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Journal Item

How to cite:

Yamagata, Naoko (2014). Camilla and Tomoe: female warriors in Virgil and in medieval Japan. Proceedings of the Virgil Society, 28 pp. 81–98.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

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Version: Version of Record

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Camilla and Tomoe: Female Warriors in Virgil and in Medieval Japan

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 28 January 2012**

This paper examines the character of Camilla in the *Aeneid*. She is a heavily studied subject, but I would like to ask two questions which I believe are still current and pertinent: (1) What are Camilla's models? and (2) What functions might Camilla be fulfilling within the *Aeneid*? She is unknown outside the poem, and it is almost certain that Virgil created her out of many elements. Evidence within the text will be our first port of call, but I believe it will also be useful to bring in observations afforded by a comparative approach, using both female warriors in Homer (and other Greek sources as appropriate) and Tomoe, a female warrior in the *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike* hereafter) from medieval Japan. Most similarities with Greek sources can be attributed to direct influence, but in the case of *Heike*, we can safely rule out any such possibility. Rather, we are more likely to be looking at common ideas in world literature stemming from human universals. This perspective can provide new insight into the function of female warriors in the male-dominated epic world of war.

But why compare Virgil and *Heike*? The primary reason is *Heike*'s similarities to Homer's epics which form the model of the *Aeneid*. As a classicist from Japan, where the continuing influence of *Heike* is felt through school education as well as popular culture,¹ I came naturally

* The paper was originally entitled 'Female Warriors in the *Aeneid* and the Japanese *Tale of the Heike*: Camilla, Amazons and Tomoe'.

¹ Its enduring popularity is exemplified by the fact that in 2012, the year in which I gave this talk, NHK (Japan's national broadcasting service) dedicated its flagship weekly drama serial slot to a drama based on it. Also striking is the bibliography of novels, short stories and plays based on *Heike* since the 19th century in Takeda (2007), which lists over 200 items.

to comparing it and Homer. They are similar not only in their status as “national epics”,² but also in their themes. *Heike*, based on historical events in the 12th century AD, is a tale of military struggles between two groups of warriors, the Heike and the Genji, each with support from within the Imperial household.³ It charts the rise and fall of one powerful family, which is seen as a paradigm of the variability of human fortune, in similar sentiment to Homeric references to fate and chance.⁴ This theme of changing human fortune and fate is certainly something that Virgil imported from Homer, most memorably exemplified in the fall of Troy in book 2 or the tragedy of Dido in book 4. I then believe that it is the duty of Japanese classicists such as myself to point out the remarkable similarities between Tomoe, the female warrior in *Heike*, and Camilla in the *Aeneid*, and to explore their implications.

Camilla and her models

Camilla is mentioned in two books of the *Aeneid*, 7 (803-17) and 11 (498-898). She is first introduced at the end of the catalogue of Italian forces opposing the Trojans in book 7, in the passage that ends the book:

Enter Camilla (*Aen.* 7.803-17)⁵

*Hos super advenit Volsca de gente Camilla
agmen agens equitum et florentis aere catervas,
bellatrix, non illa colo calathisque Minervae
femineas adsueta manus, sed proelia virgo
dura pati cursuque pedum praevertere ventos.
Illa vel intactae segetis per summa volaret
gramina nec teneras cursu laeisset aristas,*

² Strictly speaking *Heike* is not an epic, as it is composed mostly in prose, but I believe that the scale and complexity of the story as well as the rhythm of the text, which renders it performable – and above all its similarities to Homer – amply qualify it to be ranked among great epics of the world. For a detailed explanation of stylistic features of *Heike*, see Tyler (2012) xxiii-xxv.

³ The text of *Heike* is likely to have been composed in the late 13th to early 14th century. Rather as with Homer, its authorship is obscure, but according to a contemporary account, it was composed in writing, but meant for oral performance by a blind bard, and it is certainly through oral performance by blind bards, accompanied by music played on a type of lute, that *Heike* was preserved, developed and disseminated to the extent that it has acquired its status as the national epic. The text developed into many versions, some suitable for silent reading and others for oral performance, and inspired a number of dramas, which also parallels Homer’s influence on Greek tragedy. Cf. McCullough (1988) 7-8; Tyler (2012) xxi-xxiii.

⁴ Cf. Yamagata (1993).

⁵ Virgil is quoted from Mynors (1969). The translation of *Aeneid* passages is from West (2003), unless otherwise stated.

*vel mare per medium fluctu suspensa tumentis
ferret iter celeris nec tingeret aequare plantas.
Illam omnis tectis agrisque effusa iuventus
turbaque miratur matrum et prospectat euntem,
attonitis inhians animis ut regius ostro
velet honos levis umeros, ut fibula crinem
auro internectat, Lyciam ut gerat ipsa pharetram
et pastoraalem praefixa cuspidis myrtum.*

“Last of all came Camilla, the warrior maiden of the Volsci, leading a cavalry squadron flowering in bronze. Not for her girlish hands the distaff and wool-basket of Minerva. She was a maid inured to battle, of a fleetness of foot to race the winds. She could have skimmed the tops of a standing crop without touching them and her passage would not have bruised the delicate ears of grains. She could have run over the ocean, hovered over the swell and never wet her foot in the waves. Young men streamed from house and field and mothers came thronging to gaze at her as she went, lost in wonderment at the royal splendour of the purple veiling the smoothness of her shoulders, her hair weaving round its gold clasp, her Lycian quiver and the shepherd’s staff of myrtle wood with the head of a lance”.

There are many signs and influences to be read in this passage. At first sight, with *femineas* (806), Camilla’s gender appears to be emphasised, but she is no ordinary female. *bellatrix* (805) and *virgo* (806) echo the image of Penthesilea, the Amazon queen, which adorns Dido’s temple to Juno in book 1:

The Amazons on Dido’s temple (*Aen.* 1.490-93)

*Ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis
Penthesilea furens mediisque in milibus ardet,
aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae
bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo.*

“The Amazons were there in their thousands with crescent shields and their leader Penthesilea in the middle of her army, ablaze with passion for war. There, showing her naked breast supported by a band of gold, was the warrior maiden, daring to clash with men in battle”.

As Camilla ends the catalogue of allies, here the tour of the picture gallery ends with the Amazons.⁶ Saylor points out that, whilst the other leaders come as sets of two or three,

⁶ Cf. Williams (1960) 150. This also echoes the fact that Penthesilea joined late in the war, just as Camilla. Cf. Fratantuono (2007) 272.

Camilla “by herself forms a highly evocative pendant to the whole”,⁷ highlighting her uniqueness and otherness even further.

Camilla’s swiftness of foot is exaggerated with the lines (808-11) modelled on Homer’s depiction of horses begot by Boreas (*Il.* 20.226-29).⁸ Her swift feet also remind us of Achilles or Atalanta, another huntress.⁹ Her gold quiver, the gold clasp for her hair and her purple dress echo Dido’s outfit for the hunt in *Aen.* 4.138-39:¹⁰

*Cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum,
aurea purpuream subnectit fibula vestem.*

(“Her quiver was of gold. Gold was the clasp that gathered up her hair and her purple tunic was fastened with a golden brooch”).

The people’s admiring gaze at Camilla reminds us of that for Telemachus (*Od.* 2.12-13)¹¹ and also of that for Arete, the Phaeacian queen (*Od.* 7.69-75), whom her family and people look up to, which in turn reminds us of Dido among her people at the time of Aeneas’ arrival in Carthage, giving laws to men just as Arete does (*Aen.* 1.502-08). The quiver also points to Diana’s patronage of Camilla, and her chastity - again a point of comparison with Dido before she met Aeneas.

Dido’s huntress image, which connects her to Camilla, is also associated with that of Venus, who appears to Aeneas earlier in book 1:

Venus as *venatrix* (*Aen.* 1.314-20)

*Cui mater media sese tulit obvia silva
virginis os habitumque gerens et virginis arma
Spartanae, vel qualis equos Threissa fatigat
Harpalyce volucremque fuga praevertitur Hebrum.
Namque umeris de more habilem suspenderit arcum*

⁷ Saylor (1974) 250. Or, as Williams (1961) 149 puts it, “the final haunting lines which describe the warrior-queen Camilla act as a sort of pendant, bringing the book to a close on a note of strange beauty”.

⁸ It may also be noted that the description occurs within Aeneas’ speech to Achilles, in which he declares his lineage, a point likely to have been appreciated by some of Virgil’s educated audience. Although Aeneas is not to appear in Camilla’s story, his “voice” is quoted by the poet here.

⁹ For complex connections between Camilla and Atalanta, see Alessio (1993) 123, who points out their upbringing in the wild as well as their attraction to gold: Camilla is distracted at the sight of Chloereus’ gold finery and Atalanta at the sight of golden apples. Cf. also Fratantuono (2005a).

¹⁰ For the connection between Camilla and Dido and the significance of their clothing, see Fratantuono (2006) esp. 32-40.

¹¹ Cf. Eichhoff (1825) 64.

*venatrix dederatque comam diffundere ventis,
nuda genu nodoque sinus collecta fluentis.*

(“As he walked through the middle of the wood, his mother came to meet him looking like a Spartan girl out hunting, wearing the dress of a Spartan girl and carrying her weapons, or like the Thracian Harpalyce, as she wearies horses with her running and outstrips the swift current of the river Hebrus. She had a light bow hanging from her shoulders in hunting style, her hair was unbound and streaming in the wind and her flowing dress was caught up above the knee”).

Venus looks like Harpalyce, a huntress princess, anticipating Dido’s appearance before meeting Aeneas. Here, the image of Venus as huntress links to Dido as huntress, which links to the Dido-Artemis simile, and then to the Camilla-Artemis connection. Moreover, as Austin has pointed out,¹² for the readership who knows Harpalyce’s story of motherless upbringing in the wild, she also anticipates the story of Camilla’s upbringing as a child of the wild dedicated to Artemis (*Aen.* 11.539-84).

There is then a complex of images closely woven together, of Camilla, Dido, Penthesilea and Artemis, all queens in their own domains.¹³ In book 7, as with Dido’s first appearance (*Aen.* 1.496-503),¹⁴ the focus is on Camilla’s Diana-like beauty and purity rather than her valour. For her quality as warrior we have to turn to book 11.

Camilla as “Amazon” (*Aen.* 11.648-63)

*At medias inter caedes exsultat Amazon
unum exserta latus pugnae, pharetrata Camilla,
et nunc lenta manu spargens hastilia denset,
nunc validam dextra rapit indefessa bipennem;
aureus ex umero sonat arcus et arma Dianae.
Illa etiam, si quando in tergum pulsa recessit,
spicula converso fugientia derigit arcu.
At circum lectae comites, Larinaque virgo*

¹² Austin (1971) on *Aen.* 1.317. See also Alessio (1993) 122.

¹³ As was pointed out by a member of the audience at my talk, there is another prominent queen to reckon with in the poem, Cleopatra. She was also renowned for her beauty and charm, led her people into war and was a queen from Africa. All this seems to indicate that she is Dido’s model above all, but does relate to the image of Camilla as a warrior queen (more on this below), if not as a virgin huntress. See Carney (1988), who finds more points of comparison between Dido and Camilla than with other *reginae*.

¹⁴ The simile, which emphasises Dido’s Diana-like beauty, is modelled on *Od.* 6.101-09, where Nausicaa is compared to Artemis among her attendants.

*Tullaque et aeratam quatiens Tarpeia securim,
 Italides, quas ipsa decus sibi dia Camilla
 delegit pacisque bonas bellique ministras:
 quales Threiciae cum flumina Thermodontis
 pulsant et pictis bellantur Amazones armis,
 seu circum Hippolyten seu cum se Martia curru
 Penthesilea refert, magnoque ululante tumultu
 feminea exsultant lunatis agmina peltis.*

(“There in the middle of all this bloodshed, exulting in it, was the Amazon Camilla with the quiver on her shoulder, and one side bared for battle. Sometimes the pliant spears came thick from her hand; sometimes, unwearied, she caught up her mighty double axe, and the golden bow and arrows of Diana rang on her shoulder. Whenever she was forced to retreat, she turned her bow and aimed her arrows while still in flight. The girls she had chosen as her companions were all about her, Larina, Tulla, and Tarpeia brandishing her bronze axe, all of them daughters of Italy, chosen by the servant of the gods Camilla to do her honour by their beauty and to be her own trusted attendants in peace and war. They were like the Amazons of Thrace whose horses’ hooves drum on the frozen waters of the river Thermodon when they fight round Hippolyte in their brightly coloured armour, or when Penthesilea, daughter of Mars, rides home in her chariot and her army of women with their crescent shields exult in a great howling tumult”).

Camilla is depicted very explicitly as an Amazon figure here, complete with a bared breast, the bow and arrows, and Amazonesque companions. The comparison with Penthesilea harks back to *Aen.* 1.490-93 (quoted above) and to the Greek epic tradition, originally developed in and mostly lost with the *Aethiopsis*, now known only through Proclus’ summary, and through its version in *The Fall of Troy* by Quintus Smyrnaeus.¹⁵ In book 1, the scene with Penthesilea seamlessly leads to the meeting of Aeneas and Dido, who appears like the divine archer Diana (*Aen.* 1.496-503). The mention here of Penthesilea, killed by Achilles (and indeed that of Hippolyte, accidentally killed by her sister Penthesilea during a hunt) bodes rather ominously for Camilla. On one hand, the comparison and connection respectively of Diana with Dido and Camilla give them the glamour of the divine archer, but on the other their association with Penthesilea foreshadows their tragic ends.

¹⁵ As discussed in Huxley’s Virgil Society address given in February 1960 entitled ‘VIRGO BELLATRIX’, the summary of which is reproduced in Huxley (2011).

Camilla, however, is not just exceptional as an archer, but in hand to hand combat, too. Even in retreat Camilla does not stop firing her arrows, and the way she fights with her axe is even more impressive:

Camilla vs Orsilochus (*Aen.* 11.694-98)

*Orsilochum fugiens magnumque agitata per orbem
eludit gyro interior sequiturque sequentem;
tum validam perque arma viro perque ossa securim
altior exurgens oranti et multa precanti
congeminat; vulnus calido rigat ora cerebro.*

(“She fled from Orsilochus, but after he had driven her in a great circle, she cut inside the arc and began to pursue her pursuer. Then, rising above him, she struck again and again with her mighty axe, hacking through his armour and his bones as he begged and pleaded with her and the axe-blows spilt the hot brains down his face”).

The contrast between the ruthless Camilla who “exults” in bloody fighting, and the pathetic Orsilochus begging for his life, is made all the more striking by the reversal of usual expectations for male-female power balance. This could easily be the most brutal killing in the whole poem, and it is executed by a female warrior.

A little later, she is like Achilles in her speed both in running and in dispatching her enemy. Angered by her opponent’s deliberately provocative insult, Camilla replies in anger, first in words and then in action.

Camilla vs Aunus’ son (*Aen.* 11.715-24)

*Vane Ligus frustra que animis elate superbis,
nequiquam patrias temptasti lubricus artis,
nec fraus te incolumem fallaci perferet Auno’.
Haec fatur virgo, et pernicibus ignea plantis
transit equum cursu frenisque adversa prehensis
congregeditur poenasque inimico ex sanguine sumit:
quam facile accipiter saxo sacer ales ab alto
consequitur pennis sublimem in nube columbam
comprehensamque tenet pedibusque eviscerat uncis;
tum cruor et vulsae labuntur ab aethere plumae.*

(“‘You Ligurian fool!’ she cried. ‘You are the one who has been carried away by the empty winds of pride! You have taken to the slippery arts of your ancestors, but little good will

they do you. Trickery will not bring you safe back home to your treacherous father Aunus'. These were her words, and on nimble feet she ran as swift as fire in front of the horse and stood full in its path. Then, seizing the reins, she exacted punishment from her enemy in blood, as easily as the sacred falcon flies from his crag to pursue a dove high in the clouds, catches it, holds it and rips out its entrails with hooked claws while blood and torn feathers float down from the sky").

She is very much in the mould of a male warrior, capable of hurling insults like any of them.¹⁶ The falcon simile also clearly connects Camilla to Achilles who chases Hector like a falcon chasing a dove (*Il.* 22.138-42).¹⁷

In the tragic side of her role, however, Camilla can be seen as a Patroclus figure, most conspicuously in the poet's apostrophe to her at *Aen.* 11.664-65:

*Quem telo primum, quem postremum, aspera virgo,
deicis? Aut quot humi morientia corpora fundis?*

("Whom first did your spear bring down from his horse? Whom last, fierce warrior maiden? How many bodies of dying men did you strew on the ground?")

This recalls Homer's apostrophe to Patroclus at *Il.* 16.692-93:¹⁸

ἐνθα τίνα πρῶτον, τίνα δ' ὕστατον ἐξενάριξας,
Πατρόκλεις, ὅτε δή σε θεοὶ θάνατόνδ' ἐκάλεσαν;

("Then who was it you slaughtered first, who was the last one, Patroklos, as the gods called you to your death?")

However, while Homer clearly signals Patroclus' fate in the second line, Virgil does not do exactly the same in the equivalent passage. He does hint at Camilla's end by saying "whom last?", but then immediately returns our attention to her successes.

To this extent, the lines could compare her as much to Hector as to Patroclus, as the words of *Il.* 16.692 are also used by Homer to address Hector while he is still granted

¹⁶ Cf. the list of taunts and challenges in the *Aeneid* in Hight (1972) 318-19 and Achilles' insult to Hector at *Il.* 22.331-36.

¹⁷ However, there is an important difference between the similes: the hawk in Camilla's simile succeeds in killing the dove, whereas the one in Achilles' never catches its prey. In this tableau, Camilla outperforms even Achilles. Cf. Gransden (1991) on 11.721-24.

¹⁸ Eichhoff (1825) 309; Fratantuono (2009a) *ad* 11.664-65. Cf. Horsfall (2003) on 11.664, who points out that this line is not exclusive to Patroclus, and Brill (1972) 65, who adds *Il.* 8.273 (for the first half of the line) and 11.299. The Greek text of the *Iliad* in this article is that of West (2000), and the translation is quoted from Lattimore (1951).

success by Zeus.¹⁹ Seen in this way, Virgil is echoing Homer's addresses to both Hector and Patroclus, doomed heroes on both sides. This aptly fits Camilla's position as enemy of Troy and hero of Italy, which is soon to be merged with Troy. This reminds us of the fact that the line that describes her death, shared with Turnus (*vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras*, "and his / her life left him / her with a groan, fleeing in anger down to the shades", *Aen.* 11.831 = 12.952) is modelled on the lines shared by Patroclus and Hector in their deaths (*Il.* 16.856-57 = 22.362-63).²⁰

In terms of her role within the plot, too, Camilla can be seen as a Patroclus, in so far as Turnus can be seen as an Achilles to oppose Aeneas, the Trojan champion.²¹ It is Camilla's death and his grief for it that causes Turnus to abandon the potentially more successful plan of ambush and choose a direct challenge to Aeneas which leads to his death.²² On the other hand, if we see Turnus as a Hector figure, as the champion of the losing side who is weaker than his opponent, Camilla can be cast as a Sarpedon, whose death stirs Hector and other Trojans for revenge (*Il.* 16.548-53). Camilla's dying speech to Acca (*Aen.* 11.823-26) also echoes Sarpedon's to Glaucus (*Il.* 16.492-501).²³

There is another female warrior to consider within Greek epic tradition – Athena/Minerva as warrior-goddess, whose domestic implements Camilla has rejected (*Aen.* 7.805-06), but whose nature is perhaps the most like her own. Recall Athena and Ares in the *Iliad*:

Ares and Athena as war gods on Achilles' shield (*Il.* 18.516-19)

οἱ δ' ἴσαν· ἦρχε δ' ἄρά σφιν Ἄρης καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη,
 ἄμφω χρυσεῖω, χρύσεια δὲ εἴματα ἔσθην,
 καλῶ καὶ μεγάλω σὺν τεύχεσιν, ὥς τε θεῶ περ,
 ἀμφὶς ἀριζήλω· λαοὶ δ' ὑπ' ὀλίζονες ἦσαν.

("And Ares led them, and Pallas Athene.

These were gold, both, and golden raiment upon them, and they were beautiful and huge in their armour, being divinities, and conspicuous from afar, but the people around them were smaller").

¹⁹ *Il.* 5.703 and 11.299.

²⁰ Cf. Ross (2007) 52; Knauer (1990) 395-96, n.1.

²¹ As *alius* ... Achilles of *Aen.* 6.89 signals. Cf. Austin (1977) *ad loc*; Williams (1985) on 6.88-90.

²² Cf. Fratantuono (2005b) 35. See also Fratantuono (2009b) 399-400 for the Turnus-Camilla and Achilles-Patroclus parallel.

²³ Cf. Eichhoff (1825) 319. The divine rescue of the body (by Zeus and by Artemis respectively) is also common to Sarpedon (*Il.* 16.667-83) and Camilla (*Aen.* 11.593-94).

Athena beats Ares in combat (Il. 21.400-09)

ὡς εἰπὼν οὕτησε κατ' αἰγίδα θυσανόεσσαν
 σμερδαλέην, ἣν οὐδὲ Διὸς δάμνησι κεραυνός·
 τῇ μιν Ἄρης οὕτησε μαιφόνος ἔγχει μακρῶ.
 ἦ δ' ἀναχασσαμένη λίθον εἴλετο χειρὶ παχείῃ
 κείμενον ἐν πεδίῳ, μέλανα τρηχύν τε μέγαν τε,
 τόν ῥ' ἄνδρες πρότεροι θέσαν ἔμμεναι οὖρον ἀρούρης·
 τῶ βάλε θοῦρον Ἄρηα κατ' αὐχένα, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα.
 ἐπτὰ δ' ἐπέσχε πέλεθρα πεσών, ἐκόνισε δὲ χαίτας,
 τεύχεα δ' ἀμφαράβησε. γέλασσε δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη,
 καὶ οἱ ἐπευχομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα.

("He spoke, stabbed against the ghastly aegis with fluttering straps, which gives way not even before the bolt of Zeus' lightning. There blood-dripping Ares made his stab with the long spear, but Athene giving back caught up in her heavy hand a stone that lay in the plain, black and rugged and huge, one which men of a former time had set there as boundary mark of the cornfield. With this she hit furious Ares in the neck, and unstrung him. He spread over seven acres in his fall, and his hair dragged in the dust, and his armour clashed. But Pallas Athene laughing stood above him and spoke to him in the winged words of triumph").

Here is a perfect prototype of a warrior maiden, more than a match for her male counterpart. The scene on the shield of Achilles is rather like Turnus and Camilla standing shoulder to shoulder as allies, yet Camilla's action is more impressive than Turnus', at least in the context of *Aen.* 11. She is certainly stronger than the male opponents whom she meets, just as Athena is, and can only be brought down by stealth. The way the goddess applies her brute force as well as hurling insults at her opponent just after the quoted passage (410-14) is also very much echoed in Camilla's behaviour in her *aristeia*. In my view, Athena is most definitely one of the prototypes of Camilla. Greco-Roman audiences had already been accustomed to the image of a mighty warrior maiden in Athena, and must have enjoyed the reversal of the normal gender power balance in the context of epic poetry, though admittedly the goddesses had a totally different status to mortal women both in literature and real life.

Thus Camilla can be seen as a synthesis of many predecessors, beautiful maidens, huntresses, warriors male and female, virgin goddesses, queens (Arete, Dido, Penthesilea)

and princesses (Nausicaa, Harpalyce, Hippolyte). All these images are superimposed, like layers of watercolour paints, from which Camilla's portrait emerges. From those images we have also gleaned some aspects of her role in the story, such as her function as "Patroclus" or "Sarpedon", to stir Turnus into action, and her position as "the other", brought up on the margin of civilisation as an Amazon-like figure. Her otherness is enhanced by her status as the one consecrated to Artemis, enjoying her divine patronage, while she also has some qualities of Athena, the virgin goddess of war.

Before we explore further aspects of Camilla's role in the *Aeneid*, I would now like to observe some characteristics of her Japanese counterpart, Tomoe.

Tomoe and Camilla

Tomoe can be called Japan's Camilla, a beautiful female warrior. She appears in only one section of *Heike*, which depicts the last moments of her master, Kiso no Yoshinaka, a Genji warrior who grew up in exile in Shinano, a mountainous, rural area, far from Kyoto, the capital city and political and cultural centre of Japan at the time. Kiso succeeds in ousting the Heike from the capital, but - not least because of his rustic manners²⁴ - he falls foul of the Imperial establishment and the leader of his own clan, and is now in exile himself, being hunted down by the Genji's superior forces. Although in some other versions of the tale Tomoe is explicitly described as his mistress,²⁵ in *Heike* there is no hint of their sexual relationship, which makes her look all the more like Camilla. Here is how she is introduced:

Enter Tomoe (chapter 9, section 4, "The Death of Kiso")²⁶

Kiso no Yoshinaka had brought with him from Shinano two female attendants, Tomoe and Yamabuki. Yamabuki had fallen ill and stayed in the capital. Of the two, Tomoe was especially beautiful, with white skin, long hair, and charming features. She was also a remarkably strong archer, and as a swordswoman she was a warrior worth a thousand, ready to confront a demon or god, mounted or on foot. She handled unbroken horses with superb skill; she rode unscathed down perilous descents. Whenever a battle was imminent, Yoshinaka sent her out as his first captain, equipped with strong armor, and oversized sword, and a mighty bow; and she performed more deeds of valor than any of his other warriors. Thus she was now one of the seven who remained after all the others had fled or perished.

²⁴ Kiso's naïve and rustic manners are cruelly mocked in chapter 8, section 6, 'Nekoma'.

²⁵ E.g. *Gempei Seisuiiki* (book 35). Cf. Mizuhara (1990) 306.

²⁶ Quotations from *Heike* in this article are from McCullough (1988).

First we are given Tomoe's rural background, by her association with Yoshinaka who grew up in Shinano.²⁷ The mention of another woman, who is likely to be another female warrior,²⁸ reduces her uniqueness to a certain extent (in much the same way as with Camilla's companions and the Amazons), but the tale gets rid of the other one quickly and concentrates on her superiority. What we notice first of all is her typically feminine beauty – “white skin, long hair and charming features” – which makes her warrior qualities even more striking. This is quite similar to the way Camilla is introduced as a beautiful woman who attracts the attention not only of young men, but also of mothers who fancy her as their daughter-in-law (*Aen.* 7.812-17; 11.581-82).

Tomoe is a woman not only stronger than any male warrior, but ready even to confront divine forces (“a demon or god”),²⁹ reminding us of Diomedes challenging Ares in the *Iliad* (5.846-67) or Camilla outstripping winds (*Aen.* 7.807) and keeping company with Diana and her immortal attendants (11.582-86). Tomoe's oversized sword reminds us of Achilles' oversized spear that no one else could wield (*Il.* 16.140-42) and her mighty bow reminds us of that of Odysseus that no one else could string (*Od.* 21.409-10). But Tomoe is not only superior in strength and in valour to male comrades; she is also trusted to be a commander second only to her master. She has now survived the ultimate test of valour as well as loyalty (when others either “fled or perished”), to be among the final seven. Here again we see parallels with Camilla, who volunteers to lead her squadron to meet the Trojan cavalry and bear the brunt of the battle (*Aen.* 11.502-07), demonstrating her confidence and superior courage, and the loyalty and patriotism poignantly shown in her dying words (11.825-27).³⁰ In short, what Tomoe and Camilla have in common is the combination of superior female beauty and exaggerated male virtues, which make both their enemies and male comrades look rather feeble by comparison.³¹

Like Camilla's tale, however, Tomoe's has an unexpected ending due to her gender. Later in the same episode, when Yoshinaka's company is reduced to just five, among whom still remains Tomoe, he tells her to leave:

²⁷ According to *Gempei Seisuiiki* (book 35), her mother was his wet nurse.

²⁸ That indeed is the case in *Gempei Seisuiiki* (book 35) which names Aoi and Tomoe as two female generals under Yoshinaka, the former of whom is said to have been killed in a specific battle.

²⁹ This expression is unique to Tomoe within *Heike*.

³⁰ Cf Otis (1964) 364, who describes Camilla in defeat as “utterly self-forgetful, concerned only for Turnus and the war”. See also Viparelli (2008) 21-22.

³¹ Hardwick (1990) 16-17 identifies the “stock role” of the Amazons as that of “worthy opponents” worth defeating. This applies equally to Camilla and Tomoe.

‘Quickly, now’, Lord Kiso said to Tomoe. ‘You are a woman, so be off with you; go wherever you please. I intend to die in battle, or to kill myself if I am wounded. It would be unseemly to let people say: Lord Kiso kept a woman with him during his last battle.’

Reluctant to flee, Tomoe rode with the others until she could resist no longer. Then she pulled up. ‘Ah! If only I could find a worthy foe! I would fight a last battle for His Lordship to watch’, she thought.

As she sat there, thirty riders came into view, led by Onda no Hachiro Moroshige, a man renowned in Musashi Province for his great strength. Tomoe galloped into their midst, rode up alongside Moroshige, seized him in a powerful grip, pulled him down against the pommel of her saddle, held him motionless, twisted off his head, and threw it away. Afterward, she discarded armor and helmet and fled toward the eastern provinces.

Here is further demonstration of Tomoe’s qualities, her devotion to her master and her extraordinary strength. She is confident and proud, and has a strong desire to show her worth to her master even when she is told to leave. Her love and concern for her master is like that of any male followers,³² at least within this episode, in much the same way as Camilla’s attitude to Turnus, whatever undercurrent of attraction there might have been (11.507).³³

Having proven her valour, Tomoe clearly resents Yoshinaka’s order to leave. He surely knew that she was “worth a thousand” male warriors, since he after all used to send her out as the commander of her own squadron. His motive for dismissing her has been a subject of academic debate.³⁴ Is he concerned about compromising his reputation, as he says, if he has a woman beside him in his last hour? There is no doubt some element of that, but surely he has some concern for her life, too, and wishes her to survive? If she survives, then there is also an advantage in that she can tell his tale to others and pray for his salvation after death (which is important in Buddhist belief).

Camilla also suffers a degree of humiliation at the hand of the poet himself, who appears to attribute her passion for Chloreus’ gold to her gender (*femineo praedae et spoliolum ardebat amore*, “burning with all a woman’s passion for spoil and plunder”, *Aen.* 11.782). This is also a curious episode, which has exercised readers’ minds as to the significance of “feminine” desire in this context resulting in Camilla’s downfall. However,

³² Indeed, her brother, Imai no Shiro Kanehira, is the one to remain with their master till the end, who kills himself after Yoshinaka’s death.

³³ Cf. Fratantuono (2009a) on 11.508.

³⁴ Cf. Brown (1998) 188-91.

the blind desire for booty is not unique to Camilla nor uniquely feminine at all. As has been pointed out, it echoes the episodes with spoils which prove fatal to Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.359-66, 457)³⁵ and Turnus (*Aen.* 10.496-505).³⁶ If we are to interpret Camilla's desire for the golden booty within the larger scheme of the poem, it is rather a trait of young male warriors.³⁷ It is above all the mode of her death that draws our attention back to her gender, by which we are forced to be a voyeuristic audience witnessing as Arruns' spear lodges beneath her bared nipple and "drinks" her "virgin blood" (*papillam / ... virgineumque ... bibit ... cruorem*, *Aen.* 11.803-04), making the killing look like sexual violence.³⁸

The clearest difference between Camilla and Tomoe is that Tomoe bows out triumphantly, with a man's head as her trophy, forever remaining Yoshinaka's invincible general. This is how Camilla's story also could have ended, had she not been distracted by golden booty. Still Tomoe cannot stay in Yoshinaka's world, just as Camilla cannot be part of the new regime under Aeneas. Just as there is no "dangerous anomaly"³⁹ allowed in the new Rome, there will be no female warrior in the new regime under Yoritomo, the leader of the Genji. The conclusions of both their episodes seem to say that they were women after all, and they each remain the "other" to their comrades.

This temporarily shifts our attention from these characters as literary creations to historical reality. We tend to think that we have to suspend our belief in order to enjoy the extraordinary exploits of female warriors in stories. Virtually no reader would believe that Camilla existed as a real historical person,⁴⁰ which was certainly my assumption in searching for the multiple "models" of which she is a composite. However, her similarities to Tomoe and the fact that Tomoe is part of the essentially historical narrative, most episodes of which can be verified through other contemporary sources, give us pause. Tomoe is likely to have been a real figure, though her portrayal in *Heike* is of course not entirely realistic.⁴¹

³⁵ Cf. Horsfall (2003) on 11.782; Fratantuono (2009a) on 11.782.

³⁶ Cf. Harrison (1991) on 10.501-05, who compares Turnus' behaviour with that of Hector at *Il.* 17.194, who dons Achilles' armour stripped from Patroclus, with Zeus' comment at 17.201-06. We may contrast this and Euryalus' behaviour to the mature reaction of Odysseus to his success in the night raid, dedicating the booty to Athena (*Il.* 10.460-68).

³⁷ Cf. Morello (2008) 54-55.

³⁸ Cf. Fratantuono (2009a) on 11.804. Fowler (1987) 196 points out the "perversity of her becoming a wife (defloration) and mother (suckling) only at the moment of death" in this scene.

³⁹ According to Viparelli (2008) 19, this is how Cleopatra and Camilla look to their enemies.

⁴⁰ Horsfall (2000) on *Aen.* 7.803-17.

⁴¹ Although, given the multiplicity of legends built up around the figure of Tomoe, Brown (1998) 185 concedes that "it is impossible to say precisely where the historical reality ends and the literary construct begins", he still takes it for granted that she was a historical figure.

Even if Camilla was not a historical figure, Virgil would have tried to make her character as credible as Aeneas and the myth of the foundation of Rome by the Trojans. Moreover we do have a historical “warrior queen” within the framework of the *Aeneid*, namely Cleopatra. Although her portrait is negative in this poem, the noble and courageous manner in which she took her own life inspired posterity to admire her.⁴² In addition, the Amazons were believed to be a real tribe of women, though their tales, like those of Tomoe, are of half-historical and half-legendary nature. By evoking the Amazon queen’s image in Camilla, Virgil may have been trying to enhance her historical credibility.⁴³ Even her name, which derives from an ancient ritual term and echoes a Roman cognomen, is likely to have been designed to evoke an air of authenticity. All this is important in creating a convincing and authentic representative of the Volscians, who were renowned for their sturdy, warlike nature,⁴⁴ and of Italian peoples (*o decus Italiae virgo*, “o maiden, glory of Italy” [my translation], 11.508), for whose freedom and survival within the new regime of Rome Camilla dies.

Heike also mentions Empress Jingu (chapter 5, section 1, “The Transfer of the Capital”), a semi-legendary “warrior queen”, who led her forces to victory on a foreign expedition during which her husband, Emperor Chuai, died, though it is unlikely that she was involved in physical combat.⁴⁵ Tomoe is clearly a warrior in her own right with her own history, but the image of this fighting queen as precedent will have made her story even more credible.

The fact of real female warriors or warrior queens is likely to be one of the reasons why we have the tales of female warriors in Greece, Rome, Japan and all over the world, though some of their superhuman feats are clearly a product of fantasy.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Camilla’s similarities to Tomoe, the Japanese female warrior from the *Tale of the Heike*, could add more dimensions to our understanding of her character. Like Camilla, Tomoe is the “other” to the rest of the world, not only because of her gender, but also

⁴² Cf. Plutarch, *Anton.* 85-86, which reports that even Octavian was impressed.

⁴³ We can also compare the historically well-known athleticism of Spartan girls, which *Aen.* 1.315-16 refers to.

⁴⁴ Cf. Saunders (1930) 87-94.

⁴⁵ In particular as she was heavily pregnant at the time of the expedition and gave birth to a boy on her return home.

⁴⁶ As Constantinides (1981) 3 suggests of the perpetuation of the Amazon legends.

because of her upbringing as a warrior in a remote area. As with Camilla, her beauty makes all the more striking her military prowess and physical strength, that exceed the male norm and even approach the divine. Their characters each succeed in creating a high point in the story, particularly through the contrast between their excellence and the inadequacy of their male peers, Yoshinaka and Turnus, who have to address their failings after the women are gone. Their superior virtues are not only physical, but include moral qualities such as loyalty and courage. In other words, they need to exceed their male peer in every respect in order to find their place in the male-dominated world of heroes. Considering that Tomoe was most probably a real person and the reader is expected to accept her as historical figure, there must have been an exceptional individual behind her character. Although Camilla is almost certainly a fictional character invented by Virgil, we must remember that he tried to create a credible foundation myth of Rome, and we are expected to read something more than a mere fiction in her figure. We should remember that there was a real fighting queen figure in Cleopatra within the scope of the poem, whose courage and other qualities normally associated with men were admired by posterity. Virgil also evokes the historical image of athletic Spartan girls as well as the quasi-historical figures of the Amazons. We have a credible and respectable female warrior in Camilla out of the complex of images.

Despite all this neither Camilla nor Tomoe can play an active role in the new order that is to come after the conflict – they have to go. Being a woman, Tomoe was not allowed to die with her master, but had to give up her role as warrior and survive. Camilla's death is strangely induced by her "feminine" desire for the golden booty, framed with a rape-like image which underlines her femininity. Both women remain an anomaly in a male-dominated world, intensely brilliant for a short while before they have to be eliminated due to their gender, like a supernova which shines brighter than any other star just for a brief period of time.

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