards. However, the people see the birth as ill-omened, due to a series of "laughable" events. For one, the palace accidentally signaled the birth of a princess. The custom is to roll a koshiki

down the palace roof, on the north side if a princess is born, and on the south side if a prince. However, by mistake, the koshiki rolls down the north side, before having to be brought up and rolled down the south side. The people found this ill omen to signal an unfavorable birth.

In the second month of 1180, Emperor Takakura retires in favor of his son, Antoku. The circumstances are mysterious, given that Takakura was not ill, and was relatively young. Everyone suspects Kiyomori's manipulation, as it seems like he is trying to place his grandson Antoku on the throne. It was at this point that another prince, Mochihito, son of Go-Shirakawa, flees from Kyoto, and issues a general call for rebellion against the Taira clan. The Minamoto lord, Minamoto no Yorimasa, is the first to answer, gathering an army at the Byodo-in shrine just outside Kyoto to help Mochihito overthrow the Taira and take the throne from Antoku. The Taira are quick to respond, sending an army south to Byodo-in to deal with Yorimasa and Mochihito.



Current Situation



At the start of committee, Japan is on the brink of civil war. Following Antoku's ascension to the throne, and Mochihito's call to rebellion, both the Taira and Minamoto clans are preparing for a confrontation at the Byodo-in shrine, where Mochihito and his supporters are gathering. With more lords across Japan taking sides, war appears inevitable: the Taira must fight to claim hegemony over all of Japan.

The Taira may seem to have an intrinsic advantage over the Minamoto at the beginning of the war—namely the fact that their power is much more centralized than that of their rivals. There are not multiple families and sub-clans vying for power within the Taira—the power lies with Kiyomori and his descendants, through and through. Additionally, the Taira seem to be in control of the levers of government, particularly with the ascendancy of Antoku to the throne. However, there are wild cards in play. With the power of the throne comes the intrigue of the court, and all the associated backstabbing and political power plays. Other powerful groups, in particular the various unaffiliated samurai clans of Japan, roam the cities and countryside and can prove a major boon to either side. Nearly everything in Japanese warfare is based around the skills of archery and horsemanship that these experienced warriors have mastered, allowing them to tip the balance of the war.

The Taira, though unified by the ever present Kiyomori, may seem like the clear odds-on

favorite to take this war, but their role as the state being rebelled against may change the dynamic. If the Minamoto clan can effectively spin this war as one characterized by an aggressive, overzealous empire, it is possible that more warriors and soldiers may flock to the Minamoto cause. Additionally, should the Taira clan lose its control over the young Emperor Antoku, it could seriously disturb the war's equilibrium. Or perhaps, without the proper maneuvering, neither of the war torn and embattled clans will take control. Clever samurai lords could seize power for themselves with the regency offices of shogun or shikken (the former usually being reserved for imperial descendents such as the Minamoto, and the latter open to all). The upheaval in Japan could also see a return to the Fujiwara hereditary regency, the insei system of retired emperors, the powerful emperors of the early Heiji period, or any number of other options. The actions of this committee will help determine what the future power structure of Japan will look like, and who will control the power of the emperor.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the Taira defeat the Minamoto? How can they leverage their advantages, and the various strengths of their allies, to defeat their rivals?
2. How can the Taira use the power of the Emperor and his court to both control their territory and expand their influence?
3. How will the Taira clan manage their war effort? What stake with the imperial line have in the war, if any? How can the Taira clan best manage their relations with the largely powerless, but symbolically important, imperial house?
4. If the Taira win the war, what changes, if any, will be made to the imperial court dominated by Kiyomori?

Notes:

Characters with no asterisks next to their name have had only minor changes from the original historical figure, if any at all.

Characters with one asterisk (*) have had notable changes made from the original historical figure, in the spirit of the period or of that person.

Characters with two asterisks (**) have been changed significantly or have had backgrounds created for this committee based on whatever historical information is available.

The Taira Clan

Taira no Kiyomori - Lord of the Taira Clan

Kiyomori is the leader of the Taira clan, grandfather of Emperor Antoku, father-in-law of the former Emperor Takakura, and currently the most powerful figure in all of Japan—a position now under extreme threat. His children fight as generals, his relatives serve as advisors, and he personally holds sway over endless offices and positions bringing revenue to the Imperial court. However, this also opens him up to endless threats, both from the now-rebellious Minamoto and from within his own court. He is married to Taira no Tokiko.

*Taira no Munemori - Regent of the Taira Clan**

Munemori is the eldest surviving son of Taira no Kiyomori and the regent of the Taira Clan, often serving in his father's stead when he is otherwise indisposed. He is well-known as a successful minister and competent noble, with some practice in military works despite his largely political role. He is also widely regarded as an honorable man, which has won him many friends even in the enemy's camp. He is presently best positioned to take over from his elderly father should that become necessary, but faces many rivals inside his own family for the position.

*Taira no Koremori - Devout Nobleman of the Taira Clan**

Koremori is the only surviving son of Taira no Shigemori, the son of Taira no Kiyemori who died under mysterious circumstances two years ago. Unlike his father, he is a nobleman who particularly enjoys poetry and music, regarded among the courts to be one of the most vivacious nobles in all of Japan. He can rely on the support of court officials and fellow nobles in this struggle, but does not have nearly as much military experience as others. Curiously, he has also remained in contact with Miao Dian, a ship captain from China that his father Taira no Shigemori paid to pray for him in the lands of the Song Dynasty before his death.

Taira no Tsunemori - Lauded Poet of the Taira Clan

Half-brother of Taira no Kiyomori, Tsunemori is a relative newcomer to the highest courts of Japan, having spent much of his early life involved instead in the poetic circles of the upper crust of Japanese society. However, this hasn't stopped him from playing an important role in the conflict, as his artistic skill has allowed him to sway many figures otherwise neutral or sympathetic to the rebels back to the side of the Taira Clan. Should he wish, picking up his pen and reading aloud may even shape the course of the war... at least, so long as the soldiers don't shape it first.

*Taira no Tomomori - Heroic Admiral of the Taira Clan**

Third son of Taira no Kiyomori, Taira no Tomomori is one of the finest commanders of the military forces of the Taira Clan, fighting rebels both at land and sea... but it is the latter he is most famous for. His armies, mostly raised from the outskirts of Kyoto, are staunchly loyal to him and his feats of military might, while his ships are known as some of the fiercest on the waterways around the island chain. Some have even claimed that he speaks to each one before the fight to ensure the spirits of the ships will give their all, a trick that seems to have worked so far. However, no man can win a war alone, and he will have to cooperate with his relatives and ensure his men pick the right battles or he will sink with the ship that is the clan as a whole.

*Taira no Kagekiyo - Fearsome Samurai of the Taira Clan**

Originally a member of the Fujiwara Clan by birth, Kagekiyo was later adopted by the Taira Clan and pledged his undying loyalty to Taira no Kiyomori, reflected both in his name and the unrelenting nature of him and his men on the battlefield. Kagekiyo is feared and respected by all who serve in the various armies of Japan as one of the mightiest samurai to ever fight, while his secretive army of assassins have come close to assassinating Minamoto no Yoritomo more than once. No matter his personal feats, however, righteous battle-lust can only motivate a fighter for so long, and he will need comrades-in-arms to ensure his might has a time to shine or he will risk becoming nothing more than a vengeful spirit.

Taira no Tadanori - Poet-Governor of Satsuma

Brother of Taira no Kiyomori, Tadanori is the governor of Satsuma Province and a general of the Taira Clan's forces. A prosperous and powerful province, this affords him much power and potential advantage in the conflict, particularly as he also holds a strong place in the family hierarchy. He is also known in the region as a tragic prolific playwright, mixing his love for the written word with his skill with the bow to create some truly powerful works. His position on the coast affords him many opportunities to strike in unexpected ways, while his writing gives him sway over peasant and noble alike, providing him with some strong opportunities should he live to take them.

Taira no Noritsune - Mighty Commander of Bowmen

Nephew of Taira no Kiyomori, Noritsune is said to be one of the fiercest generals of the Taira Clan, achieving great feats without a single loss in battle. He is particularly said to be a phenomenal archer, stronger than any other in the royal castle and able to shoot multiple arrows from the same bow in perfect form. He has a number of horsemen and archers loyal to him, including both samurai and levied peasant forces, and can be called on to win nearly any engagement he fights himself—though he must remember that one battle does not win a war.

*Taira no Tokitada - Advisor to the Royal Family**

Tokitada is the younger brother of Taira no Tokiko, a key advisor to the royal family, and a known spymaster in the various courts of Japan. Having maneuvered to ensure the former Emperor Go-Shirakawa would not have a series of key estates as the conflicts between the clans increased, he now has a series of agents in both camps, able to gain documents and information as he needs. He also controls some of the various royal law enforcement organizations through his former posting at their head, though his status as a civilian rather than a samurai does make him a target of rivals who would rather see his schemes come to an end.

*Taira no Yorimori - Keeper of the Imperial House**

Half-brother of Taira no Kiyomori, Yorimori is a prominent leader in the Taira Clan, having manipulated himself into a position of governance rather than military might. He presently helps to run the imperial court from his estate, which has temporarily become the Emperor's second residence, giving him significant leeway over what happens in the realm of politics. He also has influence over a series of bureaucrats and officials that make the government run, allowing him to extend his reach. However, despite officially being made a general, he is not particularly adept in military affairs, and many struggle if required.

*Taira no Atsumori - Heartthrob Samurai of the Taira Clan**

A young scion of Taira no Tsunemori and grandson of Taira no Kiyomori, Atsumori is an expert horseman and noble samurai warrior of the Taira Clan. Possibly his most famous trait is his good looks and charm, easily able to win over anyone who chooses to try to woo. However, he is somewhat inexperienced in battle, and despite his strict moral code he may struggle to win against veteran combatants. A fact some have recently learned about him is that he was given a famous flute once used by some of the greatest musicians in all of Japan, which is said to be able to inspire the greatest of feelings in its listeners.

Taira no Tokiko - Pillar of the Taira Clan

Mother to Taira no Tokuko (better known as Kenrei-mon In) and thus grandmother of Emperor Antoku, Tokiko is well-known as the matriarch of the Taira Clan, serving as a source of inspiration and moral support for the entire family. Having recently become a Buddhist nun, she is also extremely close to a number of priests, who may be able to provide spiritual and moral advice. While she cannot control many matters directly, her protection of the Three Sacred Treasures of Japan in the infant Emperor's name through her servants makes her important in the eyes of the divine and man alike.

Taira no Sadayoshi - Devout Steward of the Taira Clan

Governor of Higo and Chikugo provinces and steward of the Taira Clan after swearing allegiance to Taira no Kiyomori, Sadayoshi is regarded by many as the quintessential servant of his master in both skill and competence. The fact that he leads a contingent of samurai raised from Kyushu can't hurt matters, either, and his role grants him many privileges as well as responsibilities. He is, above all else, however, a devout Buddhist, and has been rumored to be considering the vows of the monk along with his other duties.

Kenrei-mon In - Empress-Dowager of Japan

Mother to the Emperor, daughter of Taira no Kiyomori, and Empress-Dowager of all Japan, Kenrei-mon In is in name one of the most powerful women in the entire island nation. Originally known as Tokiko no Kiyomori before the adoption of her name after Emperor Takakura's abdication, she is tasked with taking care of the infant Emperor, placing her at the heart of all affairs. However, she is not entirely helpless in these circumstances, and can affect many things from her place in the hierarchy if she plays her cards well.

*Hangaku Gozen - Warrior-Noblewoman of the Taira Clan**

An onna-musha or warrior woman of the Taira Clan, Hangaku Gozen is regarded by both her male and female counterparts as one of the finest warriors of her generation—her training regimen superb, her command of both fellow onna-musha and samurai unparalleled on the battlefield directly. She commands a company of these women in the service of the Taira Clan, now, riding her white steed and carrying her blade to victory, for she can have no other outcome. She also has the ears of many a noblewoman and courtier, for she inspires them all to achieve great things from her place in the armies.

Allied Figures

Shinzei - Monk and Advisor to Taira no Kiyomori

A Buddhist monk and ally of Taira no Kiyomori, Shinzei is a member of the Fujiwara clan and a Confucian scholar well-disciplined in the classics of both China and Japan. He currently leads the ruling faction in the Imperial bureaucracy and enjoys considerable influence over the nameless monks and scholars that keep things running smoothly, though naturally faces rivals from those that seek this position. He also has a large temple in the countryside he maintains as a residence away from the capital which may prove useful if the capital becomes unlivable for any particular reason.

*Fujiwara no Yasuhira - Prince of the Northern Fujiwara**

A prince of the Northern Fujiwara in Mutsu Province, Yasuhira is nominally neutral in the struggle ongoing between the Minamoto and Taira, though his leanings towards the Taira are known to those who listen to gossip. He commands a number of forces in his home province, though still has to contend with his father in the other camp, a fact that could allow him to broker peace or finally seize the domain for himself should he so wish. His strength is centralized in Fukushima, where he exerts influence from his palace in the northern mountains.

Fujiwara no Tadakiyo - Chief Samurai of the Court

A retainer of the Taira Clan originally from the Northern Fujiwara, Tadakiyo is a key advisor to Taira no Kiyomori and commands the family's private retinue of samurai when not on campaign. When engaging with the enemy, he will naturally be at the head of any particular force, though he is presently in Kazusa Province enjoying a government position provided to him by the Taira Clan. He is considered a rational and logical samurai by his peers, who often look to him for advice.

*tō Sukechika - Samurai Lord of Izu Province**

A scion of the Itō Clan of Izu Province, Sukechika now serves the Taira Clan from Kawazu Manor in the countryside, a fact not lost on the current governor of Izu Hojo Tokimasa loyal to the Minamoto cause. While he will likely have to flee the province, his military service has granted him loyalty from other commanders throughout the Kanto region, and he can call on them to either help him retake his promised lands or forge a new Clan from the ashes of this war. He is regarded as an expert swordsman and is known for his quick temper, which can often get the best of him.

Ōba Kagechika - Returned Samurai of the Oba Clan

A scion of the renowned Ōba Clan in Sagami Province, Kagechika is a former rebel turned loyalist to the Taira cause, having raised his sword once again to now defend his former foes. He is an expert horseman and a skilled cavalry commander able to call on similarly abled horsemen both active and retired to his aid, though he may find his old edge catching up with him after so long away from war.

Konoe Motomichi - Regent for Emperor Antoku

A scion of the Konoe family and the regent for Emperor Antoku, Motomichi has nearly as much influence as the young emperor's mother, being able to speak for the boy in matters of state affairs and religion. He is known for his connection to the various clans of warrior monks around Japan, though his ties to the famed Kofuku-ji temple have lately been severed, and many be able to call on them to fight against the rebellion if he is able to find the right words. However, he is fairly inexperienced in this role, and will need to learn on the job if he is to be successful.

*Jō Sukinaga - Governor of Echigo Province**

A leader in the Echigo branch of the Taira Clan, Sukinaga is the governor of Echigo province and a follower of Taira no Kiyomori from the olden days. Presently, he is raising an army in his home province to assist his old master, and can call on the control of the entire Jōetsu region to cut off the Minamoto from support from the far north of Japan. He is experienced in war in the countryside, though his age may be catching up to him, and has surprising adeptness with logistical matters.

*Kaneyasu Senō- Samurai of a Thousand Men***

A mysterious *samurai* loyal to the Taira Clan, Senō is best known for his fierce style of fighting and refusal to quit, having been called “worth a thousand soldiers” by his enemies and friends alike. However, much of his past is unknown even to his closest friends, with rumors swirling that he may be from Okinawa, Hokkaido, Korea, or even farther afield. Whatever the truth, he is often trusted by the highest officials of the clan to carry out their dirty work.

Kikuchi Takanao - Leader of the Kikuchi Clan

A key noble in charge of the trade routes between the Song Dynasty and Japan in Kyushu, Takanao poses a significant threat to the Minamoto for his refusal to bow and support for the Taira Clan. He controls large numbers of ships and men in the south of the country in his home Higo Province, and could pose a great aid to Taira forces in their attempt to put down the rebellion. However, he's also known as a man with many enemies, as his grudges never quite seem to evaporate.

*Harada Tanenao - Commander of the Imperial Retainers**

An officer from Kyushu and imperial court figure, Tanenao commands the imperial retainers as a personal force, controlling the military and police in command of the imperial palace and the protection of the Emperor. This allows him some influence in court affairs, particularly as the young Emperor's life grows increasingly at risk. He also has some ties to the Song Dynasty from previous employment as a trade minister, giving him connections he could leverage should events not quite turn in his favor.

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