

**THE *BUNBU* PARADIGM RECONSIDERED:  
WARRIOR LITERACY AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN  
LATE MEDIEVAL JAPAN**

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
**THE ETYMOLOGY OF VIOLENCE**

The Two Ways of Writing and Warring are the warp and weft of ruling over the country. If you have only culture but no military strength, arrogant men will be more inclined to disobedience. If you do have military power but no culture, brutal men shall create disorder. Therefore, the Two Ways of Writing and Warring are like the two wings of a bird, or like the two wheels of a cart. (*Buke hanjō* 389–90)

Now, concerning the word for “military virtue” (*bu* 武), its shape derives from the expression “halt the ax” (*hoko o yamu* 戈を止む), with two characters combined into one. Killing others, resorting to coercion and thus being feared by people do not belong to *bu*. What we call *bu* has its true meaning in [the act of] admonishing and quelling those evil men and bands who disrespect their ruler, put the country into confusion, and cause great suffering. (*Buke hanjō* 402)<sup>2</sup>

In the opening vignette, the anonymous author of *Buke hanjō* 武家繁昌 (The Flourishing of Warriors) employs a series of conventional metaphors to define the idea of *bunbu nidō* 文武二道, literally the “double path of writing and warring.”<sup>3</sup> The word *bunbu* (Ch. *wenwu*) comes from the first legendary rulers of Zhou, Kings Wen and Wu, and its origin lies in China’s classical age. The concept first appeared in Confucian texts and arrived in Japan during the Nara period. By the early Muromachi, it had become a cardinal concept in political thought, although the supposed continuity of this long-standing tradition should not eclipse the discrepancies in its scope and interpretation.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Japanese are mine.

<sup>3</sup> I adopt here Conlan’s rendition of the term. However, I wish to emphasize that *bun* has a semantic domain much broader than the word “writing” would generally imply, since it refers to the *summa* of the encyclopedic knowledge required of any would-be leader. In this sense, its variable characterization goes far beyond the basic writing skills to embrace the world of *belles lettres* and culture as a whole.

*Buke hanjō*, approximately dated from the sixteenth century,<sup>4</sup> records the genealogy of military power and inscribes both historical figures and heroes of old within a single master narrative. After a brief introduction of Chinese mythical past, it follows the teleological evolution of a warrior spirit, epitomized among others by Emperor Jinmu, Empress Jingū, and Yamato Takeru. This ancient military wisdom—the text maintains—would have naturally merged into the Kamakura shogunate and its legacy. However, the *diktat* is clear from the very incipit: Might alone is *not* the key. To wield real power, a leader should possess both martial skills and learnedness, otherwise he would face nothing but failure.

The life and deeds of illustrious precedents anecdotally support this reasoning, but the text goes even further in providing what was considered the ideographic origin of martiality itself. By alluding to the “Six Character Types” (*rikugi*), *Buke hanjō* speculates on the implications of *bu* as a compound (*kaii moji*) whose constitutive elements admonish to “halt the ax.” Accordingly, the text argues eloquently that violence should serve the greater cause of peace, as the primeval nuance of “disarmament” embedded in its character would suggest. Such etiological use of etymology hints at the ultimate non-duality of *bunbu* and surreptitiously highlights an ontological difference between legitimate and illegitimate use of force.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, my aim is to rethink the *bunbu* paradigm in the context of late medieval Japan and illustrate how the representation of its components was invested with shifting socio-ethical meaning. Furthermore, I shall emphasize the intrinsically asymmetrical nature of the concept. Although in most cases the dyad of writing and warring was conceived as an ideal equilibrium, I will attempt to disclose biases and interests which affect such an understanding. Lastly, I intend to show how the discourse on *bunbu*, though advocated as a foundational truth, was rather the outcome of cyclical negotiation and appropriation. I attest that

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<sup>4</sup> This short tale (*otogizōshi*) is commonly regarded as “medieval” and, as such, it appears in the *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei*. It should be noted that Shibata’s intertextual examination leans toward a later dating, but he also conjectures that *Buke hanjō* may indeed have descended from a medieval *urtext*.

<sup>5</sup> This cliché of *bu* as “suppression of violence” must have been common knowledge at the time. Another premodern reference to it appears in *Yoshino mōdeki*, a piece of travel literature from 1553. On his visit to Mount Tōnomine 多武峰 (lit. the “Peak of Great Fighting”), the author Sanjōnishi Kin’eda (1487–1563) composed a *kanshi*, playing on the same etymology to express the sense of tranquility he found there, despite the belligerent place name (524–25).

this process articulated within a structured realm of rhetoric, where different actors engaged to secure a stable position for themselves.

Recent scholarship on the topic has widely demonstrated that one should avoid the fallacy of considering *bunbu* a coherent phenomenon throughout Japanese history.<sup>6</sup> However, no study so far has been conducted on the specific shape it adopted in response to the contingencies of the early Sengoku period. Between the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the weakening of Ashikaga's authority opened the way for regional potentates, whose claim to power often found its legitimating source in this formidable weapon. By bringing into conversation different kinds of texts written on the sidelines of the Ōnin War,<sup>7</sup> I will attempt to demonstrate how the notion of *bunbu* spread across society and emerged as a peculiar discursive field with its own rules and conventions.<sup>8</sup>

More specifically, I have taken Cameron Hurst's essay "The Warrior as Ideal for a New Age" as a starting point but, in the meantime, I challenge his opinion of a cultured warrior as the undisputed model for the entire Muromachi period. As he poignantly observes, the *bunbu* paradigm was channeled into both literary and non-literary genres, and his synoptic reading of sources is noteworthy in this regard. Nonetheless, he fails to acknowledge the plasticity of the *bunbu* amalgam, for instance when he sees the stress on the acquisition of *bun* as "a condition that would not change until Tokugawa times" (233). Instead, my purpose is to offer a critical analysis of medieval discourse on knowledge and war by bridging sociological and rhetorical theory in order to reveal the strategic function of this ambivalent trope.

In the following pages, I will construct my argument upon a text called *Sekyōshō*. A comparison between this and other contemporary sources written by warriors of different provenance and status will shed some light not only on medieval social representations, but also on broader theoretical issues concerning didactic texts.

#### **CALAMUS GLADIO FORTIOR? METONYMIC THINKING AND UTOPIAN UNIVERSALISM IN *SEKYŌSHŌ***

Despite the relative popularity it enjoyed among courtiers, warriors, monks, and priests, *Sekyōshō* 世鏡抄 (Mirror of the World) is a rather

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Benesch.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief historical contextualization, see Suegara.

<sup>8</sup> The theoretical toolkit of "symbolic violence," "field," "cultural capital," and "social distinction" that I will be using in this paper is based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu, whilst the idea of "discursive formation" and its implications on the power-knowledge nexus derive from Michel Foucault.

understudied text. According to Kōno Jun'ichirō, its composition dates back to the second half of fifteenth century<sup>9</sup> and his philological observations sustain the hypothesis that it may be a work of Ichijō Kaneyoshi 一条兼良 (1402–1481). Although Kōno far from proves this claim, the former *kanpaku* did pen several treaties in his later years upon request of Hino Tomiko (1440–1496) to instruct her recalcitrant son Ashikaga Yoshihisa (1465–1489) in the art of good governance.<sup>10</sup> The similarities of those treaties with *Sekyōshō* are indeed difficult to ignore and reveal, if not Kaneyoshi's hand, at least a shared *weltanschauung* in his entourage.

As the colophon in the *Zoku gunsho ruijū* version attests, *Sekyōshō* spread throughout the country with different titles and served as a didactic tool for gentry and commoners alike.<sup>11</sup> The prologue tells the mythical story of how the three gods of Ise, Hachiman, and Kasuga would materialize at court on Buddha's Parinirvāna commemoration to bestow upon Emperor Daigo (r. 897–930) the venerable teachings included in this booklet. The subsequent part consists of forty-eight articles grouped in two sections, which prescribe the ideal lifestyle for every subject in the realm.<sup>12</sup> Starting from the emperor, it gradually descends to lower classes, giving the social hierarchy a closed textual shape.<sup>13</sup> The general attitude is

<sup>9</sup> The Archives and Mausolea Department (Shoryōbu) of the Imperial Household Agency is in possession of a copy from the Bakumatsu period, previously owned by the Takatsukasa family. This manuscript bears the title *Kinchū kagami* 禁中鏡 (Mirror of the Forbidden City) and is the only extant version of *Sekyōshō* in *kanbun*. It transmits the colophon of the original copy, now lost, which indicated Eishō 14 (1517) as the date of completion. According to Kōno (51–52), this evidence fixes a reliable *terminus ad quem*.

<sup>10</sup> For an account of Kaneyoshi's activity as schoolmaster, see Carter (180–202).

<sup>11</sup> *Sekyōshō* is also known as *Gozenchō* 御前帳, *Seiganki* 清眼記, *Shōjikishō* 正直抄, *Shintakuki* 神託記, *Kyoakukyō* 去悪経, *Niseishō* 二世抄, and *Hisatsukyō* 秘察鏡. The Union Catalogue of Early Japanese Books lists a series of handwritten copies from the Kantō, Kinki, Tōhoku, and Kyūshū regions, which offers an idea of its widespread diffusion.

<sup>12</sup> This choice comes from the 48 Vows of Amida Buddha (*Sekyōshō* 284). I refer to the numbered items of the text by the term "article" because of their normative and prescriptive character. It should be noted that the chidings of *Sekyōshō* stem from Confucian values, although the viewpoint of its author appears quite close to the tripartite teaching of Buddhism, Confucianism, and cult of *kami* endorsed by the Yoshida Shintō sect (Kōno 54–55).

<sup>13</sup> The *Zoku gunsho ruijū* version consists of two volumes. The first outlines the social hierarchy of the time arranged into a rather neat progression, whereas the second is less systematic. Nevertheless, it yields a great deal of information about different social strata and their interactions, ideally based on the five relationships of Confucianism. Special attention is given to child rearing and female modesty;

conservative and sanctimonious towards the public turmoil which was ostensibly ravaging Japan at the time *Sekyōshō* was written.

One peculiar aspect of this text is the recurrence of “*bunbu*.” The expression appears ten times, a remarkable figure if compared to other literary works.<sup>14</sup> Against the decline of law and order, Pseudo-Kaneyoshi seems to proclaim the balance of civil and military virtues as the only way of restoring an ideal past, when supposedly *bunbu* was the compass for socio-moral perfection.

In observance of the dual polity of the early Muromachi period (*kōbu* 公武), the emperor “seeks support from the warriors in a country at unrest and turns to the aristocrats once pacified” (*Sekyōshō* 251). For this reason, knowledge of military matters is compulsory for noblemen (257). However, the predominance of war constitutes just a temporary state of exception until the much-longed-for restoration of peace, and the true objective of *bu* appears not as the enactment but as the suppression of violence through an unavoidable act of force.<sup>15</sup> If read in the light of the political situation on the brink of the Ōnin War, this stance may well have mirrored the feeling of an aristocracy plunged into misery as never before.

Overall, the importance credited to the civil sphere is much greater, as the volume of characters devoted to its explanation demonstrates. From the time when Ki no Tsurayuki made his proclamation in the *Kokinshū* preface, every sentient being is believed to belong to a sort of choral

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hence, the hypothesis arises that the text might also have been used for women’s education.

<sup>14</sup> To give some comparative data, the compound “*bunbu*” appears in the sense of “double path of writing and warring” only once in *Hōgen*, *Heiji*, *Heike*, and *Soga monogatari* respectively; three times in *Gikeiki* and *Jikkinshō*; four times in *Taiheiki*. Similar results can also be found in minor *gunkimono*. As for *nō* pieces, the search produced one hit in *Yorimasa* and three in *Tadanori*. It is worth noting that the rate attested in *Sekyōshō* is the highest in the whole *Gunsho ruijū* collection, especially if we count the occurrences when the characters for *bun* and *bu* are split in the same sentence (statistics gathered from JapanKnowledge). Against all expectations, the word “*bunbu*” occurs sparingly in the major warrior tales, whereas it abounds in *Sekyōshō*. Such figures not only emphasize the exceptionality of this text, but also underscore a steady growth in interest in the *bunbu* debate.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, *Sekyōshō* seems to justify violence whenever necessity should require it, although without specifying under which circumstances this course of action is applicable. This conceptualization echoes what Agamben calls “force of law without law.” As he convincingly points out, the state of exception that legalizes judicial violence is “something like a mystical element, or rather a *factio* by means of which law seeks to annex anomie itself” (39).

literacy.<sup>16</sup> In adherence to this well-rooted tradition, *Sekyōshō* employs culture in order to situate high and low side by side, most strikingly when it tries to persuade prostitutes to learn *Ise* and *Genji monogatari* (265). In such an idealized scenario, courtiers focus on music and poetry whilst other people take part in this cosmic order, albeit to a much lesser degree. Since everyone falls within the same ideology, it would almost be a treacherous act to oppose the system. Consequently, this didactic text labels as monsters (e.g. beast, dog, giant snake etc.) those who deny the *status quo*, as if they had lost their humanity by this act of insubordination.

As I shall argue, these metaphors conceal a political agenda whose aim is to stop overt violence through the imposition of a symbolic order. Regardless of how counterfactual or obsolete it may be, the social utopia envisioned in *Sekyōshō* strives to produce a “harmony of ethos and tastes” (Bourdieu 82), which aligns the *hexis* of multiple actors with the overarching principle of *bunbu*. In this sense, it arranges society into roughly symmetrical compartments whose structure is regular, predictable, and easy to control.

The author attains this kind of symbolic violence through a vast array of rhetorical devices. The most compelling one is the use of metonymy, employed to combine both discursive and material domains into distinct educational patterns.<sup>17</sup> This figure of speech consists in *reducing* the whole to its constituent parts so as to “convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible” (Burke 506). Referring specifically

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<sup>16</sup> “Many things happen to the people of this world, and all that they think and feel is given expression in description of things they see and hear [...] every living being has its song. It is poetry which, without effort, moves heaven and heart, stirs the feelings of the invisible gods and spirits, smooths the relations of men and women, and calms the hearts of fierce warriors” (*Kokinshū* 35; trans. by Rodd). Emblematically, the composition of *Sekyōshō* is backdated to the golden era of Engi 2 (902), just a few years before *Kokinshū* was compiled. On the notion of *monjō keikoku* 文章経国 (“binding the realm in writing”) and the political use of literature in Heian Japan, see Heldt (44–51).

<sup>17</sup> In her thought-provoking reading of the sword trope, Selinger explores the *Heike* corpus through the lens of Hayden White’s philosophy of history. She adopts the notion of “metonymic thinking” to show how and to what extent Yoritomo’s supremacy symbolically replaced the sacred sword after the imperial regalia sunk at Dannoura. In my analysis, I follow her approach and thoroughly apply Burke’s definition of metonymy as *reduction*. As Burke himself admitted, metonymy often overlaps with metaphor (which operates a shift in *perspective*) and synecdoche (a *representation* where the two terms of comparison are qualitatively and quantitatively interchangeable). In the case of *Sekyōshō*, I argue that these figures of speech constitute three cumulative steps toward the elaboration of a systemic theory of rulership.

to the case of *Sekyōshō*, metonymy seems to combine both discursive and material domains into distinct educational patterns. In other words, each form of life is modeled on a rigid set of skills, practices, and ultimately objects, which furnishes the imaginary world of *Sekyōshō*. In this web of connections, the identity of a warrior-aristocrat is best associated with the bow and the brush:

Every day take the brush, make threefold obeisance, and design policies for keeping the world at peace. Every day take the bow, make threefold obeisance, and pray for the Three Great Gifts of fortune, life, and strength; the Three Great Attitudes of advancement, withdrawal, and perseverance; the annihilation of all your enemies and the mysterious techniques [of career progress] which grant you access to the imperial rooms. Every hour of day and night, purify your thoughts and put your mind either on the tip of your blade or in the hilt of your sword. If you let it wander away even for a single moment, you shall err. Civil virtues lie in a brush stick of one *sun*. Military virtues lie in a bow grip of three *sun*. [...] All human wealth is to be found in these two handles: The two handles of the bow and the brush. (258–59)

Material objects act as a conduit to bring the *bunbu* paradigm into being and empower those people who actually possess them. The text continues in a similar vein when it comes to samurai of lower ranks:

Holding a bow in the left hand and a brush in the right is divine manifestation. Its tremendous authority might indeed conquer a thousand enemies. The brush is the virtuous sword of the great Mañjuśrī. [...] A brush is made from a five-*sun* stick of small bamboo, one *sun* [tuft] of animal hair, a three-*sun* thread, and a single *sun* of birch wood. It costs as much as a bowl of rice. It may not be heavy in hand but it transmits the myriad of all venerable teachings, thus is superior to the sacred sword that pacifies the realm. The bow is made from a half bamboo section of seven *shaku* and five *sun*, a wooden piece of same length, a cup of glue, and a small string. Make it vibrate and the countless number of vindictive enemies shall retreat. Gold and silver are superfluous to the bow, since its value does not exceed five hundred [*mon*] or one *kan*. Despite being light in hand, such a divine weapon thoroughly overcomes the heavy [problem of] evil hordes. (261)

Together with arrows, this assemblage constitutes the physical, intellectual, and spiritual equipment a warrior worthy of that name should possess.<sup>18</sup> At this point, brush and sword cease to function as mere parts of a (mind)set, but *represent* the essence of being a warrior in its totality. The synecdochic connection is complete once it transfigures the legitimate owner of bow and brush into a new, authoritative subject.

According to *Sekyōshō*, such instruments lie within anyone's reach and their practice should be encouraged from early childhood. However, the author actually puts aside peasants and other groups of kindred people, developing alternative means of representation for them. Illiteracy becomes inherent to the system under the condition that it is accompanied by orthodox values such as passive acceptance and resilience. These virtues apparently prevent ignorance from degenerating into "non-*bun*," the true antinomy of culture and civilization. In order to express this subtle difference, the text has to introduce extra polarities where farming tools engender the proper lifestyle for commoners:

Leave the hip sword and hold the sickle. Throw the bow away and carry the hoe on your shoulder. Take the *eboshi* off and wear a braided hat of wisteria. Take the *hakama* off and wear a straw skirt. Shun colorful garments, with the exception of a slightly yellow-dyed apron covering your knees. Matters of agriculture shall always be on your tongue, sickle and hoe in your hand, shovel and plough for horses on your shoulder. Adorn your body with dirt and dust from fields and rice paddies. Your hair should be left untied. Disgraceful as it may seem, these are the manners of lowborn people. As the old saying goes, "In the monk's hand the prayer staff, in the warrior's hand the bow and arrow, in the woman's hand the spun thread and mirror, and in the servant's hand the sickle."<sup>19</sup> (265)

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<sup>18</sup> A description of bow and arrows akin to *Sekyōshō* appears in *Jinteki mondō* (210–11). Although it is possible that no genetic relationship exists, the lexical and thematic resemblance between these texts does suggest the establishment of a common discursive environment.

<sup>19</sup> It may be possible to detect in this passage a rephrasing of the Confucian warning: "Let the ruler be a ruler; the subject, a subject; the father, a father; the son, a son" (*Analects* 82; chapter 12.11; trans. by Watson). This principle, commonly known as "rectification of names," can be read as an argument for stability over social mobility.



Evidently, clothes and paraphernalia build a *hierarchy of materialities* and contribute to the process of social scaffolding. New pairs of opposites arise from the original *bunbu* matrix, with the effect of embodying—and thereby naturalizing—class distinction (Tabata 203–205). *Sekyōshō* tends to inculcate this analogical sense in its readers, because one would be less prone to question the epistemic link with their own utensils of labor and training.<sup>20</sup> In short, then, on the one hand the metonymic argument casts the commoners as passive agents, while on the other it glorifies the rulers as holy manifestation of deities and bodhisattvas.

By the same strategy of containment, the text eschews any surrogate representation of society as being incorrect or misleading. In particular, it tries to rule out those individuals whose behavior would disrupt the system, such as the negligent servant who avoids doing his duty. A samurai “willing to take the chopsticks—much bigger than the brush—and eat his fill of food and wine; [...] who pulls the ship’s rope and handles the bamboo pole—either heavier or thinner than the bow,” is judged a criminal and doomed to hell (*Sekyōshō* 261–62). Chopsticks and fishing tools typify the opposites of brush and bow as their weight is not only a sign of greed, but it also recalls the “heaviness” (*omoki*) of those “evil hordes” a warrior should vanquish. Analogously, the ruthless samurai who lacks of *bunbu* is no different from a “thief” (*nusubito*, 255).

Another controversial figure is the monastic warrior. Indeed, warriors and monks seem to share intrinsic features, which blur the tricky distinction between their respective fields of action. To make things clearer, when it comes to the definition of “samurai,”<sup>21</sup> the text skillfully turns a plain linguistic observation into a rhetorically powerful aphorism:

If one looks closely enough, the word “samurai” 侍 has the “man” (*otoko* 男) above and the “monk” (*sō* 僧) below. The reason for this is that he must carry his bow, arrows, and fighting staff, but also great compassion in his heart. [...] Hence, the “samurai” combines the two characters of monk and layman (*sōzoku* 僧俗).  
(261)

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<sup>20</sup> As a disguised form of domination, symbolic violence needs objectification in order to be effective (Bourdieu 183–97). I argue that the imagistic association at play in *Sekyōshō* served to incarnate such dispositions by pushing behavioral patterns into the more solid dimension of material life.

<sup>21</sup> For the sake of efficiency, I use the term “samurai” even though the common pronunciation for this character was probably *saburai*. See, for instance, the autograph copy of *Shōdan chiyō* 樵談治要, dated from 1480, in which Kaneyoshi provides the phonetic reading さふらひ (78).

In order to condone the violence inherent to his profession, the samurai is ennobled by the sacred-profane oxymoron, which parallels the brush-and-bow or the *bun*-and-*bu* dichotomy. What allows this semantic folding is the operation of breaking down the *kanji* into its graphic components, namely the radical for “person” (*ninben* 亻) as a universal indicator of masculinity, and the phonetic element of “temple” (*ji* 寺) which metonymically refers to the clergy. It is hardly surprising that manly bravery stays above and thus should be prioritized. The dictionary-like exegesis of *bu* further enhances this hierarchy of values as “its character is pronounced *takeshi* (武), *takeshi* means strong (*tsuyoshi*), and strong means unafraid of death (*inochi o oshimazu*)” (258). Yet, all similarities notwithstanding, the boundaries between warrior and monk ought never to be crossed, since “the monk who takes the fighting staff instead of the brush [...] is just a *tengu* (goblin)” (257). In this case, the priorities are inevitably reversed because the exercise of force would constitute a breaking of the first moral vow incumbent upon all Buddhist preachers, which is that against “taking someone’s life” (*sesshō*, 254–55). Only a few lay followers (*bōkan* 坊官) of high social standing and with exceptional expertise in the arts of *bunbu* have permission to join the armed wing of temple abbots (254). The painstaking attention to nomenclature may be considered *per se* a rhetorical strategy to relegate the individual to a single group. In all evidence, however, the terminological fuzziness of *Sekyōshō* proves unapt to convey the heterogeneity of the Muromachi clergy.<sup>22</sup>

Condemnation of brutality is a common motif in medieval literature and people not supposed to take up arms are often discouraged to do so.<sup>23</sup> In addition, *Sekyōshō* portrays another form of barbarism: Defection against one’s superior.

The paper is the vassal of the brush. The arrow is the attendant of the bow. No matter how evil or good, the paper will follow without resistance whatever [the brush] writes. [...] No matter how scary or filthy its target may be, the arrow shall never turn back. It does not even fear the most formidable of all men. It chases birds and animals, and when shot against temple halls, pagodas, or cloisters, it neither reproaches [the bow] nor retreats. (262)

<sup>22</sup> For a more historical perspective, see Adolphson (51–56).

<sup>23</sup> Kenkō Hōshi was probably one of the most trenchant critics, as he wrote: “The soldier’s life is remote from that of humankind and closer to that of the beasts; it is useless, unless one happens to be born into a warrior family, to indulge in the martial arts” (*Tsurezuregusa* 69; 80 *dan*; trans. by Keene).

Once again, the author applies metonymic logic but this time coupled with personification. Given the dystopian image of sacred places under attack, the passage above may have conceivably harbored a criticism to those upstart warriors (*nariagari*) eager to betray their lord for personal gain, or even to the roving soldiers (*ashigaru*) who would have put the capital to fire and sword.<sup>24</sup> At any rate, the text warns the cautious leader to spot any “crooked arrow” or “puckered piece of paper” and promptly eliminate them (262). Moreover, the lord should lead his vassals righteously since he is solely responsible for their negative conduct. These assertions have the implicit consequence of ratifying two types of violence: The military prowess and self-abnegation I shall call “orthodox *bu*,” placed within the appropriate master-slave dialectic; and a mischievous use of force (“non-*bu*” or *inbu*<sup>25</sup> 隠武), sanctioned as illegal.

To summarize, *Sekyōshō* seems to encapsulate the ideals of a leading class at the pinnacle of its decadence. It exalts the lore of ancient times and condemns any form of social mobility as a way of counteracting violence and disruption. Nonetheless, it does perpetrate violence by symbolically reducing the world to a static network, in which every actor is bound from birth to a precise code of knowledge. The *bunbu* binary helps the author articulate the discourse by enabling a set of opposite categories and objects that seek union through separation.

The diagram in Figure 1 offers a synthetic overview of this binary model, showing how the elite positioned itself in the prestigious upper-right quadrant.<sup>26</sup> Horizontal and vertical axes express the degree of *bunbu* virtues, which constitute the primary source of political legitimation.<sup>27</sup> The

<sup>24</sup> Kaneyoshi pronounced a vehement philippic against the *ashigaru* in *Shōdan chiyō*, in which he labelled those masterless soldiers as an “evil band given to excesses” (78).

<sup>25</sup> This is how *Sekyōshō* terms this lawless condition (251). The expression literally means “hidden army” and alludes to the uncontrolled use of violence the leader is called upon to repress.

<sup>26</sup> For this graph, I primarily focused on the first book of *Sekyōshō*. The greater attention paid to the political intelligentsia makes the right half of the diagram densely populated if compared with the other sector. Incidentally, this fact tallies with what is supposed to be the original title of *Sekyōshō*—namely *Kinchū kagami*—which more accurately refers to the imperial palace and its surroundings (see note 9).

<sup>27</sup> The numbers in superscript indicate the numbered article of *Sekyōshō* that deals with that particular subject. Their progression is indicative of the hierarchical relationships. In addition, the distribution principle that I adopted took into account the type of knowledge required and the degree of mastery possessed by each element. Where there was no explicit mention of *bun* or *bu*, I followed the metonymic logic. Accordingly, I interpreted as *bun* any cultural activity (e.g. *shiika*

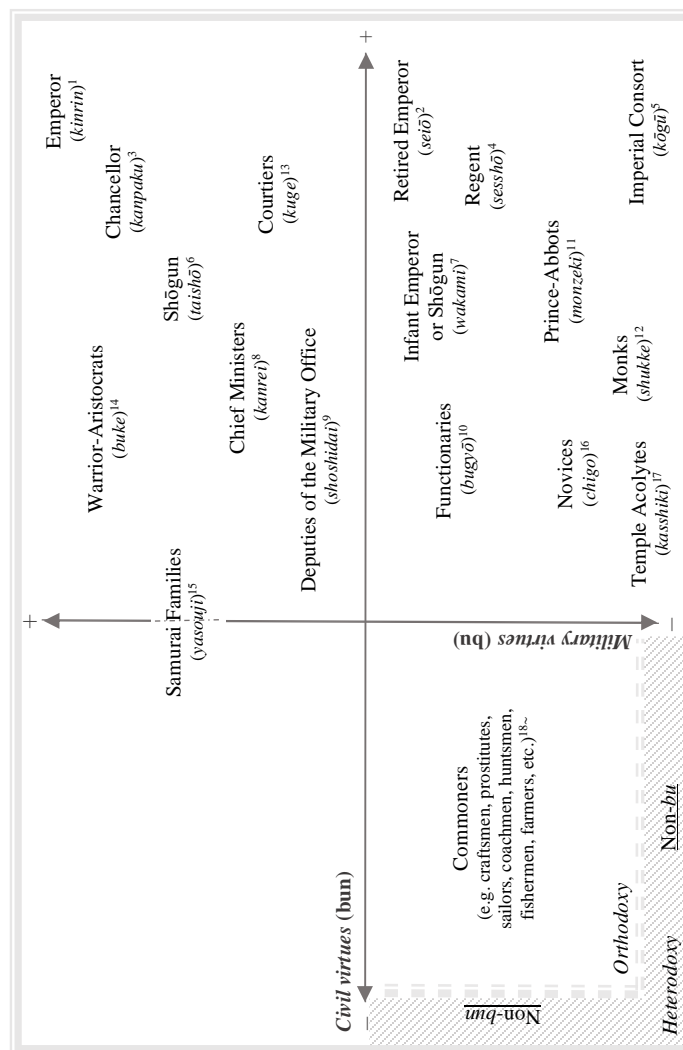


Figure 1 The World of *Sekyōshō*

*kangen* 詩歌管弦) and as *bu* any form of legitimate violence. For example, I considered a manifestation of *bu* any act of justice such as “punishing” (*seibai* 成敗), “protecting the realm” (*gokoku* 護国), “rectifying the wrong” (*yugameru o naosu* 橋ヲ直ス), “wiping the evil away” (*akugyaku o harau* 悪逆ヲ拂フ) etc. A certain margin of error is inevitably present, in particular for those articles that include more than one category of people.

multitude of commoners occupies the opposite side, whereas social tricksters and freewheelers are left in the blind spot of this worldly mirror, as if they do not deserve any sort of representation within the human collectivity. Whenever *Sekyōshō* evokes outlaw subjects, it purportedly does so in order to marginalize unauthorized violence and pure illiteracy (i.e. lack of both knowledge and civic values).

However, the threshold between groups cannot escape a certain ambiguity and its definition leaves room for (mis)interpretations. In the following section, I will show how the *bunbu* paradigm assumed a very different role and shape in response to a different social positioning.

#### **NOBLESSE OBLIGE AND PRACTICAL LOGIC IN THE HOUSE PRECEPTS OF ISE SADACHIKA**

As much as Confucianism downplays personal experience in favor of universalistic ambitions, *Sekyōshō* emphasizes the *code of knowledge* rather than the *knower's* individual asset. The friction between the two approaches is obvious once we consider the reception of this ideology, for instance by looking at how individual actors managed to overcome its framework and reconfigure the *bunbu* dichotomy according to their own interests. *Gusoku no tame no kyōkun issatsu* 為愚息教訓一札 (Letter of Instructions for my Stupid Son) by Ise Sadachika 伊勢貞親 (1417–1473) exemplifies this process of appropriation and adaptation.<sup>28</sup>

Appointed Chief of the Administrative Office (*mandokoro shitsujī*) in 1460, Sadachika had been the personal tutor of Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435–1490) and maintained a trusting relationship with his mighty wife Tomiko. Due to this influence, the Ise family came to wield enormous power to the extent of acting as a privileged mediator between the shōgun and the other daimyō lords. In particular, Sadachika would intervene in the succession disputes of the Hatakeyama and Shiba clans, and apparently he pulled the strings behind the scenes for the selection of Yoshimasa's heir. Such involvement eventually hastened the path to the Ōnin War and earned Sadachika the reputation of cunning vassal.<sup>29</sup>

The letter he handed down to his son Sadamune (1444–1509) dates from the Chōroku era (1457–1460) and was in all likelihood written on

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<sup>28</sup> Numerous textual variants exist and, for convenience, the text is usually referred to as *Ise Sadachika kyōkun* 伊勢貞親教訓. Nonetheless, the internal title of the Naikaku Bunko version is “*Gusoku no tame no kyōkun issatsu*” and this is likely to be the original one. For a philological survey, see Kakei (126–31).

<sup>29</sup> The anonymous author of *Ōninki* described Sadachika as a greedy, immoral man, “who craved pleasures of the flesh, engaged in lustful affairs, and accepted bribery” (140; trans. by Varley).

occasion of his coming-of-age ceremony. It belongs to the genre of house precepts or *kakun* 家訓, a useful category of texts in tracing the transformations of *bunbu* as a concept.<sup>30</sup> I demonstrate that this document witnesses a major shift from the ideals of the fourteenth century towards a more fluid definition of “warrior.”

The clearest difference with *Sekyōshō* lies in its disenchanting view of literacy. The word “double path” (*nidō*) appears for the first time in article 14, which, tellingly enough, replaces brush with horse: “What really matter are bow and horse (*kyūba* 弓馬). Whether day or night, practice these Two Ways without negligence. [...] You may well study other disciplines, but if you do not, you will be fine anyway.” Accordingly, Sadachika dissuades his son from training in *sarugaku* instead of martial arts, as being unacquainted with dance would be much less disgraceful than lacking the necessary skills of archery and equitation. Elsewhere he encourages him to pursue other forms of entertainment, such as wrestling, falconry, and trials of strength—surely more apt for a young warrior, as long as they are practiced with moderation (art. 13). However, it is in article 15 that Sadachika’s claim to pragmatism is evident more than ever:

As for the Way of Poetry, even if unskilled [in composition] you should know at least the form. When I once took part in an official contest, I found myself trapped in the room as I was asked to choose a random slip and improvise a poem without leaving my seat or consulting with people.<sup>31</sup> The topic I picked up was “Remaining of Night.”<sup>32</sup> I could not even understand the meaning

<sup>30</sup> Wilson translated a selection of *kakun* into English.

<sup>31</sup> This practice goes under the name of *saguri dai* 探題, i.e. when contestants were assigned by lottery a poem slip (*tanzaku*) with a fixed topic (*kadai*) at the top. Later, the judge would collect the *impromptu* compositions, read them aloud, and announce the winner.

<sup>32</sup> “Remaining of Night” (*joya* 除夜) refers to New Year’s Eve and is frequently associated with the recollection of past memories and people, sorrow over lost and irretrievable time, a sense of melancholy somehow mitigated by the coming spring, and so forth. The earliest work in *Shinpen kokka taikan* that features this theme is the *Horikawa hyakushū* (nos. 1105–1120). Apparently, it found resonance with the *Kyōgoku* style since it appears twice in *Gyokuyōshū* (nos. 1032 and 2759), the imperial anthology compiled by Tamekane (1254–1332), and several times in the personal collection of his patron, Emperor Fushimi (r. 1287–1298). It regained some popularity from the fifteenth century onwards, although Sadachika’s perplexity suggests it never became a widespread topic, arguably overshadowed by its more common equivalent “End of the Year” (*seibo* 歳暮). This also explains why in *Kanjinshū* by Inawashiro Kensai (1452–1510) we find written in smaller characters the explanatory note “[*joya*] indicates the night of seasonal change”

and my face was flushed with embarrassment, when Nōa[mi]<sup>33</sup> looked at me, wrote down on a piece of paper the definition and conventions of this topic, and secretly put his note in my pocket. As soon as I read it, I knew what to do and eventually managed to avoid public humiliation. In recalling this event, I cannot stress enough how important it is to be prepared. As ancient people used to say: “Devote yourself more to Technique (*gei* 芸) than to the Way (*michi* 道)!” [...] Nonetheless, as I said before, you should never neglect the Two [Ways] of bow and horse in order to pursue this one. Everything else comes next. Remember that poetry is indeed first among the others but second to the Two Ways [of bow and horse]. (art. 15)

As should be clear from this quotation, the meaning endorsed in the “double path” motto changed radically. Although the signifier (*nidō* or *ryōdō*) may sound the same, its content is more *bu*-oriented. The metonymic designation undergoes an equivalent adjustment. In fact, we find no direct reference to the brush whereas a pool of articles deals with the dress code in both war and everyday life (art. 3, 16, 18). For instance, Sadachika prescribes a decent demeanor for his young heir and considers at length how long his formal sword should be (17). Finally, when the text sketches a picture of an ideal dwelling, it says no matter how humble the outlook of its furniture, a samurai house should always exhibit horses and weapons. Potentially violent items transfer a symbolic power to their owner, because they entrust him with the choice of whether enacting their potential or restraining from their use. The text represents these objects as they strengthen the bond of belonging to the dominant class. On the other hand, any extravagant accessory—such as lavishly decorated scrolls—would be redundant and rather befitting the house of a merchant than a samurai (29).

As already stated, objects encode practices and practices define subjects, but what we witness in Sadachika’s case is a sort of repurposing of metonymy in order to reverse the all-embracing ideology of the “double path.” By underlying the disparity between *bun* and *bu* and asserting the

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(*sechibun no yo no koto nari*, no. 226), which otherwise would have been pleonastic.

<sup>33</sup> Nōami (1397–1471), also known as Shinnō, was personal consultant of the shōgun in matters of taste. Well versed in painting and *renga* poetry, he reached the position of *dōbōshū* under Yoshinori and exercised his supervision over the Ashikaga art collection. Names ending with -ami were customary for Jishū priests and followers, thus the suffix is often omitted.

pre-eminence of the latter, the author deliberately opted to *reduce* his sphere of action; yet this reduction is aimed not at self-restraint but empowerment. Arguably, the acquisition of cultural capital from literacy alone did not suffice in an age of discord and hence the need to establish a tighter control through the exercise of either physical or symbolic force. In other words, the chaotic political conditions on the eve of the Ōnin War and in its aftermath resulted in a massive deployment of military means, which transformed violence itself into a practice of self-affirmation. As the Portuguese missionary João Rodrigues (c. 1562–1633) would admit a century later: “The government in Japan depends more on weapons than letters” and “they learn only those that will suffice in ordinary social use.”<sup>34</sup>

Being a high-ranking official, Sadachika paid lip service to the aristocracy and its rituals but only as long as this relationship granted him social prestige. In addition, the shōgun Yoshimasa was notoriously fond of poetry (Keene 115–17) and Sadachika’s foremost concern might have been to please his lord. Nevertheless, such obligation for cultural engagement would have also served the careerist goals of a family about to become the legitimate repository of warrior knowledge and customs.<sup>35</sup> Even the fear of public stigmatization, which transpires throughout his letter (art. 9, 11, 20, 22, 36, 37 etc.), supported the hegemonic ambition to become “a mirror for the whole realm (*tenka no kagami*)” (38).

If I may indulge in the same metaphor, the author’s standpoint produced a reflection whose silhouette seems relatively far from the image mirrored in *Sekyōshō*. The assassination of Ashikaga Yoshinori in 1441—an episode known as the Kakitsu Disturbance—followed by the outbreak of the Ōnin War destabilized the configuration of power. Under this pressure, a conversion of civil (*bun*) into military (*bu*) capital started taking place and warriors such as Sadachika began—albeit still timidly—to

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<sup>34</sup> The quotation is from the *History of the Church in Japan* (340, second book). Rodrigues also acknowledges the importance of “Ise-no-Kami Dono” as masters of ceremonies, admitting that for his own account he drew heavily from their library of *buke kojitsu* volumes: “[The Ise] family possesses copious books dealing in detail with the subject of their customs and the way of observing them. Some of the things that we have written here have been taken from their books” (177, first book).

<sup>35</sup> In his milestone research, Futaki (239–40) describes the swift rise of the Ise family during and after the Ōnin era. Moreover, he attributes the booming interest in the field of warrior rites to a new “self-consciousness” (*jiishiki* 自意識), which supposedly suffused not only the emerging warlords, but also lower-class people in search of recognition.



“colonize” the upper-left quadrant in Figure 1.<sup>36</sup> By so doing, they managed to affirm their own superiority in a pristine rhetorical space where the martial sphere played a more prominent role. Over the following decades, many Sengoku daimyō would engage at different levels in the *bunbu* dispute, sometimes proclaiming the primacy of the military, sometimes adopting a more balanced rationale. In both cases, their aim must have been that of finding a place in the discursive field and—most urgently—establishing a profitable way of life (*kafū* 家風) for themselves and their progeny.<sup>37</sup>

### THE *BUNBU* BINARY AS A GENERATIVE SCHEME

*Sekyōshō* and *Gusoku no tame no kyōkun issatsu* are very different texts in both length and scope. Nevertheless, a comparison allows us to track the emergence of conflicting instances in the midst of the Ōnin War. The former depicts a highly idealized hierarchy, which finds political legitimation in the moral superiority of its elite. The prerogatives of *bunbu* equate the *kōbu* polity heralded by *Kenmu shikimoku*, the influential code of law of the early Ashikaga shogunate. Accordingly, it propounds the mutual integration of aristocrats and warriors as the cornerstone of a system where conflict is silenced and violence exists only in its suspended form. The latter, however, unmasks the fictitious nature of this account. As partisan records, house precepts such as Sadachika’s seem less adherent to antiquated moral standards and shift our attention to the discontinuities in the *bunbu* ideology. Furthermore, such precepts point to a growing tension within the leading class, whose attributes appear far from homogeneous.

Being anything but neutral, knowledge and its articulation engendered this gap. During the late medieval period, the denotation of *bun* and *bu* became more tangible and so did the logic of metonymic association, which kept multiplying its objects. This inventory of items aimed at

<sup>36</sup> Figures of speech may produce both “artistic” and “realistic” outcomes. However, when I speak of “conversion,” I mainly refer to a symbolic shift without implying that this exchange also happened on a material level. Although Bourdieusian theory would suggest an equivalence between literary and economic fields, such interaction needs further evidence from historical sources to be verified.

<sup>37</sup> The craving for social order expressed in rulebooks such as *Sekyōshō* is just one facet of what Berry called the “culture of lawlessness.” In her words, a climate of growing tension marked the ascendancy of disruptive behavior and violence, but it also prompted a “process of invention, as men and women of all stations rejected stable definitions of selves, attachments, and values to test possibilities” (xxi). I argue that Sadachika’s rhetorical positioning fits within this process of self-construction.

exhaustiveness and consensus in *Sekyōshō*, whilst their selective display was charged with new meaning for Ise and other warrior families. In particular, the choice of weapons and so forth conveyed a more nuanced, self-conscious personality—an element that counters the illusion of a unitary *bunbu* ideal. What originally was supposed to prevent sacrilegious acts of violence, paradoxically gave prominence to its representation.

Of course, this does not imply that literacy was underestimated *a priori*. Knowledge about poetry, epistolary etiquette, and ancient rituals certainly conferred legitimacy to the warlord government and its representatives. However, I emphasize how warrior exponents would tend to foreground elements of concrete experience, be it on the battlefield or in public office. In this sense, they did not simply reproduce or imitate the symbolism imbricated with the earlier *bunbu* rhetoric, but appropriated and adapted it in order to attune their identities to the dynamics of historical change.<sup>38</sup>

A negotiation of this sort never develops in a vacuum since pre-existing discourses inevitably constrain the expressive range of language (Foucault 49–51). I argue that this “*bunbu* regime” provided a convenient system of classification to be applied reflexively in multifarious ways. The results were different warrior-types, which need to be discussed on their own terms without overgeneralization.

The fragmentary nature of *bunbu* unequivocally emerges whenever the revered stereotype of the warrior-aristocrat—so fundamental to fourteenth-century political theory—becomes the target of revision or even criticism. In this regard, a contemporary source worth mentioning is *Uesugi Sadamasa jō* 上杉定正状. Its author, Uesugi Sadamasa (1443–1494), belonged to the Ōgigayatsu branch of the powerful Kantō *kanrei* family. In 1489 he addressed this missive to his vassal Soga Sukeshige (dates unknown) and his adopted son Tomoyoshi (1473?–1518).

Instead of upholding the conventional view on *bunbu*, Sadamasa’s attention is entirely devoted to military issues. Apparently, he strove to pass this attitude on to his heir and showed himself very attentive to details regarding his early education (art. 7). In the following passage, he

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<sup>38</sup> Bourdieu defined the individual system of dispositions I call “identity” as *habitus* and showed that it always results from a complex interaction between subject, class-consciousness, and historical circumstances. He also observed how it might be considered a “*social trajectory* [...] irreducible to any other” (86). In the present study, this trajectory finds expression in the ideal shift every warrior enacts on the rhetoric field of fig. 1, which for the purpose of this paper shall be renamed the “discursive regime of *bunbu*.”

complains about Tomoyoshi wasting his time in futile gossip during a meeting with other retainers and householders:

Among the things asked were the thrush, the chasing of birds on Musashi moor, the six great shrines of Musashi province, and the galloping horses of Fukaya.<sup>39</sup> Stories were told of feasts and libations. When a *rōnin* came from the direction of Kyōto, they inquired about the songs of Shōgetsu [i.e. Shōtetsu] and his calligraphy, discussed the *renga* of Shinkei and Sōgi, engaged in conversation about the people in the capital—rich and poor, high and low, young and old, men and women. Then they spoke of pilgrimages, of sightseeing at [Iwa]shimizu Otokoyama [Hachiman Shrine], of the Five Mountains [i.e. Gozan temples], of dances from Toyama and Yūzaki nō schools,<sup>40</sup> and many other things. Needless to say, as soon as I saw this I cried and whined. Should this foolish old man die in battle tomorrow, everyone in this family would lose their life, and the survivors live like beggars. (art. 8)

Against the political correctness of the time, Sadamasa expresses his disapproval for social conventions and fiercely criticizes as “aristocratic effeminacy” any kind of recreational or learned activity. The semantic domain of *bun* explodes in this exponential accumulation of place names, snippets of knowledge, and famous poets and dancers, which metonymically define the cultural horizon Sadamasa would excise from Tomoyoshi’s worldview.<sup>41</sup> Learning is nothing but a distraction from more demanding concerns, as he clearly states in the articles that ensue:

Does Tomoyoshi want to pursue learning (*gakumon* 学文)? If so, all the better, but I am convinced it will be to no avail. You may well recite the Seven [Military] Classics, but you won’t find a

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<sup>39</sup> The reference to the thrush (*uguisu*), a well-worn topic in *waka* poetry, is paired with the practice of bird hunting (*oitori*), a lofty pastime enjoyed by both warriors and courtiers. Fukaya is in modern-day Saitama Prefecture and was one of Uesugi’s headquarters.

<sup>40</sup> Other textual variants mention Kanze and Konparu.

<sup>41</sup> Spafford sharply discusses this passage, albeit focusing more on the peculiar depiction Sadamasa provides of Musashino. Indeed, this peripheral grassland ingrains “the dialectic between literary commonplace and daily life,” and qualifies as a “blank space of leisure beyond engagement in the politics of intrigue and war and conquest” (58–59).

single clue on how to win a battle. Also, there are people who read the *Analects* and the *Classic of Filial Piety*, yet behave unfilially. Indeed, this is [as foolish as] wearing a brocade to go out at night, or like a [bald] monk collecting combs. (art. 9)

Starting from *The Commentary of Zuo* and the Seven Classics, one should be cautious about whatever teaching comes from those virtuous men in the great continent. Even between the capital and the Kantō region there are differences! In a remote country where millet grows scattered around,<sup>42</sup> only inept people would apply to their actions the art of discernment proper to a vast land. It is something you should absolutely avoid. (art. 10)

Sadamasa's catastrophic prophecy over the clan's future urges him to elaborate further on "*bun*," lumping together elements from both China and Japan, center and periphery. His scornful lamentation ends by defending a pragmatic approach to war and politics, opposed to any other frivolous claim.<sup>43</sup> On first impression, one would consider a comment like this the dissolution of *bunbu*, because Sadamasa tacitly asserts his total emancipation from the cultural requirements of the warrior elite. However, such negation of the civil sphere is exactly what prevents the apparatus from collapse, insofar as it merely re-proposes—without overcoming—the writing-warring dualism. In order to achieve this *reductio ad unum*, the author cannot but enunciate an obligatory set of *schemata*, which pertains to the same grid of reference.

Lastly, a well-known example of adaptation is *Sōunji dono nijūichi kajō* 早雲寺殿廿一箇条 (Hōjō Sōun's Twenty-One Articles), written around the first decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>44</sup> The secular name of its author was Ise Moritoki 伊勢盛時 (1432?–1519) and there is a strong likelihood that he had blood ties to his namesake Ise Sadachika.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Japan is called *zokusan henji* 粟散辺地 to enhance the contrast in scale with the Chinese empire.

<sup>43</sup> The only antecedent to this rhetorical inversion seems to be *Tōjiin goisho* 等持院御遺書, apocryphally attributed to Ashikaga Takauji (1305–1358). Its putative author propounds an elitist vision of *bunbu* by distinguishing between high and low-ranking warriors. The former must pursue "both the wheels" of writing and warring for the sake of good governance, whereas the latter should disregard literature "for it brings no gain" and neither do the Confucian classics (art. 13). However, Sadamasa's opinion is even more extreme insofar as it extends to the warrior elite a negative judgment on *bun*-like values.

<sup>44</sup> For a study in English on Sōun's life and work, see Steenstrup.

<sup>45</sup> Until recently, the figure of Sōun had been shrouded in shadow and even his true name was unknown, but Ienaga's research shed new light on his origins.

Nonetheless, he is commonly portrayed as an upstart innovator and the prototype of all Sengoku warlords. In fact, his strategic acumen led him to exploit the intra-clan dispute between the Ōgigayatsu and Yamanouchi Uesugi to impose his own supremacy over the eastern provinces.

The most striking feature of this memorandum is the emphasis on prosaic everyday affairs and, conversely, the paucity of information about military and literary matters. Sōun does discuss the importance of reading books, but only as a secret pastime (art. 12). Similarly, writing and poetry should be cultivated merely as tools for public administration (15). Concerning swords and garments, they do not need to be elegant (6) and the art of riding should be performed during leisure time (16). In this context, his tribute to the (quadruple?) way of *bunbu kyūba* is perfunctory and relegated to the bottom of the list (21), as if it were a later addition. Among other objects selected by Sōun, we find the three “bad friends” of *shakuhachi*, *go*, and *shōgi*, whose “frequentation” should be moderate (17).<sup>46</sup> In general, his stance is what could be described as the *popularization* of warrior values, suggesting with this term a tendency towards the lower-left quadrant in Figure 1. The scarce significance assigned to commoners’ rhetorical space is reassessed thanks to its “frankness” (*shōjiki*) and “straightforwardness” (*ari no mama naru kokoro*, art. 5), prized as the most important of all values.

Subsequent Sengoku generals would have followed either this or other trajectories. For them, willingly or unwillingly, the *bunbu* paradigm expressed a taxonomy of values impossible to ignore. Its partial adoption or blatant refusal eventually turned into a strategy of mutual positioning and the very construction of a “warrior self” happened inside this fluid ranking system as an invention within a convention.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

An empirical analysis of texts composed in a time span of roughly fifty years—from 1460 to 1510—leads us to the conclusion that *bunbu* was the catalyst of a doxic realm, in which the legitimate use (and representation) of violence was at stake. First, I discussed how a variegated set of (rhetorical) tools gave substance (and expression) to opposing instances. By making (discursive) practice immanent to objects, the

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<sup>46</sup> Sadachika mentions *en passant* the triple *go*, *shōgi*, and *yōkyū* (i.e. a smaller bow used in competitive game) just to warn the reader against a gambling addiction (art. 34). On the other hand, Sōun elaborates an allegorical personification to deliver a broader reflection on friendship. Both cases are distant from *Sekyōshō*, whose main concern is to instruct the commander to think of the chessboard as a battlefield (257).

concept of metonymic association served to describe the generative process of social hierarchy and class distinction. Secondly, I showed how the Ōnin War signalled a significant change in the ideological tenets of the old aristocracy, with the emergence of different actors who became players on this symbolic field by attributing flexible meanings to the *bunbu nidō* signifier. The values projected onto the so-called “double path,” as well as the ever shifting balance between its components, were themselves a major issue of debate and actively contributed to the creation of idiosyncratic warrior identities. Finally, I insisted on the necessity to look at multiple points of view in order to understand the dominant logic at work without ignoring the irreducible difference between texts, and the positionality of their authors. The initial step of this method would be to rephrase Hurst’s statement in the plural, by addressing the question not just about a single but a composite of *competing ideals* for warriors in the New Age.

Due to space limitations, this paper focused on normative writings because they delve more deeply into the discussion of *bunbu*. However, a substantial amount of textual production from late medieval Japan also deals with it. Socio-political speculation gave a relevant impulse to literature and informed a variety of genres, such as *gunkimono*, *otogizōshi*, *ōraimono*, and encyclopedias, which apparently shared a didactic purpose.<sup>47</sup>

As for future research, it would be worth giving resonance to this multifaceted phenomenon by investigating a broader spectrum of sources. Furthermore, I believe that conceiving *bunbu* as a contested field of discourse might be effective not only in problematizing didactic methods and contents, but also in examining how subjugated classes—which emerged from the melee at a later stage—would engage in this symbolic struggle with similar weapons<sup>48</sup> toward a momentous “cultural overturning.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> On this matter, see Ogawa (especially 273–77) and Kosukegawa.

<sup>48</sup> For instance by reversing the *bunbu* ideal through irony, as occurs in some *kyōgen* satirical pieces where warriors of dubious culture and skills are lampooned.

<sup>49</sup> I borrow here the felicitous coinage of Yonehara, who described the tumultuous cultural landscape of Sengoku Japan as “*bunkateki gekokujō*” (477).

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