Abstract: *The Tale of the Heike* (平家物語), often called “Japan’s epic,” recounts one of the most divisive and consequential conflicts in Japan’s history: the Genpei War (源平合戦) that brought the first shogun to power and ushered in the age of the warriors. The war represents a number of important symbolic losses. The child-emperor Antoku drown in the final battle, and one of the three regalia marking divine sanction of the imperial line was also lost at sea. The Taira clan, whose ambition precipitated the war, was completely destroyed, and a new center for the warrior government was established far from the imperial capital at Heian-kyō (平安京). This presentation discusses how the variant texts of *The Tale of the Heike* frame the war, ranging from a Buddhist parable to a celebration of the establishment of warrior rule.

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