Seeing like Monks:
Strife and Order at Kōyasan Temple, Japan,
Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries

by

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Abstract

This study reassesses the politics of religious institutions from the late medieval to the early Tokugawa era in Japan. It suggests that the dominant discourse on the topic has been constrained by a theoretical tension between religion and the state as the main framing device. What has been overlooked is the interplay between geographical manifestations of religion and politics. This study examines documents of the Kōyasan Buddhist temple, to learn how monks overcame tensions at the contested space of the temple from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. It was found that in the late medieval period (fourteenth to the late sixteenth centuries), the numinous power of the temple was exploited by monks to transform themselves into regional overlords. Monks controlled land through the medium of a sacred landscape and governed the region in unison with deities.

This changed with the emergence in the late sixteenth century of the unified state of early modern Japan. The state curtailed the potential of the sacred to give rise to autonomous power, all the while consolidating its hold by ritually tapping the numinous power of a national landscape. It also entrenched its power at the heart of the temple society by issuing land grants.

Accompanying this shift was an epochal change in the manner by which the temple space was organized. In the medieval period, monks forged a ritualized unity to overcome conflict and impose order. The unitive impulse was broken inadvertently by the state with its land grants. Internal divisions hardened and it no longer became possible to overcome differences. Divided groups then tapped the state’s judicature to rebuild their society.

From the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the source of order at the temple shifted from the sacred to the state. For monks, both authorities were higher powers that they needed to contain the fluidity of their contested space.
Preface

This dissertation is an original, independent and unpublished work by the author, Eiji Okawa.
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<td><strong>KM</strong></td>
<td><em>Kōyasan monjo</em> [Documents of Kōyasan]. 1904-1907. Dai Nihon komonjo, iewake I. Tokyo teikoku daigaku shiryō hensanjo, ed. 8 vols.</td>
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Introduction

This dissertation is a social history of the Kōyasan Buddhist temple in Japan. It examines the politics that shaped and reshaped the temple society from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries. During this period, the temple transformed from an autonomous regional polity in the late medieval era (fourteenth to late sixteenth centuries) to a politically weakened yet religiously powerful temple under the unified state that emerged in the late sixteenth century. The study analyzes the changing pattern, amidst this broad change, in the way in which people organized themselves at the temple, negotiated interests and tried to overcome conflicts in their efforts to impose order.

My goal is to reassess and refocus the discussion of the history of temples and shrines in late medieval and early modern Japan in two ways.

First, we must reframe the analysis of the politics of religious institutions from a paradigm that is centred upon a theoretical structural relation between religion and the state to one that looks at the political practice and ritual life at religious institutions. In other words, rather than assessing the politics of temples and shrines through the lens of state-level politics, I consider the temple space as worthy of analysis in its own right and examine the political contests that shaped that space over time. But considering the religious nature of the temple, politics was never separate from the deities and the numinous powers that manifested themselves to the world at ritual sites. For that reason, the study will examine the politics at the temple dialectically with the “interactive relations,” to borrow from Julia Shaw, between social groups and the sacred landscape of the temple.¹

Second, I analyze the political dynamics of the temple space in the late medieval era, which corresponds to the Nanbokuchō (1333-1392), Muromachi (1336-1573) and the Sengoku (1467-1573) periods. I then explore the transformation of the temple society in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The method of organization that the temple society had developed

¹ Shaw uses the term to describe “archaeology of action,” which is an approach in archaeology that focuses on the “interactive relation between people and buildings” in order to consider the “experiential ways in which people interacted with their environment.” See Shaw 2000, 27. Shaw emphasizes the importance of seeing sacred objects in the religious culture of ancient India. According to her, *stupa* sites were designed in such a way so that they could be seen from other *stupa* sites, enabling senior monks to gaze on multiple *stupas* to pay homage to the Buddha and Arhats that were understood to be present there. By contrast, this study will pay attention to the role of sacred landscape in constructing political power as I will discuss later in this introduction.
through its medieval experiences was shattered during the emergence of the unified state of early modern Japan (1600-1867). Surprisingly, this is a topic that has received little attention. Yet, narratives that have been focused almost entirely upon state action have held a dominant influence, as I shall demonstrate later. A state-centric approach has marginalized temples and shrines and is constraining our understanding of the social change that accompanied the state formation. Through a close reading of temple documents, this study reassesses the significance of the early modern transition from the perspective of monks. It adds depth to the discussion of the impact of the unification of the country on temples and shrines in Japan.

The temple that I will focus on is Kōyasan 高野山. It is situated in a basin in the mountains at an altitude of approximately 900 metres. Today it is located in Wakayama prefecture in western Japan. In the medieval and early modern periods (late twelfth to late nineteenth century) it was a massive monastery. It is a temple of the esoteric Buddhist sect called Shingon 真言 (True Words) and is known for the charismatic founder, Kūkai 空海 or Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師 (774-835). In a nutshell, Kōyasan is a sacred site.

The temple was thought of as a Buddhist Pure Land on earth and a site of the living presence of the deified founder. It is surrounded by a circle of mountains that were interpreted as special “eight peaks” that resembled a lotus flower, which was interpreted as an earthly manifestation of the Buddhist cosmos of the mandala.

During the late medieval period, this Buddhist temple controlled sizable estates in the plains below and presided as the overlord of the region. In the early modern era, it was a renowned sacred site with patrons and worshippers from around the country. One seventeenth century source tells us that over 7,000 monks, acolytes and servants lived there. With a large population and religious and political powers centred at the temple, Kōyasan was rife with social energies and tensions. Fortuitously, it also contains a large body of historical documents that tell us how the medieval denizens organized their society.

**Temples in the Narrative of the Unification**

There are important studies that examine how the unification of the country by three successive warlords, Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and

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Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) impacted the temples.³ Neil McMullin’s study surveys the historic relationship between Buddhism and the state in Japan from ancient times through the medieval era. He focuses on the late sixteenth century when Nobunaga took radical measures to oppress and subjugate temples in his bid to unify the country.⁴ In the medieval era (late twelfth to late sixteenth centuries), there were many Buddhist temples that boasted not only religious power, but also political, economic, social and cultural influence. Kuroda Toshio discussed how temples and shrines were among the ruling elites of the early medieval era of the late Heian and Kamakura periods.⁵ According to Kuroda, central to their power was what he called the medieval orthodoxy, the kenmitsu or exoteric-and-esoteric system (kenmitsu taisei 顕密体制). This was an ideology that stressed the concept of the mutual dependency of the Buddhist and kingly laws. Rulers needed the ritual support of Buddhism, hence, they supported temples. The latter amassed power and influence.

The late sixteenth century was a crucible for the political life of powerful temples and Buddhist organizations. As McMullin concludes, “Nobunaga implemented policies that were designed to eradicate the military power of the temples, to suppress or at least take control of their economic power and to subject them to the authority of the central administration. By the end of the sixteenth century, the temples were weak and docile, Nobunaga having largely achieved his goal.”⁶ This is an important point, but there is a notable limit to his study. That is, though his two “protagonists” are “Buddhist temples” and the state, he does not really examine the historical record of the temples. His focus is on the structural relation between the Buddhist law (huppō 仏法) and the kingly law (ōbō 王法) and his main primary sources are Nobunaga’s documents.⁷ These sources may provide invaluable data on the ruler’s bid for hegemony, but have little to say about temples and the experiences of their members. Then, to argue for the post-Buddhist era under the Tokugawa rule (1600-1867), he draws on studies of intellectual history, which have argued for a this-worldly turn in the mindset and attitude of people. This

⁴ McMullin 1984.
⁵ Kuroda 1975a, 413-547; Kuroda 1975b.
⁶ McMullin 1984, 4-5.
⁷ They are: 1) Oda Nobunaga monjo no kenkyū (Research on the Documents of Oda Nobunaga), edited by OkunoTakahiro, which contains almost 1,000 documents issued by Nobunaga; and 2) Shichō-kō ki (Chronicle of Lord Nobunaga), which is a biography of Nobunaga written by Ōta Gyūichi, who had served Nobunaga. These sources are discussed in McMullin 1984, 9-12.
kind of broad analysis of the changing pattern in how people thought is important, but curiously, McMullin pronounced the end of temples without examining their documents.

Somada Yoshio and Itō Shinshō have criticized McMullin’s line of interpretation. According to them, the understanding of the actual relationship between the unified state and temples and shrines has been constrained by what Somada calls “the historiography of the control of religion” (shūkyō tōsei shikan 宗教統制史観). Similarly, Itō discusses how “the discourse of the defeat of temples and shrines” (jisha seiryoku haibokuron 寺社勢力敗北論) by the state has given little voice for temples. These refer to the dominant narrative which is predicated upon the assumption of the unilateral and pre-determined control of religion and temples by the state.

According to Somada and Itō, influential studies by Tsuji Zennosuke, Tamamuro Fumio, Tamamuro Taijō and Fujiki Manabu have posited such a narrative and little progress has been made to readdress or enhance the understanding of the significance of the early modern state formation on temples and shrines. Though Somada focuses on the seventeenth century and Itō on the late sixteenth, they both show that the relationship between temples and the unified state has been discussed too simplistically, lacking a careful analysis of documents or consideration for the problems specific to the time. For instance, Itō points out that the Toyotomi regime’s measures on temples in Kyoto had been misinterpreted as active intervention by the regime in the internal affairs of temple societies. However, a careful reading of the available documents tells us that the primary measures in question were related to adjudication. Disputes between competing groups within temples were settled by agents of the regime. Similarly, Somada points out that temples had fallen into a state of disorder in the seventeenth century and they tried to rebuild themselves by using state power. Not surprisingly, temples were complex and have important stories to tell us about the experiences of the period.

However, Kawauchi Masayoshi has observed that there has been no serious empirical study of religious organizations across the early modern transition.

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8 Somada 2003, 3-4, 121-22.
9 Itō 2003, 3-5.
10 Itō 2003, 215-39. According to Itō, Asaho Naohiro argued in his essay in the book, Kyoto no rekishi, that the Toyotomi regime had proactively intervened in the internal affairs of the temple. Itō’s analysis suggests that was not the case.
11 Somada 2003, 8.
12 Kawauchi 2004, 283.
The academic neglect of temples has been caused by both historiographical and historical factors. Historiographically, the period of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century is regarded as the juncture between the medieval and the early modern epochs. Thus it falls in between what have become the established fields of medieval and early modern studies. It tends to be treated as either an end of a period or the beginning of a new age without critically examining the various forces that propelled complex historical processes that involved change as well as continuity.

Historically, there remains a problem with sources. Temple documents have yielded a wealth of historical data. The scholarly examination of these documents in the twentieth century has greatly informed our knowledge of Japan’s medieval history. However, as Yoshii Toshiyuki has pointed out, while large and powerful temples have preserved an impressive body of medieval documents, which have been made available to historians, the very bulk of documents has militated against close study of material from the early modern era. Not only have these masses of documents not been sorted, they have yet to be released to historians.13

The temples have had the time to deal with the rupture of the early modern transition; they were able to organize records from the preceding era. But the changes wrought during the Meiji era (1868-1912) were too great; the bulk of records from the early modern era have piled up in temples’ vaults and storages without having been archived and catalogued.

But there is another critical issue here. Empirical studies of temples and shrines tend to have a narrow focus of time, which prevents a more judicious assessment of change across long spans of time. They also tend to neglect the most obvious function of temples and shrines. Namely, they were sanctuaries dedicated to deities. Deities were there. That was both the reason for their existence and the basis of the social formation.

What is lacking, then, is consideration for the geographical and material manifestations of religious phenomena. I suggest that religion transformed nature and environment and set the foundation for the politics which occurred. As Durkheim has pointed out, nature and the supernatural were not conceived as being separate from one another before the advent of empirical science in the modern era.14 It follows that the presence of deities at temples and shrines were embedded in geography and the environment. The ineffable power of deities was considered to

13 Yoshii 1984, 46-47.
14 According to Durkheim, “The idea of the supernatural, as we understand it, is of recent vintage,” and that before the “triumph of the empirical sciences,” the idea that the environment operated strictly in accordance with the natural law did not exist. In other words, what we might call supernatural and religious were understood to be part of nature and the environment was understood to be animated with various kinds of divine forces and entities. Durkheim 2001, 28.
be part of natural phenomena, activated and exploited by ritual practices. Geography transformed by divine beings informed the actions and practices that shaped history.

**Place, Space and Power**

With that in mind, I use place and space as guiding concepts in the present study. By place, I mean land and nature transformed culturally and ritually. The focus of this study will be the landscape of Kōyasan and its surrounding region. Space, on the other hand, is the arena of action and relations. It is the social world where power is asserted and interests negotiated. Place and space were not separate, but intertwined and informed one another. Space did not exist apart from place, but represented a three-dimensional sphere of action that developed upon place. This study examines how the relationship between the two changed over time.

**Place**

Let me here substantiate the concepts of place and space by referencing ideas and debates in pilgrimage studies and theories of space and geographies that have influenced my approach. In his study of the pilgrimage site of Hardwar in northern India, James Lochtefeld articulates that “place is an idea—consciously and deliberately constructed, propagated, ascribed to and imposed upon the physical landscape...of a space.” ¹⁵ In India, as Lochtefeld discusses, sacred sites are often called *tirthas*, meaning “crossing place.” These are recognized as “gateways or passages through which humans can cross over to make contact with some deeper reality. In many cases, such places are believed to have some resident power (e.g., a presiding deity) or to be more efficacious channels for transmitting such power.” ¹⁶ This characterization of place applies to sacred sites in other cultural and historical contexts as well. Even if the term, *tirthas*, has no direct correlate in the Japanese language, temples and shrines functioned as access points to the realm of deities and ritual practices connected groups and individuals to their awesome power.

Landsapes of temples and shrines included both the features of the natural environment, such as mountains, rocks and trees, as well as the artifices of buildings and objects that housed the deities and create liminal spaces that were used for ritual interaction with the power of divine

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¹⁵ Lochtefeld 2010, 4. Here, Lochtefeld is drawing on the deliberation of place by Anne Feldhaus in her study of pilgrimage and geographical imagination in Maharashtra, India. While I find their ideas about “place” useful, I do not subscribe to their notion that space is abstract, unmarked and undifferentiated.

¹⁶ Lochtefeld 2010, 5.
entities. As Ian Reader points out, narratives and legends were important to “suffuse and give meaning” to place and landscape and create an “atmospheric or emotional power that permeates and enhances the meanings of the physical terrains.”

The presence of sacred entities and their otherworldly powers were a visceral phenomenological reality for worshippers and members of religious communities. On this, Diana Eck has observed that the way devout pilgrims see the icons of the sacred site of Banaras in India is different from how objective observers see them. This applies to sacred sites in other historical and cultural contexts. I would argue that the purpose of temples and shrines was to turn the presence of deities into a visible, tangible and a felt reality on a plot of land deemed to be a hierophanic site in the Eliadean sense, or made into such through sustained ritual practices. The calendric rituals that occupied the routinized life of prelates were designed to maintain and rejuvenate the powers of numinous beings and to generate merit and thaumaturgical boons.

The question is, how did people organize social relations at such a place?

Space

Temples were not merely objects of imagination and devotional practices, but places where people made a living and formed social and power relations. This then leads us to the dimension of space. In thinking of space, I am following Doreen Massey’s conceptualization that space is a complex of power relations that is diverse, political and always under construction.

This is another way of thinking about the social world and it is the dimension that makes relations and politics possible. Space does not so much exist as it is made and remade on an ongoing basis. It is made or produced by networks, links, relations and territories that are not rigid or fixed but in flux, shifting as they are through practices of power and negotiation of interests. As the legal geographer, Nicholas Blomley, puts it, “spaces matter (because)...(t)hey are constituted by and are constitutive of social life, practice and experience and shot through with power and possibility.”

17 Reader 2005, 39.
18 Eck 1983, 6.
19 My thinking of place in this manner is inspired by David Bialock’s argument that “worldviews or ideology cannot easily be separated from geopolitical or other realities,” and that worldviews or “imaginaries” are brought into “tangible presence” through “textual, ritual, and spatial practices.” Bialock 2007, 11.
20 Massey 2009, 16-17.
21 Blomley 2014, 229.
Such a conceptualization of space offers a lens through which to analyze historical societies. Our understanding of temples and shrines benefits from such a perspective. Here, let me note Kuroda’s insight that powerful temples and shrines, in the final analysis, were social organizations and nodes of a special type of social solidarity.22

What, then, was temple space? For large temples like Kōyasan, we are looking at a complex society of monks, semi-monks as well as a large contingent of menial labourers—more than 3,000 in the medieval era. But that only constituted a fraction of the space over which the temples presided. The monks controlled large estates, and temples served as the centre of various economic and entrepreneurial activities. We would be mistaken to think that the richness of the space simply vanished in the early modern era.

Far from it; Kōyasan reached its golden age during the period ruled by the Tokugawa shogun. According to Fujikawa Masaki, a record from 1645 states that there were 7,301 monks and their servants who lived in 1,941 subtemples in the precinct. The precinct was organized into twelve valleys that were akin to wards of neighbourhoods.23 That figure excludes merchants, artisans and labourers, such as those at the shops in the busy Odawara valley that catered to pilgrims from around the country. This was a massive population centre, deep in the mountains.

Temples in sacred places were at the epicentre of complex spaces that were a critical part of medieval and early modern society. However, the temple space was not secular, even as its participants carried out activities that we might be inclined to call as such. For instance, monks controlled land and taxed peasants. But these activities did not exist apart from the numinous landscapes of temples that were sustained by the living presence of various deities. Space was never apart from place, but emerged and developed in intimate relation to it.

This begs the question: what power structured and organized the temple space? Were there schemes of power that dominated and regulated social relations at the temple, or was the temple a chaotic aggregate of random relations and schemes to assume authority? Here, Blomley’s point that space represents an emergent arena of “social life, practice and experience” that is “shot through with power and possibility” offers a compelling point of reference. For Blomley, it is law and legal apparatus that pervade space and imbue it with power relations.

22 Kuroda 1975b, 290.
23 The source that he cites is the Kōyasan kyūki, held at the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University. Fujikawa 2006, 107. The number of the subtemples is probably fairly accurate. A map that was presented to the Tokugawa shogunate in 1646 show a total of 1,865 subtemples. Yamakage 2006b, 44.
Massey, on the other hand, speaks of “power geometry” which postulates that there are foci of condensed power relations that imbricate larger space through economic, cultural and political influence. Was the space of the medieval and early modern temple “shot through” with power and if so, how? Moreover, how did the sacred and liminal features of the temple’s place influence the power that structured its space?

**Temple Documents**

Old and powerful temples and shrines have preserved large collections of historical documents (or more accurately, manuscripts). And it is not by chance that the documents have been preserved. Documents have their own history and temples had highly developed manuscript systems in the medieval and early modern eras. It was only in the modern era when these systems lost their purpose that they were released to historians. As such, to examine the history of temples critically, it is not only necessary to analyze the content of documents, but account for how they were produced, copied, used and stored and how they have become available to modern historians for research.

What are temple documents? Kawane Yoshiyasu’s observation is illuminating.\(^\text{24}\) According to him, elite temples and shrines preserved documents over a long span of time and across regime changes. This itself is remarkable and a result of a systematic effort on the part of the temples. But they did not keep just any document. They chose to retain only those documents that were deemed to be necessary to protect their properties and prerogatives from future challenges and threats that they anticipated.\(^\text{25}\) Documents, in other words, are nothing but the embodiments of the power relations of the past, which were wielded by members of temple societies to assert their property and authority. Broadly speaking, temple documents include those that were issued to them by governments and rulers, those issued by the temples to the residents and officials of the estates that they controlled and those that were produced and submitted by those residents and officials.

But documents were never “documents” until modern historians began to consider them as such. As Uejima Yū notes, regarding the documents of the Tōji temple in Kyoto, documents

\(^{24}\) Kawane 1996.

\(^{25}\) Kawane 1996, 63.
were treated as “temple treasures.” Like images, portraits and ritual implements, documents were produced, preserved and transmitted for the purpose of maintaining the temples. Hence, by taking them simply as source of historical information, we deflate the rich significance that they commanded in the operation of temples in the past.

According to Uejima’s account, the most important administrative documents of the temple were housed in the scripture storage (kyōzō 経蔵) of the Portrait Hall, which was dedicated to the patriarch of the temple. This storage of critical documents was a medieval phenomenon that emerged soon after the construction of the hall in 1240. There was also the Treasure Storage (hōzō 宝蔵) building, which housed important documents from the Heian period (794-1192). Inside the Portrait Hall, the documents were stored in “archives” and the “sacred room,” located in the inner cloister (naijin 内陣). Also stored there were its treasures, such as the portrait of the patriarch and images of the Amida Buddha. They were handled by designated temple officials, but these documents were selected from the quotidian administrative documents held by secretariats of the various monastic functionaries. The latter category of documents were later stored in what are known as the “hundred boxes” (hyakugō 百合) that were donated to the temple by the daimyo of Kaga domain, Maeda Tsunanori, in 1685. They have become the famous hyōkugō documents (hyakugō monjo 百合文書) of Tōji, which have been designated as the Unesco Memory of the World in 2015. The documents in the Portrait Hall constitute a separate collection, and they were moved to the Sacred Treasure Storage (Reihōzō 霊宝蔵) that was built at the start of the early modern era.

A turning point of Tōji’s medieval manuscript system, Uejima observes, was the land surveys that were carried out by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the late sixteenth century. These ended the estate system which had been vital to the economy of the temple. With that, the treasure documents lost their power and became “dead” documents. Needless to say, the control of land was the prime purpose of the manuscript system.

Documents of Kōyasan have a history similar to the Tōji documents. Since the thirteenth century, the most important documents of the temple were stored in the Portrait Hall. The

\[^{26}\text{Uejima 1998, 11.}\]
\[^{27}\text{Uejima 1998, 18-21.}\]
\[^{28}\text{Remarkably, the hyakugō documents have recently been fully digitized and made freely accessible online by Kyoto furitsu sógō shiryōkan (Kyoto Prefectural Library and Archives). See }\text{http://hyakugo.kyoto.jp/}\]
\[^{29}\text{Uejima 1998, 21.}\]
temple’s traditional manuscript system affects what historical analysis we can undertake today of the temple in the pre- and early modern eras. But we must be cautious, since the documents reflect the perspective of the dominant monks.

*Kōyasan monjo* 高野山文書 (*Documents of Kōyasan*), edited and published by the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University, may have been the first collection of temple documents that was systematically released to historians in the modern era. The eight volume set was published from 1904-1907 and this was the first of the “house-based” (*iewake* 家わけ) historic documents that the institute has been publishing under the series entitled, *Historical Documents of Great Japan, by house* (*Dainihon komonjo, iewake* 大日本古文書 家わけ). The *Kōyasan monjo* of the Historiographical Institute is a transcription of the collections of documents that were compiled in the early modern era under the title “Treasure Manuscripts Series” (*Hōkanshū* 宝簡集). These were placed in the treasure storage (*hōzō* 宝蔵) attached to the Portrait Hall (*Miedō* 御影堂) and its compilation began in the seventeenth century.60 During that period there was a bitter and lingering conflict between two status groups that had been sharing the temple space for centuries, the *shuto* 衆徒 or the clerics and the *gyōnin* 行人 or the ascetics. As such, this handwritten material consists mostly of medieval documents that were held by the clerics, who eventually prevailed over the ascetics via the ruling of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1691. As Yoshii has commented, temple documents we have today are those that were kept by the elite of the early modern temples.61 Indeed, our understanding of medieval temples is deeply conditioned by the inner fissures that ravaged temples during their early modern transformation.

Why, then, are the documents of Kōyasan classified as “house” documents? This is because temples were understood as a variation of a house and called the temple-house (*jike* 寺家). But the temple-house was one of the many houses that formed the complex temple space. The temple-house acted as a “public” house that represented the temples as a whole, though there were many smaller and “private” houses of the subtemples. These were typically called “child cloister” (*shin* 子院), “cloister house” (*inge* 院家), “stupa” (*tacchū* 塔頭), or hermitage (*bō* 坊). These, too, had their own documents. But what does it mean that temples were houses and that

60 Kubota 1956.
61 Yoshii 1984.
the documents that we examine are house documents? This hints at a structural feature of temples that might be overlooked when we think of them as “religious” institutions. That is, like other types of house, the main agenda of temples was to exist and prosper in perpetuity. In practice, this meant the preservation of property. Like any other house, members of the temple houses were prepared to fight to defend their property from challenges and predation as well as to seek ways to expand their assets and prerogatives. Temple documents record the human struggle that took place at sacred edifices.

From the perspective of the members of the temple houses, temples were repositories of property and prerogative. It follows that people often entered or used temples in pursuit of power and wealth. Kuroda had pointed out that temples in the medieval era became nothing more than aggregates of private rights (shiteki na kenri no shūgō-tai 私的な権利の集合体), rights here being property and socioeconomic prerogatives rather than modern civil and political rights. Such rights were often institutionalized by shiki 職, which typically meant the right to a certain amount of income from land that was attached to formal functions, duties or status. The operation of temples thus was a matter of managing an aggregate of property (shiki no taiketsu 職の体系), which were allocated to the various members of the temple society, based on their formal duties and functions.

At the same time, temple documents were not merely about land and property. Takeuchi Rizō’s synopsis of Kōyasan monjo is elucidating. According to him, many of the 3,502 documents in the Treasure Manuscripts Series fall into the categories of: 1) rules and laws for the temple society; 2) the administration of land, which is most abundant and 3) rules for rituals. Indeed, the purpose of the “treasure documents” was to codify property and social relations within the space controlled by the temple.

32 Koyama Yasunori argues that local magnates (dogō 土豪) in the sixteenth century in the northern Kii and southern Izumi provinces used the Negoro-dera temple, not far from Kōyasan, to store assets. Koyama 1998, 132.
33 Kuroda 1975a, 111; 1975b, 268-69.
34 As Nakata Kaoru defined it in the early-twentieth century, shiki was a form of landed property. For debates by medieval historians on the concept of shiki, see Amino and Yokoi 2003, 51-54. Jeffrey Mass defines shiki as “rights and responsibilities packaged as “named entitlements,” heritable and transferable within limits. Mass 1997, 19.
35 Takeuchi 1968.
36 The idea that the ruling power codifies social relations is drawn from David Sneath’s discussion of state power. Citing the political historian, Neera Chandhoke, Sneath argues that the state should not be conceived as an extra-social bastion of power, but social relations themselves. Sneath 2007, 5-10. Importantly, Sneath challenges the normative conceptualization of the state, based on a Eurocentric model that uses the nation-state, centralized administration, and territorial boundaries as universal marks of statehood. Sneath counters that nomadic polities of Inner Asia had long been mischaracterized as kinship society. Though they may have lacked the Eurocentric attributes, they demonstrated the robust power to formalize and arbitrate social relations and to institutionalize legal personhood. He argues persuasively that they should be treated as bona fide states as well.
Seen from this perspective, we must approach these documents with an open mind. Documents are not mere sources of information, but relics and remnants of the power struggles of the past. They were once the very power that “shot through” temple spaces to codify social relations and property allocations. Moreover, they were not documents as we understand them, but sacred objects that were embedded in the numinous landscape of temples and shrines. It may be said that the contents of documents must be taken with a grain of salt. But what is important is to learn how documents were produced and used and the consequence of their use.

Performative Construction of Power

The embedding of documents in the sacred landscape of temples suggests that we need to account for the practice of power. Power did not simply exist. It was created and contested. Similarly, social relations were not static and rigid but created, negotiated and imposed upon by schemes of power. We must explore the practices and processes that led to the codification of social relations. What role did the sacred play in that process and how did that change over time?

Victor Turner’s ideas provide a guiding light. From the anthropological perspective, Turner argues that pilgrimage facilitated a change in the mode of social existence. His interest was the ritual process of pilgrimage. His ideas were developed upon Arnold van Gennep’s three-part model of the rites of passage. In Gennep’s model, the participants of a ritual pass through three transitory stages in relation to the structures of their society: 1) separation, 2) liminality or marginality and 3) reaggregation. Turner explored the symbolic richness of the liminal state of existence that was facilitated by pilgrimage and argued that the social relations in that state were characterized by egalitarianism, equality, harmony and wholesomeness that was achieved by the leveling of the distinctions and differentiations, which are created and reinforced by formal structures. He called that liminal state of existence the *communitas* and considered it to be the ambivalent and potent antithesis to the normative structures that defined social life.37

Such a characterization of pilgrimage has been criticized by scholars who have noted that this interpretation over-simplifies the complex experiences of pilgrimage, which is often rife with tension, contention and difference.38 Yet, his insight on the transformative power of pilgrimage or direct encounter with a potent “other” remains compelling. Turner was interested

37 Turner 1974, 231.
38 For example, Pfaffenberger 1979; Sallnow 1981; Naquin and Yü; Reader 2005.
in the “dialectical relationship over time between *communitas* and structure,” and argued that *communitas* facilitated by liminal settings was “the *fons et origo* of all structures and, at the same time, their critique.”

The generative power of ritual that he argued for can be explored in a variety of different contexts. In particular, I am interested in the notion that a liminal social mode facilitated by ritual intercession gives rise to “all structures.” This aspect of *communitas* was not discussed in detail by Turner, who focused more on the ephemeral and anti-structural aspects. I would say that this reflects the modern intellectual milieu that informed his thought. Liberation from the strictures of the normative order is exciting and attractive to the modern mind; we live in a world that is pervaded with various schemes of power and hegemony.

But the premodern world was different. Stated generally, normative structures were weaker or less comprehensive than what they are in our modern society, governed by the nation state. Combined with the holistic understanding of the world, the liminal and the sacred had a much richer power and influence in past societies than what we might imagine from the prisms of our time. While Turner approaches his examination from the modern side of the diachronic spectrum, temple documents, with their rich information from the past, permit us to take the opposite approach and examine the evolving modes of ritual process and their political implications from the premodern to modern.

My hypothesis is that the sacred and the deities were a source of order at Kōyasan in the medieval era. The power to overcome contradictions and structure and to organize space was exercised by a group of people who transformed themselves through the ritual intercession of deities. But something happened with the state formation around the turn of the seventeenth century. It was no longer possible to tap the power of deities to create a local order.

**The Era of *Ikki***

Of course, Kōyasan did not exist in a social vacuum. And there is much merit in considering the hypothesis in light of a broader pattern of social organization in the late medieval era. In fact, my hypothesis is informed by studies of the medieval phenomenon known as *ikki* —

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41 Here, I am inspired by the thoughts of the intellectual historian, Yasumaru Yoshio, who advanced that during the early modern transition, the core components of Japanese society as a whole were rebuilt upon this worldly principle. Yasumaru 2007, 85.
Ikki means “one mind,” and was the primary method of social organization that was used by a variety of social groups. Ikki was formed by a group of people who forged a ritual unity in order to overcome common problems. Because of the ubiquity of ikki in the late medieval era, some historians call that period the era of ikki (ikki no jidai 一揆の時代). At the highest level, a group of the ruling warlords of the Muromachi shogunate was called ikki. Provincial landholding warriors formed kokujin ikki to establish regional hegemony. Peasants formed self-sufficient communes (sō or sōson 惣村) that used the method of ikki to organize and defend themselves, and temple societies created collectives that were called the “entire temple” (sōji 惣寺, manji 満寺) or “entire mountain” (manzan 満山). These, too, were organized by a similar unitive practice.

As Minegishi Sumio puts it, temples and shrines were “placentas of ikki” (ikki no taiban 一揆の胎盤). However, the term that they typically used was not ikki but ichimi 一味. According to Nihon kokugo daijiten, ichimi is a Buddhist term that means that all are the same and equal under the absolute truth. In practice, temple collectives often evoked the related concepts “one mind and same heart” (ichimi dōshin 一味同心), and “one mind in harmony” (ichimi wagō 一味和合). However, there is an important difference between these two terms. Ichimi wagō was one of the translations of the Sanskrit term, sangha or monastic community as I will discuss later. Sangha is often translated as sōgya 僧伽 or simply as sō 僧, but these referred to a Buddhist community that valorized the ideal of ichimi wagō. They were also rendered as wagōshū 和合衆, or “group in harmony.” Indeed, the spirit of harmony was critical to temple communities; this was rooted in the tradition of the Buddhist sangha that originated in ancient India. However, as Katsumata Shizuo argues, in the late Heian and early Kamakura periods (ca. twelfth and thirteenth centuries), temple societies in Japan adopted a similar yet genealogically different principle of ichimi dōshin, which was analogous to ikki.
Indeed, as we shall see, Kōyasan’s culture of *ichimi* was similar to the widespread *ikki* practice as described below.

*Ichimi* and *ikki* comprised an organizational mode in which members of a group held a discussion (*hyōjō* 評定 or *hyōgi* 評議) to weigh in on a problem, make decisions based on majority rule (*tabun no gi* 多分の儀, *tabun no dōshin* 多分の同心) and perform a ritual to confirm the unity of all under the decision. In short, there were three steps involved: discussion, consent and ritualized unity. The ritual is described by Carol Tsang as follows:

*Ikki* were groups of people bound together by ritual for a specific purpose. Although some *ikki* had long-term aims, in most cases, once the purpose had been achieved, the *ikki* dissolved. The process began when a group assembled to discuss possible responses to problems or concerns outside the patterns of everyday life, such as a major crop failure or a looming battle. The discussion concluded when the majority of attendees agreed on a course of action. The group then created a document, a kind of contract in which the attendees vowed to follow the joint decision. The document usually invited the punishment of the gods and Buddhas to fall on anyone who failed to pursue the action. All the attendees signed it, then burned the document and mixed its ashes with water, which all of them drank in turn. The group was bound by the vow, the shared experience of the ritual and the shared ingestion of the document, which made the same document physically a part of their bodies. The assembly was typically held at a shrine or temple, so that the gods or Buddhas could witness the deliberation and the vows. As part of the ceremony, some kind of metal, like a bell or even a sword, was struck, probably to alert the god and the *ikki* formation was complete.⁴⁹

*Ikki* was performative. Through the ritual, members of a group overcame their differences to unite the willpower of all in order to address problems that threatened them all. Once the unity was forged and the decision reached on the course of collective action to take, everyone was bound to that decision. The binding force was reinforced through the medium of deities. Each one vowed to swear absolute commitment to the decision of the *ikki* and it was understood that

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⁴⁹ Tsang 2007, 36-37.
the deities would punish anyone who contravened with divine wrath. The consuming of the consecrated water and the ashes of the vow-document was called *ichimi-shinsui* 一味神水, literally “ichimi of divine water.” It was vital to *ichimi* and *ikki* formations. Tsang suggests that the prominent role of deities in the ritual should be understood in light of the fact that people at the time “saw the world as filled with spirits of all kinds,” hence the divine vow was “potent and meaningful.”

I would emphasize the transformative effect of the *ikki* ritual in relation to the spatial setting of its performance. The temple or shrine where *ikki* acts were performed was a liminal threshold to the realm of deities. The ringing of bells and other facets of the performance did not merely alert the deities to witness the act, but brought participants face-to-face with them in a visceral phenomenological sense. The unity with the numinous beings was needed to level the differences within the group and to facilitate a psychological and qualitative leap into a subliminal collective that was endowed with the power to make the decisions on which their fate depended. The *ikki* was a quasi-*communitas* in which members created a tight unity through a ritual process. However, its purpose was to achieve social and political goals, and the unity was not voluntary, but coerced and imposed upon by the united willpower of all the members, in addition to the threat of divine wrath. It was a forced harmony where differences were not tolerated. But decisions were made through discussions and majority rule was the basis of reaching the decision. But once made, the decision was absolute and all were required to submit.

Importantly however, as Turner noted of the *communitas*, *ikki* rituals were performed both to resist authority, structures and constraints as well as to generate them. All in all, *ikki* and *ichimi* were intended to create structures. Sakai Kimi cogently observed that what gave rise to laws in the medieval era was *ikki*. The most famous of such laws is the Jōei code (also known as *goseibai shikimoku* 御成敗式目) of the Kamakura government that was promulgated in 1232. At that time, thirteen members of the judicial board (*hyōjōshū* 評定衆) at Kamakura pledged an oath to deities to adjudicate disputes in a fair manner and according to just principles (*dōri* 道理), without regards for family relations, personal preference, thoughts of the other

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50 Tsang 2007, 37.
51 On the ringing of bells during *ikki* or *ichimi* ceremony, see Minegishi 1981, 43-44; Katsumata 2015, 34-37.
52 According to Kurushima Noriko, *ikki* were forged to assert ruling power as well as to resist it. It also created checks and balance among competing ruling powers. Kurushima 2001, 9.
53 As Sakai Kimi observes. See Sakai 2004, 223.
members of the board, and authority and pressures of established powerholders (*kenmon* 權門). They also vowed to support verdicts in a full unity of *ichimi*.\footnote{For a discussion of the ritual processes behind the promulgation of the codes, see Katsumata 2015, 4-1. The vow is featured in Ishii 1972, 35-38. 2.} Indeed, the famed judicature of Kamakura was underpinned by the spirit of *ikki*.\footnote{For the justice system of Kamakura, see for example Mass 1977.}

*Ikki* has been simplistically associated with peasants’ uprisings due to the way in which it was represented in the early modern era. In the medieval era, it was a much richer concept with pervasive influence. Rather than treating it as a socially disruptive force, *ikki* is better understood as one of the mainstream driving forces of the political formation in medieval Japan.

The pervasive nature of the *ikki* in the late medieval era should be understood in relation to the political condition of the time. For much of the period, there was no effective central administration. Power became highly localized, and the political space of the country was divided and diffused. Multiple and competing powers administered regional societies in a highly self-sufficient manner and they were not bound to an integrative power structure that spanned the country. The warrior regime of the Muromachi shogunate may have held considerable ruling power during its apogee around the turn of the fifteenth century, but even then its power often did not penetrate into the provinces. The tension inherent to the divided political space of the country caused many wars. Open conflict became especially pronounced in the latter phase of the Warring States period when provincial warlords waged nearly incessant wars to stake out their territory and power. In such a divided political environment, the politics of the day was dictated by “self-realization” (*jiriki kyūsai* 自力救済). As Gomi Fumihiko points out, in the absence of political authorities that assured peoples’ life and rights, people had to defend themselves from predation and resolve problems on their own.\footnote{Gomi 2004, 32-33.} The means for them to do that was *ikki*.

**The Demise of the Ikki**

On the broad shift within the political space of Japan across the early modern transition, Fukaya Katsumi offers an elucidating synopsis.\footnote{Fukaya 1981, 100-106.} The gist of his argument is that medieval order was structured by an overlay of multiple *ikki*. For Fukaya, *ikki* was a non-state social force that
nonetheless wielded the power to demand obedience within a regional society or class. A rupture to the structural overlays of *ikki* occurred when the country was unified under the warrior state in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. According to Fukaya, the new order was created by the denial of *ikki*. To that end, the architects of the unified state dismantled the *ikki* leagues and integrated them into their system of domination. It then prevented the possibility of further *ikki* formation by displacing warriors from the land and disarming peasants in the policy known as the “separation of warriors and peasants.”

How does the experience of Kōyasan from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries fit in to the narrative of the era of *ikki* and its demise? The benefit of focusing on temples as nodes of *ikki* or *ichimi* formation is that it enables us to examine the dynamic practice of power that shaped and reshaped temple spaces in relation to changing historical conditions. With their rich trove of documents, temples can provide a wealth of data to enrich our understanding, not only of temples, but the larger sociopolitical history of the period.

At the same time, temples were special cases. They were Buddhist institutions and established temples like Kōyasan benefitted a great deal from their formal role in providing prayer ritual to protect rulers and the country. And they were, first and foremost, sacred spaces dedicated to deities and their subliminal powers. It follows that rituals were intrinsic to their social and political lives. There are documents to tell us of the interplay between the subliminal qualities of the temples’ landscape and the social groups that organized their space.

For that reason, this study will focus on the changing organizational structure and practice of power at Kōyasan in relation to its landscape and cultural geography. We will endeavour to feature a more three-dimension portrait of the social experiences of the past. We begin with the understanding that temple societies developed themselves in intimate connection with the ineffable power of deities that animated their space. To articulate this approach from a different angle, I cite Conrad Totman’s premise in his work on early modern Japan:

> Like all human history, that of early modern Japan emerged from the interaction of accumulated historical precedent, conditions of the moment and geographical context. Put differently, that history was the product of what was within the minds of human

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58 According to Fukaya, there were two broad types of *ikki*. One related to the warriors; this was the basis for the mobilization of force and domination. The other pertained to the peasants, who formed *ikki* to defend themselves from predation. Ibid.
actors at any given moment, the social context that impinged on those actors and the larger ecological context within which those internal and external factors interacted.59

Here, Totman identifies “accumulated historical precedent” with something that happened in the “mind,” and by that, he seems to be referring to what might be categorized broadly as “culture,” or the realm of meanings and symbolism including religion, ideas and thought. Totman suggests that this existed on a level that was different from a geographical or ecological context. The assumption informing the distinction that he is making seems to be that geography, ecology or nature and environment constitute an objective and material realm that functions based on natural law and composed of inert elements. This is a “rationalized” understanding of the world that can get us out of touch from the richness and complexities of traditional societies that were organized with a more holistic understanding of the world. To apply these categorical assumptions uncritically to explain the past obscures historical experiences and subjects history to the excessive influence of modern reason.

To complicate our engagement with the past and attempt to come closer to historical experiences, I propose to consider that culture imbued itself on geography and environment. They could not be separated. Culture transformed nature and the environment. Religion, ideas and thought occurred not simply in the minds but manifested in visible, material and spatialized or geographical forms. That, in turn, influenced how people organized their society. The societal and political formations developed synergistically with a culturally transformed nature and environment. Historical actors were not simply impinged by objective social and power relations alone. They were somatic, thinking, scheming and affective actors who navigated a meshwork of social relations that developed upon a geography replete with meaning that accumulated over time.60

What political roles did deities, their narratives and powers play in their space in late medieval Kōyasan? What was the relationship between Kōyasan’s late medieval political formation and its sacred landscape? How was power constructed? How were power relations

59 Totman 1993, 1.
60 The idea that Kōyasan was a place with accumulated meaning dovetails Max Moerman’s study of Kumano shrines. Moerman treats Kumano as “a site of accumulated and overdetermined meanings, a place at once real and imaginary.” See Moerman 2005, 2. However, my approach and methods differs from Moerman’s in that my principal sources are temple documents, whereas Moerman’s are visual and literary sources. My focus, moreover, is on the evolving meshwork of social and power relationships that developed through the medium of Kōyasan’s landscape, while Moerman’s is the complexity of Kumano’s landscape and ritual practices associated with it.
negotiated and imposed? What contradictions and tensions informed the political life of the temple in the late medieval era and how were they resolved? What happened to the temple and its pattern of organization when it was subjected to the unified state in the late sixteenth century? What did new rulers change and what did they leave in place? What was the relationship between the ruling power of the unified state and religious attributes of geography? How did the politics at the temple change across the early modern transition? And what might the exploration of these questions tell us about the social change that unfolded in relation to the establishment of a unified political order under the early modern state?

Chapter Outline

With the foregoing in mind, in part one, I examine the formation and evolution of Kōyasan’s late medieval political system from the fourteenth to the late sixteenth centuries. Chapter one discusses the consolidation of the late medieval order at Kōyasan with a focus on its ritual interaction with landscape and the performative construction of power in the fourteenth century. How did narratives and legends influence the temple’s political formations? How was the understanding of nature, land and deities related to its consolidated control of land? What kind of power did the temple exercise? How did it develop that power? How did people organize themselves at the temple? As I will argue, monks exploited deities and legends to take control of land and ritually transform themselves into a subliminal collective called the “entire mountain” to dominate the plains.

Chapter two looks at how the temple codified power relations in the region to take control of the regional society from the mid fourteenth to the early fifteenth century. The focus will be on the intricate relation between the political forces in the plains and the temple on the mountain. I shall argue that the temple acted as a mechanism to codify property allocation in the region. It entrenched its power in the plains by absorbing the social contradictions in the region and administered a self-contained regional space under the authority of the Kōyasan ichimi.

The changes and continuities at Kōyasan from the fifteenth century to the late sixteenth will be discussed in chapter three. How was the temple affected by the fluid social dynamics of the age? I discuss how the inner structure of the temple society was changed as monks with lower status took over the central administration of the temple from higher-ranked monks. This represents a gekokujo 下剋上, or the “low conquering the high,” which is a hallmark of the
social upheaval of the period. All the same, as I argue, the new collective was dedicated to the maintenance of order and *gekokujō* was not necessarily chaos. There was a robust scheme for order under the new group, which had preserved the apparatus of power from the previous era. Deities, landscape and *ichimi* practice remained at the core of Kōyasan’s power.

Part two will examine how the temple and its space were affected by the emergence of a new political order under the unified state in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chapter four looks at the relationship between the temple and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who subjected the temple to his ruling system in 1585. What new constraints did Hideyoshi impose upon the temple and how did that affect it? What problems and tensions arose from within the temple in relation to Hideyoshi’s measures? What roles did the deities, traditions and landscape of the temple play in the temple’s relation to Hideyoshi’s power? As we will see, in spite of the unprecedented power that Hideyoshi exercised over the temple, his schemes of domination and control were naturalized and absorbed by the hallowed landscape of the temple. And this was related to Hideyoshi’s ritual domination of the country. Chapter five’s central topic will be the breakdown of internal order at Kōyasan at the turn of the seventeenth century. Hideyoshi’s land surveys disrupted the temple’s mechanism of order, and inner fissures among different groups reached a boiling point when the temple was brought into Tokugawa Ieyasu’s political orbit at the start of the seventeenth century. I focus on the relationship between the contradictions within the temple and the judicial power of the Tokugawa state. I discuss how the “higher will” of the Tokugawa shogun replaced the *ichimi* as the source of order for monks.

My argument is that in the medieval period, the sacred and liminal power of the landscape of the temple was cultivated through cultural exploitation of nature. This created a repository of landholding and a locus of regional political order on the mountain. Ruling power was constructed through ritual activation of the liminal power vested in landscape; the temple became a focal point of regional politics. This changed with the emergence of the early modern state.

The hegemonic warriors who established the early modern state integrated the temple within their ruling systems and suppressed the potential of the sacred to produce order outside of its system of rule. Then, by displacing the sacred as the source of landholding, state power inserted itself into the core of the temple society.
Accompanying this structural shift of power at the temple was an epochal change in the mode of organization and practice of power at the temple. In the medieval era, the temple society constructed the power to demand obedience and maintain order by forging a ritual unity through the intercession of deities. Members, “united in mind,” presided as the highest ruling authority of the temple and its land. With the penetration of state power into their society, however, the unitive impulse was broken. Internal divisions hardened and it no longer became possible to overcome differences to forge unity. Divided groups thus tapped state power to rebuild their society and order was created through litigation at a court set up by the state.

All in all, the source of power and order at the temple shifted from deities and the sacred to the state. But as different as the two were, for monks, both constituted a higher power that they needed, to overcome contradictions and impose order upon the chaos of their space.

Sources

I have relied on three main groups of documents in this study. The first two are document collections that have been published under the same title, Kōyasan monjo. The content and archival history of the two are different. The Kōyasan monjo, edited and published by the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University in 1904 to 1907 features documents that were compiled and catalogued at Kōyasan in the early modern era under the title, Treasure Manuscripts Series (Hōkanshū 宝簡集). Consisting of 3,502 documents, these were documents that were stored in the Treasure Storage of the Portrait Hall. According to Takeuchi Rizō, 3,309 of the 3,502 documents in the collection derive from the period before 1615.61

With only 136 documents originating before 1185, the great majority of the documents in the collection are from the medieval era. In the medieval era, the documents were held by the temple-house of Kongōbuji, which was the main organization of Kōyasan. However, the Portrait Hall and its documents were held by a status group known as the shuto, or clerics (also gakuryo 学侶=scholar monks). That was the elite group within Kōyasan, but in the early modern era, they did not represent the temple collective as a whole. Documents in the collection include rules and laws for the temple and the estates, decrees issued to the temple by rulers and administrative

61 Takeuchi 1968, 260-64.
documents for managing land. Documents from this collection will be cited with the abbreviation *KM*.

The second *Kōyasan monjo* collection was originally edited and published between 1937 and 1939 by Kongōbuji. The chief editor and compiler of this series was Nakata Hōju. This collection differed with the *Treasure Manuscripts Series* since its documents include those that had been stored in subtemples, administrative temples within Kōyasan and temples, shrines and families in the plains. Documents from this collection will be cited with the abbreviation *KMK*.

As a side note, the documents featured in these collections constitute only a fraction of documents held by the temple. According to Nakata Hōju, there are about 200,000 documents preserved at Kōyasan from the Kamakura era to the beginning of the Meiji period. Documents of the subtemple Kangaku-in alone number over 80,000 and of those, only 194 have been featured in the Kongōbuji version of *Kōyasan monjo*.62 There is no doubt that the release of these documents for historical inquiries is welcome, but there remains much more work to be done with the documents that have been released. The 1973 reprint of KMK that I referenced features a total of 2,656 documents.

The third collection of primary sources that I have studied are the manuscripts of the subtemple Takamuro-in 高室院, the *Takamuro-in documents* (*Takamuroin monjo* 高室院文書). Microfilm copies of these manuscripts are held in the Samukawa Library & Archives (*Samukawa bushokan* 寒川文書館) in Kanagawa prefecture. There were many patrons of Takamuro-in and another Kōyasan subtemple called Jigen-in in the vicinity of Samukawa city in the early modern era. Hence, with the effort of local historians, the manuscripts of Takamuro-in that had yet to be catalogued were catalogued and microfilm copies were taken by a team of researchers from Samukawa city over the period of three years, from 1989 to 1991.63 Included in this collection are documents that originally belonged to a subtemple called (Minami or south) Renjō-in 蓮上院. This was an influential subtemple in the medieval era, but it closed down in the Meiji era and came to be absorbed by Takamuro-in. Proof documents and records of litigation of Renjō-in in the seventeenth century were used in my research to examine the temple’s transformations in the seventeenth century under the rule of the Tokugaw shogunate.

63 Tamamuro 1992, 4. Among the members of the team was the specialist of the history of early modern Buddhism in Japan, Tamamuro Fumio.
Aside from these collections, there are two other sources that I will be referencing frequently in the study. The first is the early nineteenth century *The New Gazetteer of Kii Province (Kii shoku fudoki 紀伊続風土記)*. This is a highly informative gazetteer that features countless historical documents, geographical and ethnographical data, detailed explanations of temples and shrines and so on. Its compilation began in 1806 by the order of the Tokugawa bakufu. And under the supervision of a Confucian scholar, Niita Yoshifuru, it was completed in 1839. The version I referenced was re-compiled under the auspices of the prefectural office for Shintō clerics under the Meiji government in 1911. In that version, there are two volumes dedicated to Kōyasan. But because Kōyasan was sharply divided along status line in the early modern era, the content of the gazetteer was compiled separately along the status lines. Of the eighty-two “scrolls,” sixty were compiled by the clerics, twenty-one by the ascetics and one by holy-men or *hijiri*, which comprised a different status group.

*Kōya shunjū 高野春秋 (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Kōya)* is also a valuable historical account of the temple that features countless historical documents. It was compiled by the monk, Kaiei 懐英, and deals with the history of the temple from its beginnings in 816 to 1719 when Kaiei completed the work. However, as Wada Shujō points out, this source has to be used with care. Kaiei had privileged access to the documents in the Portrait Hall. The reason for that was the devastating litigation between the clerics and ascetics that embroiled the temple in the seventeenth century. Kaiei needed to sort the old documents and bring those that confirmed his group’s prerogatives to Edo for the purpose of the litigation.

Indeed, Kaiei’s stated purpose of writing *Kōya shunjū* was to celebrate the decisive victory of the clerics over the ascetics via the shogunal ruling in 1691. His group of monks believed that the proper order at Kōyasan would be restored, at long last. Indeed, the conflict between the two groups was part of the difficult early modern transformation of the temple. The contents of early modern sources, including the *Kōya shunjū* and the gazetteer, cannot be taken at face value, for they are often coloured by the bitter resentment toward the other status groups.

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64 Suzuki 1985, 772.
65 The term “scroll” in the original is “*kan*巻. The version of the gazetteer that I referenced was printed in a bound book, and did not come in the form of scrolls. According to *Nihon kokugo daiziten*, *kan* literally means scroll, but it also referred to sections within a bound book. The original gazetteer may have been produced in a scroll format. However, it is quite possible and likely that it was also compiled into a book prior to the Meiji era (1868-1912), which is when the version that I consulted was printed. At any rate, the term *kan* was used to organize the contents of the gazetteer. As such, it is nearly equivalent to chapter or section.
66 Wada 1999, 316.
This study will look at aspects of Kōyasan’s difficult transition, but the status politics of the seventeenth century is a topic that will need to be explored further in a separate study.

With its rich sources, the original documents of Kōyasan represent a motherlode of source material for historical inquiry from a variety of approaches. Since this study focuses on a limited aspect of its social history, many issues will be left for further inquiry. Here, I wish to make note of two such issues.

The first issue is the long tradition of prohibiting women from the precinct, known as *nyonin kinsei 女人禁制*. The temple space was an exclusively male space. Living women were prohibited from entering that space due to patriarchal assumptions about the dangerously seductive power of the female body as well as notions about the polluting effect of their blood.¹⁶ However, women and female elements played a crucial role in undergirding the temple’s power and economy. I will note two occasions in which women influenced the historical trajectory of the temple in a profound manner.

The second issue this study will not be dealing with involves the sectarian aspect of Kōyasan’s religion. The formal sect of Kōyasan’s Buddhism is a strand of esoteric Buddhism called Shingon 真言, or True Words. Shingon emphasizes rituals because it is understood that the ultimate reality transcends words. As the current abbot of Kōyasan, Matsunaga Yūkei, describes the practice, it teaches that one can become a Buddha in the bodily existence in the here and now. The “three secrets” of the body, mouth and mind facilitate a wholesome ritual unity between practitioner and buddhas and the ultimate reality that is personified by the Great Sun Buddha or Mahavairocana (*Dainichi nyorai 大日如来*).¹⁷

Kōbō Daishi transmitted the Shingon teaching and practice from master Huiguō 惠果 (746-805) in the Tang capital of Chang’an in China. This transmission of the dharma is symbolized in the legendary account that Kōbō Daishi threw the Shingon ritual implement of the Trident *Vajra*, embodying the truth and the wisdom of the Buddha, from the shore in China toward Japan. It landed on a certain pine tree in the mountains of Kii province. That is where Kōbō Daishi built Kōyasan in 816 to provide ritual protection to the country and to save sentient

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beings. The Vajra is a sacred treasure that is housed in the Portrait Hall and the Pine Tree still stands beside the hall to confirm the legend in space.

Lastly, the title “seeing like monks” evokes James Scott’s Seeing like a State, a study on the failure of the policies of modern states to improve society. An explanation is due. Indeed, I am using Scott’s work as a point of reference to situate my study. However, my focus is quite removed from Scott’s and my aim is not to promulgate about how rulers and monks may have seen things differently with respect to the social life at Kōyasan. Nor do I explore the visual culture of the religious practice at the temple, which is an important topic that requires methods that are different from those applied in the present study. Rather, my usage of the term “seeing” stems from my intent to explain the history of the temple from the perspective of its monks, based on factors that had immediacy for them. As I see it, there is a parallel between this study and Scott’s. Scott stresses that actual social lives of people were informed by a “complex, functioning order” that is elided and mutilated by states’ projects to simplify society and make it “legible.” At the same time, he argues that, in the final analysis, it is quite impossible to understand how such complex orders work, because they are constituted by diverse, fluid and informal practices and ideas.

Following Scott’s logic, historiographical narratives that privilege state actors and institutions have limits in recovering the actual historical experiences and processes on the ground-level. Is it possible, then, to do a history that brings to life those ground-level experiences and dynamics? Can we capture the significance of historical trends, watershed policies, and state formation from the perspective of those who lived through them? Is it viable to explore how the “complex, functioning order” on a local level developed, evolved and changed over time?

Yes is my answer, so long as there are relevant sources. The following is my attempt with the documents of Kōyasan.

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69 Matsunaga 1984, 21-22.
70 Scott 1998.
Part I: Engi Polity

Beyond Izumi province lays Kii, a province devoted to devil worship. In Kii, there are four or five religious organizations, and each is like a republic. Devil worship has thrived there from long ago; no war has tamed it. Not only that, massive flocks of pilgrims headed for these sites never cease.

One of these is called Kōya. It has three to four thousand monks. The patriarch is Kōbō Daishi. 700 years ago, he ordered to be buried alive. Their sect is called the Shingon sect, and monks gather at a large plain in the mountain. Each year, there are massive flocks of pilgrims who go there. But no woman is allowed to climb the mountain, and things related to women are strictly prohibited.\(^2\)

With those words, the Jesuit, Luis Frois (1532-2597) described the Kii province in 1585. Even with biases rooted in his own faith, Frois captured the gist of the religio-political features of Kōyasan and the Kii province at the time. Kōyasan was a place where a large number of men, who were Buddhist monks and devotees of Kōbō Daishi, assembled at a temple on the mountain to run their “religious republic.” Kōbō Daishi was the patriarch of the temple who died over 700 years ago, yet was believed to be “alive” at his grave in the precinct. This sanctum was the headquarters of this “republic.”

Frois’s characterization of Kōyasan as a republic is apt, if we define republic as a polity without monarchy that is run by an assembly, which made political decisions through discussion and consent. In the late medieval era of the fourteenth to the late sixteenth century when Frois penned the above account, Kōyasan was a *de facto* temple state on a regional scale. It controlled land, taxed peasants and sake rice wine, rewarded warriors for their services, mobilized force to repel invaders, settled disputes, and maintained order in the regional society. As Frois noted, Kii province was formed by numerous similar religious polities. Notable among them were the Negoro-dera (also Negoro-ji 根来寺), which was known for its prowess in making muskets as well as competent fighting men. The powerful Pure Land league also had its regional headquarters in Saika 雑賀. In the larger scheme of things, these were among the numerous

\(^2\) *Historia de Iapan*, 154.
regional polities that governed regional spaces. At this juncture, Japan was a country divided and diffused, lacking a strong central state. This was rapidly changing when Frois penned his account, as the hegemonic warriors, Oda Nobunaga and his successor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, were paving the way toward unification by subjecting regional powers to their brand of domination. The religious republics of Kii were the last of the religious powers to resist Hideyoshi. Indeed, Frois was aware of the mounting tension between the two, and astutely observed that monks knew that if Hideyoshi were to invade, their “lives, land and assets would be threatened.” The temples were systems of managing property and maintaining order and their members were prepared to fight to the death to defend that.

A contrasting yet evocative account of Kōyasan is found in the medieval epic, *Tales of the Heike*. There, Kōyasan appears as a hallowed sanctum surrounded by the “eight peaks” of the Buddhist mandala. Located over 200 ri from the capital and deep in the mountains, at Kōyasan, there was not a human voice to be heard. In the *Heike*, Kōyasan appears as a realm of renouncers dejected from the suffering of the world, a place to leave behind the pains and vanity of the worldly realm in pursuit of salvation. This is contradicted in the Frois’ account. But the *Heike*, too, captures a celebrated cultural feature of the place when it tells the story of the monk, Kangen 観賢, (d. 925) who went to present a new robe to Kōbō Daishi in his mausoleum in the Inner Sanctuary (Oku-in 奥院) of Kōyasan. Though it was nearly a century after Kōbō Daishi’s death, Kangen found the monk’s body in a living state. He reverently shaved the hair that had overgrown and changed his robe. Known as the legend of nyūjō 入定 or “entry into a state of eternal meditation,” the idea of the living presence of the deified patriarch was, and still is, a defining feature of Kōyasan’s sacred landscape.

Kōbō Daishi’s legend of nyūjō was part of the hallowed narrative of the beginning of the temple. It belongs to a genre of tales called *engi 緣起*. Literally meaning “karmic rise,” *engi* is ubiquitous. Perhaps all temples and shrines have them. *Engi* tales typically narrate the miraculous powers of deities that were revealed when temples and shrines were first founded. Max Moerman defines *engi* as “territorial legends, (and) genealogies of places.” This definition is apt for Kōyasan’s *engi* as we will see.

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73 *Historia de Iapan*, 157.
74 *The Tales of Heike*, scroll 10, Kōya no maki (Takano-bon, or Kakuichi betsu-bon), 301.
75 Moerman 2005, 59.
The _Heike_ also points to the notable geographical features of the place. To be sure, the distance of 200 _ri_ or roughly 780 kilometres is an exaggeration of the distance between the temple from Kyoto by over seven-fold. Nonetheless, the temple was situated deep in the mountains. Even with the convenience of modern transportation, it still takes over an hour to reach it from a population centre in the plains.

Such a remote temple in the mountains was the locus of a regional political order that controlled sizable estates that spanned roughly forty-two kilometres from east to west on the fertile plains along the Ki River. Common sense should tell us that it would be impractical for a political centre to be located in such a remote place. Yet it seems that for Kōyasan monks, it made perfect sense that the mountain ruled the plains.

Why was this so? Given the prominence of Kōbō Daishi and the _engi_, we can suspect that they had roles to play in the making of Kōyasan’s ruling system. What, then, was the relationship between Kōbō Daishi, Kōyasan’s hallowed origin tale, with its sacred landscape, and the political power of the temple?

These questions have not been explored. One of the reasons relates to the nature of the disciplinary divisions in academia. Stories and legends are relegated to ethnographical history and literary studies, but studies in these fields rarely deal with the political life of the temple or its documents.

A purely political history of the temple, based on empirical temple documents, on the other hand, examines objective social and political organizations of the temple without giving sufficient consideration to the narratives and deities that animated the landscape in which politics occurred. This is partly because these documents being pored over were produced for specific utilitarian administrative purposes. They rarely mention the deep layers of meaning that resonated through the landscape and spaces they occupied. The sacred site has had no voice that captured the true _gestalt_ of its rich space.

However, the invisibility of legends and landscape reflects the dominant paradigm of the political history of temples and shrines.

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76 The distance from the Fuki estate near the border to the Yamato province and the Kishi estate on the eastern end of the land that was controlled by Kōyasan in the late medieval era. According to a study of Kōyasan’s estates, there were forty-two estates controlled by the temple in the medieval era. Toyoda 1977, 502.


Kuroda Toshio is arguably the most influential historian of the medieval politics of religion. In his *kenmitsu* system theory (*kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制), or exoteric and esoteric system, Kuroda suggested that in the medieval period, religion in Japan was dominated by esoteric Buddhism. This was because the philosophical formulation of esoteric Buddhism offered a schema that grasped the totality of the world. It subsumed other strands of Buddhism, indigenous religious traditions, and even politics as it became intricately connected with state power with the ideological premise of the mutual dependency of the Buddhist and kingly laws. *Kenmitsu* system, as Kuroda puts it, was the medieval political orthodoxy. Kuroda’s approach and interest are evident in the introductory paragraph of his analysis of the *kenmitsu* system.

…the following single point shall serve as the axis of analysis in this study. How the religious *ism* or the ideological system that should be called the *kenmitsu* system developed, and became completely united with state power.

As we see here, Kuroda privileged ideology and abstract ideas, but tended to overlook myths, deities, and practices. It is true that he pointed out the importance of deities and legends at temples and shrines. However, with the emphasis on ideology and the structural relation between Buddhist and kingly laws, his model does not enlighten us as to how the numinous beings, manifest at temples and shrines, informed ritual life and the political process.

We need to re-embed the politics of religious institutions in the spatial and material settings in which it took place.

For that reason, in the three chapters to follow, I examine how the numinous powers at the temple influenced Kōyasan’s exercise of power in the late medieval period from the fourteenth to the late sixteenth century. A point of reference to bear in mind is Mikael Adolphson’s observation that Kōyasan in the thirteenth and fourteenth century made a notable departure from the established pattern of temple proprietors in the estate system of the medieval period.

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80 Kuroda 1975a, 413-547.
81 “Ism” here is Kuroda’s own rendering of the term *shugi* 主義, which may be rendered as ideology or principle. According to *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, the term was used to translate the English word, “principle.” Kuroda marked the characters 主義 with the Japanese syllabaries イズム or izumu, which is a Japanized reading of “ism.” Kuroda 1975a, 415.
era. Powerful temples, Kōyasan included, had typically acted as absentee landlords of estates in distant places. But this model was failing by the thirteenth century. Local estate managers were taking more income from land at the expense of their proprietors. Kōyasan, however, concentrated on land in the region that it could control directly. As a result, while its control of estates in distant provinces slipped, by the mid-fourteenth century, it had transformed itself into an autonomous regional ruler amidst the political turmoil that followed the fall of the Kamakura shogunate in 1333.

I suggest we consider late medieval Kōyasan as an engi polity. The edifices on the mountain functioned as political institutions to control space. The aforementioned transformation of the temple was achieved through a dynamic ritual interaction between monks, narratives of the engi, and the ineffable power of deities that were enacted in space through the temple’s sacred landscape. The temple’s landholding was based on legends and monks organized themselves through the ritual intercession of deities. The liminal power of deities facilitated the monks’ transformation into a collective that called itself the “entire mountain,” which ruled the region in unison with deities. The temple’s political power was ritually constructed, and its substance was to codify property allocation and structure the regional society under its authority. This is how Kōyasan ruled the region from the mid fourteenth century until the late sixteenth century.

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83 Adolphson 2000, 233-37; 325-27.
One: The Mountain

There are some events in the history of Kōyasan that could be called seminal. These pertain to how the place began. Kōyasan was seeded with legends and myths. At its heart was the tale of how the place began long ago when the monk, Kūkai, founded it. This is the *engi* of Kōyasan, which was never forgotten.

Two related events warrant our interest here. The first is Kūkai’s founding of the monastery, and the second is his subsequent death there. These were actual historic events that occurred in the early ninth century. But, as George Tanabe has pointed out, they were mixed with mythical elements after the fact by the followers of Kūkai from generations later. As such, the *engi* blurred history and fiction. It is not objectively true, but represents how the beginning of the place was remembered and canonized.

Here is an excerpt from a succinct version of the *engi* found in the twelfth century *Konjaku monogatari-shū* 今昔物語集.

Long ago, after Kōbō Daishi spread the Shingon teachings far and wide, he had aged and bequeathed the various temples [that he had] to his disciples. He thought, “I shall find the place where the Trident *Vajra* that I had had thrown from China landed.” Thus in the sixth month of the year of Kōnin (816), he left the capital and arrived in the Uchi county of Yamato province. There, he met a hunter whose face was red and whose height about eight feet. [The hunter] wore a blue short-sleeve. He was tall and well-built, and had bow and arrows. He had two black dogs, one large and the other small. As he saw Kōbō Daishi passing by, he said, “Which holy person would this be?” Kōbō Daishi replied, “In China I had thrown a Trident *Vajra* with a prayer ‘let this land at a sacred cave for meditation.’ Now I am looking for that place.” The hunter said, “I am the dog-keeper of the Southern Mountain. I know that place. I shall promptly tell you where it is.” Then he let his dogs run and they disappeared (to lead Kōbō Daishi toward the place).

Kōbō Daishi stayed the night on a bank of a great river on the border to the Kii province. There, he met a mountain person. Kōbō Daishi asked about the place, and the latter

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84 Tanabe 1999.
replied “To the south, there is a swampy flatland. That is the place.” The next morning, as they walked together, the mountain person secretly said, “I am the king of this mountain. I shall give you my land.” [Kōbō Daishi then] went into the mountain [from the swampy plain] for about 100 chō.85 [The place in the] mountain resembled perfect bowls that were turned upside down. It was surrounded by eight peaks. Cypress trees were larger than words could describe them, and they stood together [in great number] like bamboo forests. One of the cypress trees was split. The Trident Vajra had struck it. Seeing this, Kōbō Daishi felt an immeasurable compassion arise in him, and he thought, “Indeed, this is the sacred cave of meditation.” He asked, “Who is this mountain person?” The latter replied, “I am Niu myōjin (明神 luminous deity)” This is [the goddess of] what is today called the Amano shrine. “The dog-keeper is called the Kōya myōjin,” said the mountain person and disappeared… 86

The key elements of the legend are the Vajra and the deities, Niu and Kōya. The Vajra, a ritual implement in Shingon Buddhism that symbolizes the wisdom of the Buddha, signifies the transmission of the esoteric doctrine from China. For the current analysis, the most important event in the legend is the conferment of land to Kōbō Daishi by the Niu deity, which was a female deity. Because the account in the Konjaku is not intended to be explicitly political, it does not mention anything specific about the land. In some other documents, the land is specified with its “four corners” (shiishi 四至). According to Shirai Yūko, the corners changed over time, and these likely reflected the land disputes that the monastery had had with other claimants of land.87 Interestingly, in one of the “will-injunctions” apocryphally attributed to Kōbō Daishi (Yuikō Shinzen daitoku tō 遺告真然大德等), we see the Niu deity driving in “divine-curse spikes” (sic. in tsue 忌杖) into the earth at several specified sites to mark her land.88 Clearly, establishing boundaries of the temple land was of utmost importance, and the goddess acted out the monks’ territorial aspirations.

85 One chō is roughly 109 metric metres.
86 Konjaku monogatari-shū, scroll 11, story 25, 70-71.
87 Shirai 1986.
The narrative of divine conferment was connected to the genealogy of the royal house. The Niu goddess was identified as the child of Japan’s creator gods of Izanagi and Izanami.\(^89\) And it was claimed that the land that she held was given to her by Emperor Ho Honda (Honda tennō 品田天皇, also Honda wake no mikoto 誉田別尊). This is Ōjin 応神, the legendary fifteenth emperor who appears in the eighth century royal chronicles of Kojiki and Nihon Shoki as one of the hallowed ancestors of the divine royal lineage.\(^90\) He was also considered to be the deity, Hachiman. As such, the temple rooted its landholding rights in the mythical tale of the beginning of the Japanese state.

Added to this was the claim that Emperor Saga (r. 809-823), who reigned during the time of the founding of the temple, recognized Kōbō Daishi’s miraculous encounter with the Niu, and issued a land grant to formalize the temple’s entitlement of the land that was bestowed by the goddess. With that, the temple expanded and consolidated its landholding in the medieval period with the notion that it was recovering its “old land” (kyūryō 旧領).\(^91\)

But was the temple’s landholding really based on a mythical account of the divine conferment of land? If so, how was that possible?

Kuroda pointed out that landlord deities were used by Hieizan, Kōyasan, and Kasuga to control land. However, he did not follow the thread and discuss practices related to landlord deities and their myths.\(^92\) What needs to be examined are the institutional practices associated with myths, deities and the control of land. That is the topic we shall explore in the remainder of the chapter.

1.1 Engi Landscape

We should never underestimate the power of stories to shape reality. At Kōyasan, the engi was a reality. It could be said that the landscape of the temple was a mechanism that turned the legend into reality and ensured that it never be forgotten. There were three sites in the precinct that enacted the engi in space. One is the Inner Sanctuary where Kōbō Daishi’s

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89 The identification of the “landlord mountain king Niu great illuminating deity” (jinushi sannō Niu daimyōjin 地主山王丹生大明神) as the child of Izanami and Izanagi is seen in Kōya kōhaiki 高野興廃記 (The Rise and Fall of Kōya). The version of this text in volume 120 of Dainihon bukkyō zenshō 大日本佛教全書 has a note at the end. According to it, the original was written in 1411, then it was copied in 1686, and again by the monks of the Kōyasan subtemples, Kitamura-in and Hōki-in in 1836. The 1836 version, moreover, was stored in the subtemple of the temple official, the annual custodian of the time. Kōya kōhaiki, 117, 136.

90 This is seen in the most authoritative version of the engi, known as the otein-engi (also goshuin engi) or “hand-print legend” which will be discussed later. Kōbō Daishi zenshū 高野山仏師全集, 241; Koyama 1998, 47.

91 Koyama 1998.

92 Kuroda 1975a, 266.
Mausoleum was located. As Frois and the Heike mentioned, that was where the patriarch remained seated in meditation. The Inner Sanctuary is located at the eastern end of the precinct. When the powerful courtier, Fujiwara Michinaga, made his pilgrimage to Kōyasan in 1023, he worshipped Kōbō Daishi at the Inner Sanctuary, and sponsored the expansion of the Worship Hall (Haiden 拝殿) that was situated in front of the Mausoleum. As the name implies, the purpose of that hall was to worship the deified patriarch, for the Mausoleum itself was a restricted space. The Inner Sanctuary was the considered to be Pure Land on Earth, and a focal point of Kōyasan worship.

But it is two other sites with close association with the engi that were more important for the political life of Kōyasan monks: the Portrait Hall (Miedō 御影堂) and the Shrine (Miyashiro 御社). Both of these were situated in the area called Danjō Garan 檀上伽藍, which was the main ritual space of the temple where formal rituals were performed to protect rulers and the country. Danjō Garan is located about three kilometres to the west of the Inner Sanctuary and in it were the most imposing ritual edifices of the Golden Hall (Kondō 金堂) and the Great Stupa (Daitō 大塔). Both of these were part of Kōbō Daishi’s original design of the temple, though they were completed decades after his death. The Golden Hall was the main hall of the entire temple, and the Great Stupa was the centre of the eight-peak mandala or Buddhist cosmic representation that morphed onto the landscape of the mountain. The sanctum of Danjō Garan was demarcated with the Middle Gate (Chūmon 中門).

While the Golden Hall and Great Stupa were important engines of the Buddhist law, the Portrait Hall and the Shrine were intimately connected to the organization of Kōyasan monks. At Kōyasan, each New Year begins at the Shrine, and it likely has for a long time. On the eve of the New Year, a great pine torch is brought to the Shrine in the ceremonial offering of votive slips (gohei osame 御幣納め). According to Hinonishi Shinjō, the purpose of this rite is to present the fire to the main deities of the Shrine, the Niu and Kōya deities that protect the temple.

In fact, offerings to the Shrine and the Portrait Hall in the New Year were an intricate part of Kōyasan’s ritual and economic life. A journal of various expenditures of Kōyasan’s head priest dated Tenbun 14 (1545) shows the allocation of ritual stipends for New Year. According to

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93 KSF, vol.4, scroll 7 (clerics), 140.
94 Fujita 2006, 52.
it, 500 *mon* of copper coins were allocated each to the Great *Stupa*, Golden Hall, and the Inner Sanctuary, while the Shrine and the Portrait Hall were allotted double that amount with one *kanmon* each. Sizable amounts of food offerings were made to the two sites in New Year as well. To the Shrine, one *to* and three *shō* of white rice, which corresponds to roughly 23.4 litres, was presented while the Portrait Hall received one *to* and two *shō* or 21.6 litres of the same. Other food offerings included 300 to 400 daikon radish, kelp, sweets, oranges, and persimmons. Evidently, there was a morning worship service (*chōhai* 朝拝) at the Shrine, and we can assume that there was a communion of the offerings afterward by the member of the monastic community. The kelp was likely used to make stock with which to cook meals.

But of course, the offerings were made to the deities that dwelled at the respective buildings. The Shrine housed the tutelary deities of the temple, including the landlord deities. The Portrait Hall, on the other hand, was dedicated to Kōbō Daishi.

First, allow me here briefly flesh out the architectural and spatial features of the two buildings before discussing their significance for the political life of Kōyasan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

### 1.2 The Portrait Hall

Compared to the Golden Hall and the Great *Stupa*, the Portrait Hall is unpretentious. As the name suggests, its main object of worship was a special portrait of the patriarch. It is said that the origin of the Portrait Hall was a hall where Kōbō Daishi dwelled when he was at Kōyasan. He had enshrined a sculpture of the bodhisattva Kannon (*Avalokitesvara*) in that hall, and he offered his esoteric rites to it. As Akamatsu Toshihide points out, Kōyasan claims that the portrait was painted by Kōbō Daishi himself. This is likely related to the narrative that the portrait was actually painted by Prince Takaoka (799-865, also known as Shinnyo Shinnō 真如親王, a more common appellation at Kōyasan), who took tonsure and became a close disciple of Kōbō Daishi. It is said that Takaoka painted the portrait shortly before Kōbō Daishi’s death, but to complete it, the master drew in the eyes himself. This subtle subliminal notion hinted that he was still “watching” through the portrait. It is said that the patriarch had the portrait painted so

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95 Kudoyama chōshi, *shiryō*, 357 (doc. 7).
96 KSF, vol.4, scroll 3 (clerics), 57; Akamatsu 1959, 344; Wakayama-ken no chimei, 69.
97 As seen in the nineteenth century gazetteer of Kii province. KSF, vol.4, scroll 3 (clerics), 58.
that his followers in later generations would not lament the fact that they could not see their master. Given that the portrait was repaired in 1079, it is possible that it was actually painted during or shortly after Kōbō Daishi’s lifetime.98

Today, there is a special pine tree in front of the Portrait Hall that is protected with a red wooden fence. Called the Pine of the Trident Vajra (sanko no matsu 三鈷の松), the pine is said to be the very pine on which the Vajra that Kōbō Daishi had thrown from China landed. The current tree is the seventh generation of the original. It is not known just when this tradition began. But the pine does appear in the painting of Danjō Garan in the Illustrated Scrolls of the High Priest Ippen (Ippen shōnin eden 一遍上人絵伝), painted ca. 1300.99 By that time, the Vajra was housed in the inner cloister of the hall. Interestingly, the Vajra was returned to Kōyasan in 1252 by a certain monk named Tankū from the Sagano area in Kyoto. It symbolized not only the transmission of esoteric Buddhism from China, but also the founding legend of the temple. Later, it became known as the “Flying Vajra” (higyō no sanko 飛行之三鈷). It was placed in a raised China chest (karabitsu 唐櫃) that was ritually sealed by imperial order, and stored in the sacred cabinet (zushi 厨子) in the inner cloister of the Portrait Hall together with the portrait.100

The original Portrait Hall was destroyed by fire in 1521. But as Yamagishi Tsuneto points out, the architectural design of the original hall had the outer cloister (gejin 外陣) that was situated in front of the inner cloister (naijin 内陣).101 That layout was retained in the hall rebuilt after that fire, and also after the fires of 1620 and 1843.102

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98 Akamatsu 1959, 344.
99 The illustration is seen in Hinonishi 1983, 44.
100 As we see in the inventory of the treasures of the Portrait Hall from 1619. Zokuhōkanshū 11-250 [KM2].
101 Yamagishi 1992, 204-205.
102 Wakayama-ken no chimei, 70.
With the portrait, the *Vajra*, and the hand-print legend, the Portrait Hall combined to enshrine the hallowed founding story of the temple. But there was more to the hall than the materiality of these objects. The exceptional quality of the hall is apparent in the painting in the *Ippen* scrolls. Notably, the painting shows two halls placed next to the pine; this differs from the known arrangement of the Portrait Hall. What is interesting, however, is that one of the halls has the sliding doors opened to reveal a beaming yellow Buddhist robe. The painter, who may never have seen the hall himself, was likely thinking of a famous robe. There is a ritual at Kōyasan, which involves the changing of Kōbō Daishi’s robe annually, which traces itself to Kangen’s initial changing of the robe mentioned above. Called the *mieku* 御影供, or offering to the portrait, it involves the presentation of a specially-made robe to Kōbō Daishi at the Inner Sanctuary. It has been performed annually on the twenty-first day of the third month. This is the
anniversary of Kōbō Daishi’s death, or his entry into the state of eternal meditation as it was understood. In the current form, monks chant Buddhist sūtra as the robe is presented to the patriarch in his Mausoleum, though that is not where the robe is kept. After the ritual robe-offering to Kōbō Daishi at the Mausoleum, the robe is taken from the Inner Sanctuary to the Danjō Garan. It is then carried into the inner cloister of the Portrait Hall where it stays beside the portrait until it is replaced by a new one in the following year. As Hinonishi Shinjō has observed, the mieku served to rejuvenate the energies of the hall. But it also transformed the Portrait Hall into a space animated with the living presence of the patriarch, who continues to watch over his monks in perpetuity as their supreme leader.

According to the temple tradition, the mieku began at Kōyasan in 1149. A pot that is used to cook a massive amount of rice to be offered to the patriarch was inscribed with the year, Kenkyū 8 (1197), along with the note that it was donated by an itinerant fundraising monk (kanjin 勧進) specifically for the mieku. What we can assume is that the mieku in one form or another was performed during the medieval and early modern era. In fact, the 1545 journal of Kōyasan’s head priest states that the mieku was performed on the 21st day of the third month. A brief note mentions that the special robe made by the subtemple Hōki-in was taken to the Inner Sanctuary by two ascetics (gyōnin 行人), then brought into the Portrait Hall in the evening.

1.3 The Shrine

The Shrine, on the other hand, is what would be called a Shinto shrine by modern convention. It is located on the western end of the Danjō Garan, on the foot of a lushly forested mound known as the Miyashiro Mountain (or the Venerable Shrine Mountain), which is one of the eight petals that forms the lotus mandala on the mountain. The Shrine stands apart from the rest of the edifices in the Danjō Garan with its forest. The rest of the Danjō Garan is cleared, and this basic spatial feature was perhaps similar in the medieval era. At the least, an early nineteenth century illustration shows the Shrine with the forest, though the trees are much smaller in the illustration that focuses on buildings. But the large sanctum of the Shrine is also demarcated

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103 For a discussion of the mieku as it is performed today, see Nicoloff 2007, 250-52.
104 Fujita 2006, 54.
105 That kanjin monk likely carried out a campaign to solicit donations in order to make the pot. KSF vol.4, scroll 3 (clerics), 61.
106 Kudoya chōshi, shiryō, 357-62 (doc# 7).
107 See figure 3 below, taken from the Kii no kuni meisho zue, vol. 3-4, 16. This is an illustrated guide to the famous places of Kii province, originally published in 1811 or 1838. See Suzuki 1985, 770.
with the *torii*, a Shinto gate, from the rest of the Danjō Garan. Approaching it from the central area of the Danjō Garan, one passes through the “outer *torii*” toward the Mountain King Hall, which served as the worship hall that faced the abode of the deities on the mountain. The landlord deities were also known as Mountain Kings (*sannō* 山王). The actual Shrine is on the foot of the Miyashiro Mountain, which, too, is marked off with another *torii*.

Today, the Shrine in the forested mound consists of three buildings as it did in the early modern period. One on the northern end is the abode of the Niu goddess, and the middle shrine of the Kōya hunter deity. The third one is dedicated to the Twelve-Prince deities and One-Hundred-and-Twenty-deities. The exact layout of the Shrine in the medieval era is unknown, but what is certain is that there was the “outer *torii*” and the Mountain King hall. All but the Twelve-Princely deities were there by the early fifteenth century.  

![Figure 2. The Shrine at Kōyasan. The front building is the Mountain King Hall. The buildings behind it are the shrines that house the tutelary deities of Kōyasan including the landlord deities. Photographed by author in June 2014.](image)

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108 *KSF*, vol.4, scroll 4 (clerics), 76.
109 The deities were invoked in the early fifteenth century *Kōya kōhaiki*. The outer *torii* is mentioned in the Rites of the Four Seasons that I will discuss below.
Figure 3. An illustration of the Danjō Garan from the early nineteenth century *Kii no kuni meisho zue*, or the *Illustrated Guide of the Famous Places of Kii Province*. The highlighted circle is the Shrine. Note the outer *torii* gate on the right beside trees. The long hall to the left of the gate is the Mountain King Hall and the three smaller buildings on raised platforms at the foot of the Miyashiro Mountain are the abodes of the tutelary deities. Of those, one to the right houses the Niu deity and in the middle one you will find the Kōya deity. In the square highlighted box is the Portrait Hall. The smaller building behind that hall is the Treasure Storage (*hōzō* 宝蔵), and that is where many of the documents in the *Treasure Manuscripts Series* were kept in the early modern era. The lone tree in front of the hall is the Pine of the Trident *Vajra*, which in legend caught the *Vajra* that Kōbō Daishi had thrown from China.\(^{110}\)

The Shrine was the tutelary shrine of the temple that was dedicated to the guardian deities of the mountain. In fact, the main shrine for these deities was the Amano shrine located in the fertile basin below the temple. But according to the temple’s tradition, Kōbō Daishi performed a ritual to invite the deities to their other abode on the mountain and built the Shrine in 819.\(^{111}\)

\(^{110}\) *Kii no kuni meisho zue*, vol. 3-4, 16.
\(^{111}\) *KSF*, vol. 4 scroll 4 (clerics), 77.
In all likelihood, Kūkai probably did not build the Shrine. It is quite possible that he never even knew of the so-called landlord deities. According to Wada Akio, there is no mention of the Niu and the Kōya deities in the writings that can reasonably be attributed to Kūkai.\(^{112}\)

However, the narrative of Niu’s conferment was evidently well-established in 1088, when Retired Emperor Shirakawa (1053-1129) made his pilgrimage to Kōyasan. He offered talismans to the “landlord deities” (jinushi myōjin 地主明神) of Niu and Kōya myōjin before worshipping at the Mausoleum. There he was told the story of how Emperor Honda long ago established the “four corners” of the land which in turn was given to Kūkai.\(^{113}\) The Shrine must have been a fixture in the temple’s landscape then. According to the nineteenth century gazetteer of Kii province, it was customary to perform a roof-changing ceremony (fukikae 蓋替) every twenty-one years. That served to restore the shrine and purify the sanctum. It involved the relocation of the deities to a temporary shelter in a ceremony known as sengū 遷宮 for the duration of the repair.\(^{114}\)

The Portrait Hall and the Shrine transformed the geographical terrain of the mountain to reflect the presence of the deities in space. They created a dynamic link between monks and the hallowed engi of their temple that was never allowed to be forgotten.

What was the point of this? Can we expect that these liminal spaces had a wider role to play than only places of worship and veneration? Why did monks have to perform the mieku, and what role did the liminal quality of the hall play? And how could the identity of the deities of the Shrine as “landlords” relate to the temple’s transformation into an autonomous landholding ruler? Before addressing these questions, let us situate Kōyasan’s mythical landholding in the premodern worldview and the cultural understanding of land and environment.

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\(^{112}\) Wada 1976a, 86, 98

\(^{113}\) Koyama 1998, 38.

\(^{114}\) KSF, vol. 4, scroll 4 (clerics), 78-79. In the same gazetteer, we learn that among the routine rituals at the Shrine were those of perpetual ritual and the relic confraternity. Fifteen newly-initiated monks assemble at the Mountain King Hall to perform their service, the speed-reading (tendoku 転読) of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra. This tradition began in 1108; and is performed on the first day of each month to purify the shrine and to pray for the peace and stability of the mountain. The prayer ritual to protect the country was initiated by the retired emperor Goshirakawa in 1173.
1.4 Nature, Land and Space

Takagi Shōsaku offers thought-provoking ideas that help to elucidate the cultural logic behind the temple’s use of legends and deities to control land. According to him, in a traditional worldview, land, nature, deities, and the ineffable powers of deities were understood to be a seamless whole, while humans and their collectives situated themselves in a holistic space. Takagi points out that communities established themselves by occupying nature, but since nature was being occupied by deities and spirits with dangerous powers, it was essential to placate those beings. Through rituals, people pacified nature and transformed the primordial wilderness into habitable spaces where they settled and carried out economic activity, such as cultivating crops, to generate wealth and sustain themselves. Without ritual interaction with deities and numinous beings, communities could not form and reproduce themselves; the relations of production as well as property could not be institutionalized. Ritual was never separate from economics and politics, for nature was divine. It was controlled not by humans but deities and divine forces.

Takagi suggests that when the state emerged, property bifurcated. Local-level land rights and relations of production were retained, but the state presided as the ultimate proprietor of the land that it ruled. Japan’s ancient state, which emerged in the Asuka (592-710) and Nara (710-784) periods, was headed by the emperor, who had the priestly function to placate the deities of the land. But, as Takagi points out, the traditional worldview that saw nature suffused with deities and spirits influenced politics and policies throughout the medieval era and beyond. The early modern state, too, established itself upon such a spirit-infused world. Hideyoshi used the ritual authority of the emperor to lay claim to all the land in the sixty-odd provinces in the Japanese archipelago. His land surveys clarified and reorganized the relations of production on the ground-level, and codified the landholdings of the warlord vassals who submitted to him.

However, the links between deities and nature or geography is an elusive dimension of the social experience of the bygone era that was not developed into systematized doctrines or tenets. Kuroda’s observation of the shinkoku thought (shinkoku shisō 神国思想) should be recalled. Shinkoku, or the “country of gods,” referred to the idea that Japan was a country protected by myriad deities. According to Kuroda, this idea was pervasive in the medieval era,

115 Takagi 1990, 15-16.
116 Takagi 1990, 35-36.
yet it represented an “ambiguous and hazy orientation of thought and beliefs” (shisō ya shinkō no isshu bakuzen taru keikō ya yōshiki 思想や信仰の一種漠然たる傾向や様式) rather than a rationalized body of thought. Moreover, it was first and foremost a “conceptualization of land” (kokudo ni tsuite no kannen 国土についての観念).

Indeed, deities’ presence on land was regarded as part of nature, but this supernatural nature as we might call it influenced social life in a pervasive manner. As Thomas Conlan argues, in his study of warfare in fourteenth century Japan, deities were vital elements of space in and out of their formal sanctuaries of the precincts. According to him, “Not only did ‘religious’ beliefs—that is, the responsibility to mediate with the ‘otherworld’—underpin the power of religious institutions, but they also propelled behaviour in the seemingly unrelated arenas of political legitimacy and war…The battlefield was conceived as a realm where gods and buddhas mingled with men.”

Consider the following words uttered by Minamoto Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147-1199) in 1191 as he reflected on his success in establishing his warrior regime in Kamakura. It alludes to an implicit understanding that land was held by deities in the medieval religious imaginary, and such an understanding was primarily political:

There is no land for even a single needle to stand on in the sixty-odd provinces of our country that is not owned by the Great Shrine of Ise (waga chō rokuju yoshū wa risshin no chi tari to iedomo Ise daijingū no goryō naranu tokoro arubekarazu 吾朝六十余州は、雖為立針之地伊勢太神宮の御領ならぬ所あるへからず). When Taira Shōkoku (Kiyomori) disrupted the world, I prayed earnestly at (or to) that shrine, and received a divine oracle from Hachiman that could not be ignored. It said to summarily destroy the traitors. Hence [I followed] and the realm is now at peace.

Religion was not simply a matter of belief and worship. It permeated broad aspects of social and political life. If land was seen not as objective entity governed by the “natural” law, but as the home of deities, the temple’s land claim, based on divine conferment was not

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117 Kuroda 1975a, 257.
118 Ibid., 527.
119 Conlan 2003, 166.
120 Cited in Kuroda 1975a, 313.
outlandish, but logical. The narrative of divine conferment with the landlord deities driving their spikes into the four corners then was a form of colonization of land by those who claimed ritual mastery over surrounding space. Takagi’s notion of the bifurcation of property under the state is compelling. It is applicable to Kōyasan’s political power. The temple was the ultimate proprietor of the regional land, a status it attained and maintained through the medium of the Niu and Kōya deities. Monks did not actually hold the land directly, but through the deities that were made to manifest at the temple. Then, they controlled regional society by codifying property allocation in the region under their authority.

1.5 Medieval Property

The indirect rule of land was related to the systematization of property in the medieval estate system known as shōen. In the estate system, people did not own land on an exclusive basis, but held specified rights to it. The system was based on the institution of shiki 職, which is often translated as “rights to income from land.” The shiki holder did not retain full ownership of the land. It was normal for a single estate to have multiple overlapping shiki held by different individuals and groups. Some of the common shiki included guarantor (honke), proprietor (ryōke), steward (jitō), estate official (shōkan), lower estate officials (gesu), even-lower estate officials who handled documents (kumon), and peasants or cultivator (saku).122

Land rights in Kōyasan’s estates were structured in such a way that each parcel of land in each village in each estate had a “landlord” (jinushi or jishu) and “cultivator” (saku), whose names and rights were recorded in the land registers that monks produced by conducting land surveys.123 Indeed, recording and codifying land rights was the prime purpose of the land surveys that the monks conducted in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Monks referred to that process as “retying” (yuinaoshi 結直) of land rights. Once that was done, Kōyasan was poised at the pinnacle as the aggregator of land rights in the region.

Indeed, the temple functioned as a local state that codified relations of production and exploitation, all the while collecting taxes. That was the principle of the temple’s administrative

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121 According to Amino Yoshihiko and Yokoi Kiyoshi, the legal historian, Nakata Kaoru was the first to define shiki as “real property” and “conceptually almost the same as what we call ‘rights’” in the early twentieth century. Amino and Yokoi 2003, 51.
122 Amino and Yokoi 2003, 45-57.
practice and the fuel that allowed it to dominate the region. That power is expressed succinctly in Retired Emperor Kōgon’s decree in 1336.

With regards to the various shiki of the lands of the subtemples and of the temple as a whole, violations must be ended [and the shiki] shall be controlled by the temple-house.\textsuperscript{124}

Here, “control” in the original is shinshi 進止. According to the dictionary, Nihon kokugo daijiten, this referred to the power to appoint and revoke shiki and landholding. The decree thus recognized the authority of the temple-house as the controller of the aggregate of property of the land held by its subtemples and the monastery as a whole (jiryō 寺領).

But it was not only Kōgon who recognized Kōyasan’s land claim. Kōgon was the regent to the throne on the Northern court that was used by the warrior, Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358) in his bid to oust the Southern court headed by Emperor Godaigo (1288-1339). Godaigo had toppled the Kamakura shogunate in 1333 by mobilizing none other than Takauji. Godaigo, too, had fully recognized Kōyasan’s land claim in his 1333 imperial decree. That was the watershed moment for Kōyasan’s consolidation of its estates in the nearby area.\textsuperscript{125}

After that time, both sides of the competing courts sanctioned Kōyasan’s status as a local state. Why was this?

On one level, the reason was the pragmatism of power politics. As Adolphson discusses, both the Southern and Northern courts wanted to bring Kōyasan to their side of the struggle.\textsuperscript{126} To be sure, the fall of the Kamakura heralded a period of political turmoil when powerholders in the country allied themselves with either side of the two courts to wage wars that lingered for six decades—until the divided court was unified under the third Ashikaga shogun, Iemitsu, in 1392. Amid the turmoil, Kōyasan remained neutral. It capitalized on the attempts by the competing rulers to solicit its support. To be sure, the rulers wanted Kōyasan on their side because it had troops to deploy. At the same time, the ritual support provided by the temple was deemed to be an important political factor. As Kuroda discussed, with the ideology of the mutual dependency

\textsuperscript{124} Hōkanshū 14-196 [KM1].
\textsuperscript{125} Koyama 1998, 68-71; Adolphson 2000, 297-98.
\textsuperscript{126} Adolphson 2000, 303-307.
of the Buddhist and the kingly laws, rulers could not rule except by harnessing the ritual support of Buddhism. Indeed, one logical tenet buttressing Kōyasan’s landholding was that land was needed to fulfill the venerable wish (gogan 御願) of emperors and rulers to have rituals performed for them.

Such an explanation is useful to place Kōyasan in the broad political and religious milieu of the fourteenth century. However, it does not tell us how the temple worked, or how the Buddhist law and the temple’s political power were generated. The temple-land that Kōgon spoke of, and what Godaigo approved, was Kōyasan’s land claim based on its engi. Godaigo’s decree specifically mentioned that the land in the “four corners” belonged to Kōyasan, and this was based on the most authoritative version of Kōyasan’s engi known as the “hand-print legend” (otein-engi 御手印縁起, also goshuin engi). According to Akamatsu, in 1332 the “hand-print legend” was taken from Kōyasan to Kyoto where it was inspected by Godaigo. On that occasion, a copy was produced. Godaigo then wrote with his own hand a note on the back of the copy stating that it was to be treated as the original, and that it shall never be taken out of the temple. He then sealed it with his hand-print and had it returned to the temple.

1.6 Kōbō Daishi’s Hand-Print Legend

Indeed, the hand-print legend was the basis of Kōyasan’s medieval landholding. According to Kaizu Ichirō, the text was used nineteen times in land disputes from 1004 to 1343. And it was even used in 1585 to shield the temple’s land from Toyotomi Hideyoshi, as we will later see. The hand-print legend is a set of documents that includes maps and documents. Among the items are illustrated maps of the temple’s land, three statements of the “four corners” of land that the temple was entitled to hold, Kōbō Daishi’s “final injunction” (or will, yuikō 遺告) that addressed his disciples in which he explained the genealogy of the land tracing back to Emperor Honda and its conferment to him by the Niu goddess, and a formal land grant issued by Emperor Saga in 816 that confirmed the temple’s right to hold the land. It is called hand-print (tein 手印) because it is sealed with Kōbō Daishi’s hand-print to vest it with inviolable authority. Objective historians, starting with the pioneer of medieval Japanese history in the English

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127 Akamatsu 1984, 143-44.
129 Zokuhōkanshū 2-11 [KM1]. For the specific items of the hand-print legend, see Koyama 1998, 25-28.
language, Asakawa Kan’ichi, have determined the hand-print legend to be a forged document.\(^{130}\) There can be little doubt about that. But that is almost beside the point, because it was treated and functioned as the true venerable document. If we do not consider the power of this text, we are out of touch with the world of medieval Kōyasan.

The hand-print legend was “returned” to Kōyasan in 1159 by Empress Bifukumon-in, or Fujiwara Tokushi (1117-1160).

She was a devout worshipper of Kōyasan who deeded to the temple the Arakawa estate in the vicinity of Kōyasan in the same year as an offering for the salvation of the late Retired Emperor Toba, who had loved her dearly.\(^{131}\) She discovered the text in Toba’s treasury. Startled by the clear “hand-print” of Kōbō Daishi, she donated it to Kōyasan to make merit. Her decision to do so changed the fate of the temple forever.

To understand how this text asserted power, let us note how it was treated. Bifukumon-in did not return it to the temple herself. That task was assigned to the monk named Kanben 寛遍 (1100-1166), the abbot of the powerful Tōji temple in Kyoto which acted as the head temple of Kōyasan at the time. The discovery of the hand-print legend was a great joy for Kanben who, along with eight other monks, deposited the text to the inner cloister of the Portrait Hall. In doing so, he established the rules for handling the text.\(^{132}\) In it, we read that the hand-print legend, “as the secret and eternal treasure, shall never be taken out of its chest in the Portrait Hall.” When the head priest changed, he was to be allowed to view it only in the presence of monastic officials. In fact, not even the abbot of Tōji or the head priest of Kōyasan was permitted to access the inner cloister of the hall on his own. Kanben’s vow says that the original was to be housed in the hall at all times and if the emperor wished to view it, a copy (anmon 案文) should be presented. Needless to say, Kanben was thinking of its future use in land disputes. He went on to state that only when courtiers (that is, arbiters of land disputes) deemed the copy to be suspicious, the matter was to be taken to the abbot of Tōji, who in turn would instruct temple officials to take the original to the court. After the litigation was resolved, it was to be returned quickly to the Portrait Hall.

\(^{130}\) Akamatsu Toshihide, for instance, argued that the hand-print legend was likely produced in or shortly before 1004 when there is a record of a land dispute between Kōyasan and provincial officials. Akamatsu 1984, 146-151.

\(^{131}\) Toyoda 1977, 465.

\(^{132}\) The storage of the hand-print legend in the Portrait Hall is discussed by Yamagishi Tsuneto in Yamagishi 1992, 199-200. Kanben’s rules are seen in Zokubōkanshū 2-11 [KM1].
The rule was established through a vow that Kanben and the eight monks made to deities including the “landlord Niu myōjin” (jinushi Niu myōjin 地主丹生明神). Indeed, Kanben’s rule has been followed. An inventory of the treasures of the Portrait Hall from 1222 shows the hand-print legend being stored in a black lacquered box, placed inside another decorated box that was contained in a raised China chest (karabitsu 唐櫃). And the engi has been held in the Portrait Hall to this day.133

1.7 The Portrait Hall, Documents, and the Liminal Threshold

The placement of the hand-print legend in the Portrait Hall was a highly symbolic act. But it was not the only document that was stored in the Portrait Hall. The hall began to function as a sacred vault that held important administrative documents of the temple from the late thirteenth century onward. As Yamagishi has noted, Kōyasan monks deposited a large body of documents in the Portrait Hall in the late thirteenth century. In so doing, they moved documents from a separate Treasure Storage (hōzō 宝蔵).135

The following are some of the major types of documents that were stored in the Portrait Hall as seen in an inventory of its treasures dated Kagen 3 (1305):

- documents of land disputes;
- rules and laws for the monastery and its estates;
- documents on the allocation of duties among temple members;
- drafts and copies of documents that the temple issued to its estates;
- land registers and ledgers for the administration of estates;
- ledgers of the allocation of tax income from estates among temple members (bunden haubun sōchō 分田配分惣帳, shihaichō 支配帳);
- documents submitted by estate officials (shōkan 荘官); and so on.136

What was the significance of storing these documents in the Portrait Hall? According to Yamagishi, from the twelfth century onward, it became fairly common for temples to use halls

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133 Zokuhōkanshū 12-252 [KM2].
134 As a side note, Kanben’s instruction, which also outlines the items of the hand-print legend, was included in the Treasure Manuscripts Series in the early modern era, but it was likely treated as a temple treasure from the medieval era. However, the hand-print legend was too precious to be included in that series.
135 Yamagishi 1992, 201-203.
that were dedicated to buddhas and patriarchs to store important documents. One reason for that, as Kasamatsu Hiroshi has suggested, was that buddhas represented the temple-house, which was a public authority that stood above and beyond the different groups that cohabited the temple. Yamagishi points out that some documents were marked with a note indicating their storage site, suggesting the idea that once documents were placed in the hall, they attained a higher status and became sacrosanct. The control of documents was tightly regulated as indicated by Kanben’s instructions on the hand-print legend, and at Kōyasan, monastic officials known as the three secretariats were in charge of depositing and withdrawing documents from the hall. The secretariats, as we will see, represented the temple collective as a whole, hence the public interest of the temple.

But what remains unexplored is the link between the exceptional quality of the space of the halls dedicated to buddhas and patriarchs and manuscript systems. For instance, Yamagishi points out that the use of the Portrait Hall was related to the emphasis in the Shingon tradition on the transmission of the dharma from the patriarch, and that there was the well-developed manuscript system that assured the safe storage and use of documents. On the other hand, Yamakage Kazuo provides a detailed analysis of Kōyasan’s manuscript system from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, and uses the parable of the bank vault to describe the role of the Portrait Hall. The parable might suffice to explain the objective function of the hall. The documents that were stored there undergirded the operation of the temple, and were stored in the hall with the intent to preserve and venerate them in eternity. But when we consider the purpose of the hall was to enact Kōbō Daishi’s living presence, these explanations are inadequate. Yet, how do we account for the role that the liminal quality of the hall played in Kōyasan’s manuscript system?

Let us consider the hall as a threshold to the realm of deities. With the hand-print legend and various documents that codified land rights, such as land registers and ledgers of the allocation of tax income, the Portrait Hall functioned as the seat of the aggregation of land rights. Monks stored documents that codified property rights at the temple and in the estates on the other side of that threshold. It was important for monks to do that. They needed the sacred power

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139 Wada 1959.
140 Yamagishi 1992, 228-30.
141 Yamakage 1997, 60.
of Kōbō Daishi to control the legendary land and maintain order at the temple with various rules and regulations. The Portrait Hall was the sacred locus from which the power of the temple to codify social relations “shot through” the space constituted by the temple and its estates.

### 1.8 The “ Entire Mountain”

However, the Portrait Hall was not a stand-alone site but part of the complex landscape of the temple that linked the monks to the numinous realm of deities. There is a literary text that helps to situate the power of the hall in relation to the landlord deities and the Shrine. The *Kōya kōhaiki* 高野興廃記 (*The Rise and Fall of Kōyasan*) is recorded as being written in 1411.\(^{142}\) It recounts Kōyasan’s bitter land dispute with the temple Kinpusen in Yoshino, located in the mountains about fifty kilometres to the northeast of Kōyasan. The conflict with Yoshino, which broke out in the early thirteenth century, is known as an early instance of Kōyasan’s mobilization of the hand-print legend. When the conflict arose, Kōyasan monks took their case to the imperial court, and brought with them the hand-print legend to support their claims. However, the court was hesitant to buy into Kōyasan’s claims. Such was the backdrop of the account of the *Kōya kōhaiki*.

Being a storytelling text, the *Kōya kōhaiki* expresses the assumptions and mentality that informed monks’ institutional practices that are rarely mentioned in administrative documents. It describes the process by which monks dealt with problems and threats. It indicates the rationale for the monks’ forging of a ritual unity among themselves and with deities to transform themselves into an entity that called itself the “entire mountain” (*manzan* 満山), which acted as the highest political authority at the temple.

After narrating the familiar engi episodes of the *Vajra* and Niu’s conferment of land to Kōbō Daishi, the *Kōya kōhaiki* tells us how the stifling response of the court distressed the monks. It says that investigators were sent to examine the disputed area in the mountain. And surely, there were stone stele that was inscribed with Niu’s name.\(^{143}\) Yet, the court was hesitant to issue a ruling against Kinpusen. For the monks, this was an urgent matter that threatened the Buddhist law, demolished the karma of Kōyasan monks, and sealed the fate of the country. To discuss whether or not stop the “large and small Buddhist rituals” to protect the state and

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\(^{142}\) See footnote 89 on page 35 for the dating of this text.  
\(^{143}\) *Kōya kōhaiki*, 4-6.
“descend the mountain,” a “mass assembly of the entire mountain” (manzan daishūgi 滿山大衆議) was held. That included 3,000 monks who dwelled in some 300 subtemples of the monastery, which in turn was described as the “sacred cave beyond compare in the Japanese realm” that was their temple (niche-iki musō no reikutsu 日域無双之靈崛). An elder monk sought out the Niu’s oracle at the Shrine. The goddess was evidently infuriated, and delivered the following oracle: “The Buddhist law on my mountain shall thrive after the decline of the court.” Ominously, the palace was burnt down, and Retired Emperor Gotoba’s rebellion against the Kamakura shogunate failed miserably in the Jōkyū disturbance of 1221. The monks interpreted these events as the fallout of the curse of their goddess.

The decision was reached. The monks were to shut down the temple in order to threaten the courtiers with the withdrawal of the ritual support that they were taking for granted. The text describes the action of the assembly as follows.

On the fifth day of the eight month, Jōkyū 1 (1219), the mass assembly arose. The gates of the halls and cloisters of the mountain were closed. The 3,000 members of the clerics drank the divine water of ichimi, and made the following vow. “The Buddhism guarding good deities of our mountain are the Niu deity, the Kōya deity, and the Hundred-Twenty deities. May their power be united with that of the buddhas, bodhisattvas, the heavenly beings and the like. And by harmonizing the mind of the 3,000 monks, may the hated enemy be destroyed, and may the Buddhist law thrive once again.” Nails were driven to the gates [to the halls and cloisters]. The old and young and the high and low from the cloisters and other places all assembled in front of the Great Stupa. There was not a single person who did not have his sleeves rolled up.

Apparently, because the head priest, who was old and nearing death, lamented the loss of Kōbō Daishi’s Buddhist law, the actual descend was delayed for three days. But revealed here is the performative construction of the ichimi of the “entire mountain.” All monks united their will-

144 Other places (bessho 別所) here refers to the dwellings of hijiri itinerants who settled outside the main precinct. The implication is that everyone at the mountain was there.
145 Kōya kōhaiki, 119-20.
power through the _ichimi_ ritual that involved the drinking of the sacred water.¹⁴⁶ Niu’s oracle was a key behind that decision. It was in accordance with the will of the deities that the monks staged a massive revolt to descend the mountain. The “entire mountain” was a subliminal collective that consisted of both monks and deities.

There are three points that I wish to establish before advancing the discussion. First, the use of the Shrine to seek the oracle of the Niu deity is indicative of the role that the Shrine played in the political life of Kōyasan monks. If the Portrait Hall was the administrative centre of the temple, the Shrine was the place of action. Evidently, monks were holding mass assemblies into the dead of night at the Shrine during the conflict with Kinpusen, because a 1239 law issued by the Tōji prohibited such a practice.¹⁴⁷ The rationale for such an assembly was probably not unlike what the _Kōya kōhaiki_ tells us. That is, to seek out the oracle of the landlord deities, and discuss and decide on the course of action to take to overcome the problem that confronted the temple. For the monks, it was important to make critical political decision at the interface to the realm of deities, and in unison with them.

Second, Buddhist law was geographically determined. The shut-down of the temple was a threat to the courtier-rulers because the Buddhist law had to be generated at the sacred mountain. The assumption was that the thaumaturgic power that Kōyasan monks created could not be replaced by rituals conducted elsewhere, and rulers who failed to support this scheme risked divine retribution by the deities of the mountain. The Buddhist law and the deities of the mountain were inseparable and the sustenance of the former was predicated by the latter’s goodwill.

Interestingly, the _Kōya kōhaiki_ tells us that when the hand-print legend was in Kyoto for the litigation, rituals at Tōji generated no power.¹⁴⁸ Suggested here is the notion that the hand-print legend had to be in its proper place, otherwise the Buddhist law was undermined. But the underlying assumption seems to have been that the ritual power of the temple was embedded in the numinous power of the mountain and its deities. The Portrait Hall was organically linked with that power.

¹⁴⁶ In accordance with the standard _ichimi_ practice, we can assume that the water would have contained the ashes of the vow that they made to commit to the decision. See for example Katsumata 2015, 27-30.
¹⁴⁷ _Hōkanshū_ 2-685 [KM2]; Wada 1959.
¹⁴⁸ _Kōya kōhaiki_, 6.
And third, the “entire mountain” was mobilized to influence the adjudication of the dispute at hand. Hence, in the early thirteenth century, monks were relying on the judicature of rulers in the capital to protect their property. As we shall see, that was to change in the fourteenth century.

1.9 The Kongōbuji Clerics and Ichimi

But Kōyasan was complex, and some description is needed of its organizational structure in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As Yamakage Kazuo observes, Kōyasan in the thirteenth century had three major temples. One was Kongōbuji 金刚峯寺, the oldest temple that traced itself to Kōbō Daishi. Another was Kongōsanmai-in 金刚三昧院, a Zen temple that served the role of the prayer temple for the Kamakura and later the Muromachi shogunate. Yet another was Denpō-in 伝法院 (also Daidenpō-in) which was founded by the monk called Kakuban (1095-1143), who synthesized nenbutsu and Shingon doctrines. Denpō-in gained much power and influence with the robust patronage of powerful retired emperors. Aside from that, there were many hijiri 聖, or holy men. These were highly mobile aspirants, who built their hermitages and settled in what were called the “other places” (bessho 別所) that were situated on the fringes of the precinct. But additionally, Kongōbuji was under the authority of the Tōji temple in Kyoto, which is why it was the abbot of Tōji, Kanben who had deposited the hand-print legend in the Portrait Hall. But out of this complex structure, it was Kongōbuji that muscled its way to take over many of the prerogatives that were vested at the temple. In so doing, it forced its arch-rival, Denpō-in out of the precinct, and weakened Tōji’s influence to attain autonomy.

The means by which the Kongōbuji achieved autonomy was through the unitive impulse of ichimi. According to Yamakage, the Kongōbuji organization began to invoke the notion of the “entire temple” (sōji 惣寺) sometime between 1264 and 1288. This referred to all the members of Kongōbuji. Hijiri or the affiliates of Kongōsanmai-in and Denpō-in do not appear to have been part of the “entire temple.” Within the Kongōbuji organization, there were a group called the clerics (shuto 衆徒). Consisting of about 500 members, this was the elite group of Kongōbuji that held the prerogative over its administration as well as the performance of rituals. While the

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149 Yamakage 2006a, 95-96.
clerics were the core members of the “entire temple,” there were various other functional groups that are typically categorized under the status referent of ascetics (gyōnin 行人). They were inferior to the clerics in status, but performed various menial duties for the temple.

The power of ichimi, the “entire temple” was created by harmonizing the will of its different members to forge a tight unity. The rationale of ichimi is captured in the following excerpt from a “law” (okibumi 置文) that was promulgated by the clerics of Kongōbuji in 1277. The focal point of the law—the problem that confronted the collective at the time—was the tenure of Kongōbuji’s head priest (kengyō 検校). At the time, it had become customary for the post to be appointed by the abbot of Tōji (ichi no chōja 一長者), but evidently, there was much competition for the post, and the control of the post by Tōji served to reinforce that temple’s oversight of Kongōbuji.

The goal of joining the temple and residing on the mountain is to take the post of the head priest for even a day, and establish a karmic connection with Kōbō Daishi. Hence, if a single person takes that post for long, how is the wish of the others to be realized?...Hence the post shall be limited to three years, and head priest must resign when that term is up…Residents of the temple are united in mind (ichimi). Long tenures cause troubles. If there are those who violate seniority and compete for the post, even if they are relatives, they shall be punished.

As Yamakage suggests, expressed here is a seemingly contradictory emphasis on equality based upon the temple’s system of seniority (rasshi or rōji 腹次). Each member of the clerics was to have an equal opportunity to take up the post of the head priest, which entailed the making of the karmic connection with Kōbō Daishi. This was related to the prerogative of the head priest to hold the keys to the Portrait Hall’s inner cloister, and to receive the special robe in that hall when a new one replaced the previous one each year during the mieku. Needless to say, the short tenure of the head priest was intended to prevent ambitious individuals from amassing excessive power. The monks were so concerned, and placed it in the law to prevent the

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150 Yamakage 2006a, 131-34.
151 Cited in Yamakage 2006a, 133
152 KSF, vol. 4, scroll 11, 224; Yamakage 1997, 38, 41
“devouring of estates” (shōen o musaboru 庄園を貪る). It was the logic of ichimi that they used to codify the sharing of power and privilege.

How, then, did the monks understand ichimi? A formal definition of ichimi was in fact invoked in the same law, which mentioned the “will-injunction” (goyuikai 御遺誡) attributed to Kōbō Daishi. In that injunction, the Sanskrit term sangha (sōgya 僧伽) was equated with ichimi wagō 一味和合, or unity and harmony:

[let me] speak to all the various disciples of the Vajra. Now, those who shave their head and don dyed robes are children of mine. You are called the sangha. Sangha is a Sanskrit term. Translated, it is called ichimi wagō (sōgya ha bonmyō nari. Honjite ichimi wagō to iu 僧伽は梵名なり。翻じて一味和合と云う). The will [of all] shall be harmonized without contention between the high and the low. Like how milk and water cannot be separated, you shall protect the Buddhist law (in full unity)...Those who understands this well are the disciples of the Buddha. But those who contravene this principle are an evil league. My disciples are the disciples of the Buddha. Evil leagues are not my disciples...Those who are not the Buddha’s or my disciples are evil persons, and great enemies of the Buddhist law and the state.  

According to Kuroda, sangha was also translated as wagōshu 和合衆, or group in harmony, or simply shu 衆, and was understood to convey the “spirit of harmony” that was rooted in the Buddhist tradition of the vinaya that traced itself to the historical Buddha in ancient India. It reality, attaining full harmony was difficult. For instance, the first of the forty-five-item temple law that the monk, Mongaku, established for the Jingoji temple in 1185 begins with the emphasis on ichimi wago by citing the above will-injunction of Kōbō Daishi. Surely, such an emphasis would not have been necessary if monastic communities were actually harmonious. Yet for Kōyasan monks, harmony and unity were idealized principles that were sanctified by the founder’s words. And as we see in the above passage, “harmony” was constructed against the backdrop of the “evil” other who threatened them as a whole.

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153 Cited in Yamakage 2006a, 134.
155 Kataumata 2015, 13.
Herein we observe the Janus face of *ichimi*. The other side of the “harmony” was the enemy who were relentlessly demonized and excluded. That was how the Kongōbuji eliminated the Denpō-in from the precinct in 1288. That year, the two clashed over the latter’s construction of the great bath house. From the Kongōbuji’s perspective, that was a violation of precedent and thus a crime.¹⁵⁶ But behind their conflict was land. According to Kaizu Ichirō, Denpō-in held land rights in the legendary land. But after their removal from the precinct, Kongōbuji monopolized the legendary land.¹⁵⁷

1.10 The Assembly System

The spirit of collective administration was firmly institutionalized in medieval Kōyasan through its assembly system (*shue* 集会). According to Wada Akio, the assembly system was commonly found in large temple societies in the medieval age, and rose against the backdrop of the control of those temples by the state in the late Heian era (ca. twelfth century). Its purpose was to handle the administration tasks of temple societies locally and autonomously without state interference. Notably, the assembly was the basis of the temples’ legislative power. The fact that it emerged just when the temples began to amass estates reflects its real purpose.¹⁵⁸

According to the rules for mass assembly (*dai shue* 大集会) of Kōyasan dated Tokuji 1 (1308), assemblies were held three times a month, and conch horns or bells were used to gather monks.¹⁵⁹ Attendance was mandatory. Those who were absent without notice were disciplined. A standard discipline was the duty to heat the water of the great bath house where the monks bathed, but fines were also collected. The purpose of the assembly was to discuss various matters and make decisions based on the principle of majority rule. The process of discussion and decision-making was typically called *hyōjō* 評定 or *hyōgi* 評議. In the discussions, monks were encouraged to speak their mind frankly, but once a decision was reached, it was deemed to be absolute. Those who spoke their private views to disrupt the harmony of the collective were punished. In theory, all members were “united in mind” (*dōshin* 同心), and collective governance demanded absolute obedience to the united will of everyone.

¹⁵⁸ Wada 1959, 18-20.
¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 47-49.
Central to the assembly was the office known as *nennyo* 年預, literally meaning annual custodian. This post was a secretariat of the assembly. As the name suggests, it rotated annually, though the tenure of the post was later reduced to a half-year. Similar to the tenure of the head priest, the brief and rotational appointment to the position of power is indicative of the spirit of collective administration. In theory, under the assembly system, no one ruled but “everyone” did. Just the same, there were power differentials within the monastic society, as we will see.

According to Wada, the earliest surviving reference to the annual custodian of Kōyasan is a document dated Tenji 1 (1124).\(^{160}\) Aside from the annual custodian, there were important secretariat posts of custodian (*azukari* 預), and officiant (*gyōji* 行事). Together, they formed the three secretariats (*san sata-nin* 三沙汰人) of Kōyasan. As Wada discusses, the three secretariats organized assembly meetings, and documented the decisions reached through discussions. When such a document was signed by the three secretariats, it became law. Many of these laws pertained to the estates, because economy was a vital issue for the temple-house.\(^{161}\) The three secretariats were in charge of managing the treasures of the Portrait Hall, including manuscripts. They inventoried the treasures in the hall, and handled the withdrawing and depositing of manuscripts or other treasures from the hall which required their formal approval and signature.

Medieval Kongōbuji had multiple assemblies. There were at least twenty-five different assemblies that have left documentation of their “discussions” (*hyōjō*),\(^{162}\) meaning that all of these were assemblies that made decisions based on discussion and consent. Some of these assemblies held greater power than others. For instance, an assembly literally called the “small-assembly” (*shō shue* 小集会), formed by abbots of ten or so influential subtemples that were connected to local landholding magnates, dominated the temple from around the turn of the fifteenth century. In spite its stratified structure, the Kongōbuji collective maintained unity under the banner of the “entire temple” and “entire mountain.”\(^{163}\) Related to that was “everyone”

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\(^{160}\) Ibid., 19-21.

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 26.

\(^{162}\) Based on Kumagaya Masaru’s work. See Nakamura 2001, 57.

\(^{163}\) These terms are ambiguous and to my knowledge they are not explicitly defined. It is difficult to establish a precise and unequivocal difference between the two. For instance, a late sixteenth century document uses both terms interchangeably. (*Jimyō-in documents [KMK3-199]*). Both connote “everyone,” but in the thirteenth century, the “entire temple” referred to the Kongōbuji organization. “Entire mountain,” on the other hand, likely implied all residents of the mountain, including the affiliates of Kongōbuji, Kongōsamrai-in, possibly Denpō-in, the *hijiri* itinerants and, in my view, the deities. The *Kōya kōhaiki* says that the old and young and the high and low of the mountain, including the *hijiri* in the “other places” were part of the assembly of the “entire mountain.” From this perspective, it seems reasonable to say that the “entire mountain” was a larger collective than the “entire temple.” Later in this chapter, I will discuss how the “entire mountain” dominated Kōyasan and its estates.
(shoshū 諸衆). The will of “everyone” ran the temple, and some, like the small-assembly monks, had greater will than others.

But this complex social organization did not develop on a bland plot of land but, as monks themselves put it, at “the sacred cave beyond compare in the Japanese realm.” The numinous power of the temple that had become the second-nature of the mountain was instrumental in Kōyasan’s emergence as a hegemonic landlord of the region.

1.11 The “Entire Mountain” of 1348

In the third month of 1348, Kōyasan monks held an emergency assembly. What they discussed and decided on was recorded in a divine-vow ichimi covenant, or ichimi keijō 一味契状. Yamakage has discussed this document, and as he points out, the ichimi covenant spelled out the manifesto of the temple that was to define its political life in the late medieval era.

To summarize its content, the clerics vowed to maintain neutrality amidst the power struggle that was being waged between the Southern and Northern courts and their affiliates. Both sides were demanding that Kōyasan provide troops, and threatened the temple with punishment for non-compliance. Monks rebuffed the demands, and stressed that the “will-injunction of the patriarch” (kōso no ikai 高祖之遺誡) prohibited them from taking up arms. Then they vowed to take full control of the legendary land, and to do so on their own. This was nothing but Kōyasan’s declaration of autonomy. The following are the third and fourth items of the seven-point covenant.

Item: The provincial “protector” (shugo 守護) as well as those under the court come into the province and villages to usurp various shiki and impose levies. Such acts are detrimental to the temple land and the venerable wish (of the emperor). In a concerted measure of the ikki of the entire mountain (manzan ikki ichidō no sata 満山一揆一同之沙汰), those who carry out these acts will be expelled from the temple land and never be permitted to return.

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164 Kongōsanmai-in documents 356 [KMK2].
Item: The same applies to those who violate the land and *shiki* of sub-temples, as well as privately-held paddies and fields. Those who distress peasants by embellishing suspicious documents (of land rights), and by invoking vassalage or inheritance will be punished.\textsuperscript{166}

The context of these decisions was as follows. Kōyasan’s legal basis to hold the land was assured by the sovereigns of both sides of the competing courts. Monks invoked the “venerable wish” because the usurpation of property (*shiki*) undermined the emperors’ wish to have Kōyasan perform rituals for them. But the political condition of the time was such that formal entitlements granted by rulers did not directly change ground-level power relations. Kōyasan had to achieve the control of land through its own effort, and to do so, monks needed to eliminate contending powerholders in the region by themselves. They vowed that they would do that. Not least of their enemies were local warriors who had established vassalage under *shugo*, the provincial “protector,” which was a warrior office that had been institutionalized under the Kamakura shogunate to maintain regional order.

All the same, the items allude to the inner mechanism of Kōyasan’s power. The substance of the temple’s power was to control land rights of the *shiki*, which was consonant with the stipulation of Kōgon’s 1336 decree.\textsuperscript{167} In other words, the temple was the master of property allocation within the regional space, and did not tolerate anyone who either held property within its land, but outside of its system, or those who exploited peasants and thereby undermined the temple’s own ability to tax. The entity that held that power was the “ikki of the entire mountain.”

According to Yamakage, from this period onward, this collective began to perform the *kendan* function of policing and adjudication to punish criminals and enforce order. What, then, was the “ikki of the entire mountain”? Above, I suggested that the “entire mountain” was a performatively constructed subliminal collective that fused monks with the deities. But that was based on the *Kōya kōhaiki*, which was written two centuries after the event it described. The *ichimi* covenant, on the other hand, was produced amidst the raw politics that reverberated through the mountains and the plains in the mid-fourteenth century. What can it tell us about the performative aspect of *ichimi* power in practice?

The covenant itself gives us hints:

\textsuperscript{166} *Kongōsanmai-in documents* 356 [KMK2].
\textsuperscript{167} *Hōkanshū* 14-196 [KM1].
Item: This covenant is a law established by everyone in the entire temple (manji 満寺) through a fair discussion (為満寺一同之沙汰致法令公平之評議上者). Hence, there should not be anyone who makes claims to the contrary. If there are those who postulate unfounded claims and create troubles, they shall not be tolerated.

Item: The importance of this matter to the temple-house shall be well-understood, and selfish discussion is prohibited. Even if there are other thoughts, the decision of the majority (tabun no hyōgi 多分之評議) must be followed strictly. ¹⁶⁸

As we see, the spirit of collective decision-making was functioning in the making of the covenant which was intended to be a permanent law of the mountain. It was a product of a discussion in which “everyone” participated, and the process of “fair discussion” created an absolute authority that demanded obedience from all. We see here that ichimi was a method of creating a public power that transcended private interests. And the unity of everyone was essential to make law. However, being a divine vow, it involved deities. And the vows to the deities were necessary to reinforce the decision made by all.

The items to the above have been established through a discussion by everyone in full unity (shoshū ichidō hyōgi 諸衆一同評議). If even a single item is violated, starting venerably with Brahma, Indra, the Great Heavenly Kings of the Four Directions; the middle, great, and small heavenly and earthly deities of all of Japan; the Great Luminous Avatars of the Royal Capital; the various Great myōjin and especially the Landlord Mountain Kings the two Great myōjin; Twelve-Princely deities, One-Hundred-and-Twenty deities…the Great Saints of the Three Lands, the Venerable deities of the Two Mandala Realms, Vajra Heavenly-sattas, and Dharma Protecting good deities shall punish the offender with divine retributions that would befall upon him through the eighty-four-thousand pores of the offender’s body, causing him to suffer in this life from the curse of white and black leprosies to die without mingling with others, and in the

¹⁶⁸ Kongōsanmai-in documents 356 [KMK2].
next, fall into the great hell castle from which he shall never come out. Such is the content of this divine oath covenant.\footnote{Kongōsanmai-in documents 356 [KMK2].}

The Landlord Mountain Kings are the Niu and Koya deities, and the *ichimi* invoked a host of other deities to formalize its law. Everyone was equally bound by the awesome power of the deities. It is almost certain that the historic *ichimi* of 1348 drank the holy water of their vow to produce the document. In that manner, the *ichimi* that gave rise to the covenant was a subliminal collective that was fused with the deities. Monks had to transform themselves into an exceptional mode to establish the guiding principles of their temple polity.

Therefore, where the *ichimi* ritual was performed mattered. For the participants, it was a transformative experience wherein they reached a different state through a somatic union with the deities. Let us take a look at the decision that the 1348 *ichimi* made with respect to how the covenant was to be handled and used.

Though there have been many *ichimi* covenants in the past, with the passing of time they have naturally fallen into oblivion...the original [of this covenant] shall be stored in the Portrait Hall, and a copy (*anmon* 案文) displayed (*hiro* 披露) during the Prayer Rites of the Four Seasons.\footnote{Kongōsanmai-in documents 356 [KMK2].}

There were two places that vested the material text of the covenant with ritual authority. The original was to be housed at the Portrait Hall, and its presence in the founder’s sanctum was intended to validate the covenant in perpetuity. The second was a place where the Rites of the Four Seasons was performed. In fact, the *ichimi* covenant came in a set with a manual for those Rites, which was launched by the Kongōbuji clerics a year before the *ichimi* covenant.\footnote{Kongōsanmai-in documents 355 [KMK2]; Yamakage 1997, 145-47.} The purpose of the Rites of the Four Seasons was twofold: 1) to offer ritual support for emperors and shogun; and 2) to curse residents in the estates who neglected their tax dues.

It is interesting that the manual for the Rites of the Four Seasons makes no mention of where it was to be performed. Nor does it mention which Buddha image was to be brought into the ritual stage, though a certain Buddha image was to be moved from its home temple to that
stage for the duration of the ritual. The only thing it mentions with respect to place is the “outer torii gate.” Over the course of the ritual, names of those who failed to pay taxes were to be written on a talisman, then offered to the Buddha to be cursed. Then, at the end of the ritual, the talismans were to be taken to the outside of the outer torii, where they were burnt. It is quite certain then that this ritual was performed at the Shrine, just as it was in the early modern time, and indeed continues to this day in a revised form.\textsuperscript{172}

As the name suggests, the Rites of the Four Seasons was performed seasonally. It was held at the start of the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh months for a period of four days. Participation was mandatory. Only sixteen ritualists who attended to rituals that could not be suspended were excused from attendance. In the early modern era, the Rites of the Four Seasons were held at the Mountain King Hall at the Shrine, and that is most likely where it was performed in the medieval era, too.\textsuperscript{173}

What was the significance of displaying the 1348 ichimi covenant during the Rites of the Four Seasons? Here, displayed meant being read out loud for all to hear. For that reason, a copy of the ichimi covenant, copied in 1661 by the three secretariats because the older copy had become worn out, is marked with diacritics and Japanese syllabaries that are written in between the main text in sinographs to facilitate a smoother vocalization. The ichimi covenant was enacted exactly four times a year, and each time, everyone vowed to take control of all land rights in the plains. And it could not have been a coincidence that the regular enactment of the ichimi took place in the sanctum of the landlord deities. The temple sat on their land, and the land that monks vowed to control was theirs, too. To the monks, they did not actually hold the land directly but through the medium of deities. But since the deities made themselves manifest through the hallowed landscape of the temple, we can say that land was vested in that landscape, and monks managed all that property that was rooted in the sacred.

It was also not a coincidence that the ichimi covenant had its “performative loci,” to borrow a phrase from Ross Bender, at the Portrait Hall and the Shrine.\textsuperscript{174} These two sites were the key loci of Kōyasan’s political formation, and both were thresholds to the realm of deities. The Shrine was not only an abode of the landlord deities, but a potent interface to the other

\textsuperscript{172} For the Rites of the Four Seasons in the early modern times, see KSF, vol.5, scroll 47 (clerics), 80-81. For a brief account of the ritual in contemporary form, see Fujita 2006, 56.
\textsuperscript{173} Yamakage 1997, 172-73.
\textsuperscript{174} Bender 2009.
realm. There, monks fused with the deities to transform themselves into a subliminal collective. The Portrait Hall and the Shrine provided the monks with the indispensable liminal resources to create political power.

1.12 The Sacred and the Politics of Space in Late Medieval Kōyasan

As seen above, Kōyasan was sustained by rituals. By seeing the temple in terms of the ritual interaction between its sacred landscape and the people who occupied it, we can recover the rich roles that sacred and liminal attributes of the place played in Kōyasan’s medieval political formation.

The basis of the monks’ landholding was the hallowed narrative of its beginning, the engi. The legend of the divine conferment of land by the landlord goddess served to ritually colonize land and reconstitute the space in which monks carried out their political activity. Related to that was the worldview in which land and nature were seen as being animated with deities and divine forces. Hence, the intricacy of ritual and the control of land was a given. Kōyasan monks exploited their privileged access to divine powers that were made to manifest at their temple to amass and assert power.

At Kōyasan, the engi was not simply a story but a tangible reality. The two key sites where monks organized themselves were the Portrait Hall and the Shrine. These were enshrinements of the engi, filled with the visceral power of the deities that occupied them. The most authoritative version of the engi, the hand-print legend, could be traced to the founder and his miraculous encounter with the landlord deities when the mountain was opened. This most-treasured artefact had to be housed in the Portrait Hall. There, the continued presence of the deified patriarch was sustained through his portrait and a newly consecrated robe that was presented to him every year. But there were other documents necessary to sustain the temple and its authority over the surrounding land. Those were also respectfully stored in that sanctum.

Behind this praxis was the understanding that land was held not by monks, but by deities. And their ritual mastery of land entitled the monks to manage the aggregate of properties that derived from the divine land. It follows that the threshold to the realm of deities was the lifeline of the monks’ political power. That threshold, signified by the Portrait Hall and the Shrine, was not simply an interface to the realm of deities that existed “out there” in paradise, as it were, but intricately connected with the geography over which monks asserted authority. Monks could not
control land without the sacred landscape of the temple where landlords resided. The sanctum of the Portrait Hall metamorphosed the contents of its documents into permanent laws that bound everyone in the here and now.

The threshold was also necessary to facilitate the transformation of monks into a subliminal collective of the ichimi. The highest political authority at the temple was the entity that called itself the “entire mountain.” This was a united front of the social groups and the numinous beings that dwelled on the mountain. Without the support of the deities, monks did not have the power to control land or govern the temple. In essence, this was a method of making decisions that bound everyone. It was a way of creating a public power that stood above and beyond different groups at the mountain, and demanded everyone’s obedience. Deities were an indispensable element of this power.

From the thirteenth century to the mid-fourteenth century the temple transformed itself into an autonomous regional ruler. Amid the political instability of a period with the divided court, monks vowed to take full control of the legendary land on their own. Prior to that, they had relied on the courts of the governments in the capitals to protect their property. But now there was a legal vacuum and in the absence of a reliable higher tribunal system, it was inevitable that monks find a way to protect their properties. They realized their political aspirations through better organizing their own efforts. The means to achieve that was by transforming themselves into the subliminal ichimi of the “entire mountain.” The Rites of the Four Seasons, in which the ichimi covenant of 1348 was recited at the Shrine, was important to that end, for it established the ritual enactment of the subliminal collective that ruled the plains through the sanctum of the landlord deities.

Our investigations lead us to the conclusion that the ultimate purpose of that ichimi was to assert ownership of the surrounding territory. The monks had converted their connection to the deities to their dominance over the land. This is how they ascended to the pinnacle of power and socioeconomic relations in that legendary land.

But before the monks could control the plains through assertion of their divine ownership, they needed to bring the mountain to heel. Hidden within the mantra of the “entire mountain,” monks in power forced unity by bludgeoning potential temple dissidents with the threat of divine enmity. By embodying the collective resolve of everyone, deities included, the “entire mountain” asserted a hegemonic authority over the temple space and homogenized it.
They did not tolerate anyone who did not share the will of the cowed collective. At the heart of the “entire mountain” in the fourteenth century were the Kongōbuji clerics. The consolidation of the power of the “entire mountain” was achieved in part by demonizing the clerics’ arch rival, Denpō-in, and expelling them from the precinct. In the minds of the temple authorities, such a cleansing was required to create the exclusive, homogeneous *communitas* they envisioned. These steps were needed to attain and protect their autonomy in the socio-political context of the time.

However, we must recall what compelled the monks to produce the *ichimi* covenant of 1348. It was the reality that the temple did not have control over land rights in the region. Because of this lack of control, they needed to eliminate contenders who threatened their scheme of controlling the regional space. As much as the monks asserted their ritual mastery over the plains, the temple was being driven by the forces from the plains.

How real was the temple’s control over the land in the plains? How did its power to rule the plains actually work amidst the fluid political milieu of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries? The answers to these questions cannot be found by looking at the mountain. It is essential to look at the dynamics in the plains, and the interplay between the ruling power of the temple and the political forces from the plains. That is the topic we shall delve into next.
Two: The Medieval Codifier

In the previous chapter, I suggested that monks of Kōyasan leveraged the sacred power of the temple to take control of land in the plains through the ritual practice of *ichimi*. If that were the case, how did that power work in practice? This chapter expands the focus from the precinct to the space of the estates that monks controlled. It examines the power of the temple in relation to the political dynamics of the regional society in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I argue that the temple on the mountain was a focal point of regional politics; it served as a mechanism to codify socioeconomic relations. The hallowed landscape of the temple and the mountain absorbed the contradictions of the regional space and the *ichimi* of the entire mountain presided as the highest political authority of the region.

There are ideas and interpretations offered in existing studies that provide points of reference for the discussion to follow. The first is the concept of “ceremonial centre.” This notion was originally posited by Eric Wolf and was adopted by Allan Grapard in his historical study of the Kasuga-Kōfukuji temple-shrine complex in Nara. Among the core themes in Grapard’s study were the links between political power, legitimacy and ritual systems. This problem lies within the scope of this study. Grapard adopted Wolf’s definition of the ceremonial centre as follows:

Operationally, ceremonial centres were instruments for the generation of political, social, economic, sacred (and other) spaces, at the same time as they were symbols of cosmic, social, political and moral order…Above all, they embodied the aspirations of brittle, pyramidal societies in which, typically, a sacerdotal elite, controlling a corps of officials and palace guards, ruled over a peasantry whose business it was to produce a fund or rent which could be absorbed into the reservoir of resources controlled by the master of the ceremonial centre.

The merit of this definition is that it highlights the dimension of many temples and shrines in medieval Japan as systems that institutionalized the exploitation of peasant labour. Societies of temples and shrines thus administered as ruling elites. Ritual systems were

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176 Grapard 1992, 45.
inextricably linked with the legitimacy and power of the ceremonial centre to fill its coffers with the wealth extracted from producers. This wealth was distributed to its privileged members. Such a notion captures an aspect of the structural features of temples like Kōyasan, but it also obscures the dynamics of power that imbricated the temple and the regional society in the medieval context. With the *ichimi* of the entire mountain, the power structure of the temple resembled less an acute pyramid and more a plateau with a broad peak. Such a collective exercise of power was common in medieval temples and shrines.

More significantly, however, the model only attributes agency to the few elites at the top. This assumption may be apt in describing the social role of the Kasuga-Kōfukuji in the ancient era, when it was established by the super-elite of the Fujiwara courtier house. Doubtless, that is the period Grapard is alluding to in his arguments.

However, Grapard only touches lightly on the political dynamics of the medieval era. This topic begs for a more flexible definition of the ceremonial centre.

By the twelfth century, regional landholders became an integral part of the Kasuga-Kōfukuji. They took on such status identities as the *shuto* 衆徒, which formed the main clerical organization of the Kōfukuji and *jinin* 神人, or divine persons, who performed various menial duties for the Kasuga shrine.\(^{177}\)

Can we interpret the entry of the local elites into the institutions simply as their acts of subservience to the “sacerdotal elites” sitting on top of a “brittle pyramid”? Or was there something else for them? They did not function as a state-level ruling class but more as local powerholders who had their own agendas and schemes of domination.

The Kasuga-Kōfukuji had the noble-cloister-subtemples known as the *monzeki* 門跡, which were controlled on a hereditary basis by the lineages of the Fujiwara house. Two *monzeki* subtemples at Kōfukuji asserted unparalleled power and authority within the temple-shrine organization. Even with that, how do we account for the active participation by local elites in the politics of the ceremonial centre in the medieval age?

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\(^{177}\) Grapard 1992, 100-14. Kuroda Toshio has examined the *shuto* and *jinin* of Kasuga-Kōfukuji and the *jinin* of Iwashimizu shrine in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He suggests that these men constituted the “middle layer” between the ruler and the ruled, and were from the local landholding strata and powerful peasants. According to Kuroda, these men had notable influence within the elite institutions with which they were affiliated, and used those institutions in their local water and land disputes. However, Kuroda’s analysis is centred upon the category of class with the argument that the middle layer, after all, were unable to become full overlords. Combined with his emphasis on his theory of the *kenmon* system, his study provides limited perspectives on the rich and dynamic relations of temples and shrines with the politics of space on the regional level. See Kuroda 1975a, 73-141.
A recent study by Philip Garrett offers a compelling perspective on the role of Kōyasan in the regional society in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Garrett has examined the divine vows that Kōyasan extracted from the local warrior strata who often took on the role of the estate officials to manage land under the temple’s authority. He argues that Kōyasan, “as an economic and religious centre” of the region, functioned as “a fount of authority which created the fundamental underpinning of local social structures.”

It did so with divine vows, which outlined “the rights and responsibilities of the shōen (estate) elite as agent of Kōyasan” to “establish new direct working relationships” between “power-holders in the area” and the temple proprietor. The vows, in Garrett’s words, were “a formalization and regularization of the society of northern Kii.”

Garrett reveals the role of the temple as the locus of the societal formation in the region. To that extent, my understanding of Kōyasan vis-à-vis the regional society is similar to his. However, he seems to assume that the temple simply had authority, which was deployed to control social relations in the region. But as we saw, monks had to create authority through the ritual practice of ichimi. The documents and historical records warrant a reassessment of Garrett’s interpretation of the divine vow. In his view, the vows were used by the temple as an instrument of control. This is true, but the fact remains that monks had to resort to divine vows to empower themselves to rule the plains as well as to regulate themselves, to subject everyone to the will of the “entire mountain.”

The whole system was built upon the practice of divine vows and, apart from the reflected divine authority of the deities, the monks had little power.

Garrett’s interpretation seems to be couched on the presumed tension between the temple as the proprietor and the ruled in the plains. While that tension was important, it elides the complex interrelations between the temple on the mountain and the plains. The boundary between the temple and society was fluid and porous. In reality, people from the region were essential members of the temple society itself. The presumed boundary between temples and society is also shared in Grapard’s work. When we think of temples as religious institutions, it seems natural to draw that boundary, perhaps even more for Buddhist temples, which, after all, were staffed by “renouncers.”

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178 Garrett 2013, 96.
179 Garrett 2013, 102.
But we are loath to predicate our analysis upon such a boundary. To do so is to overlook the fundamentally social nature of temples: namely, how do they reproduce themselves? To the extent that no one is born a renouncer, temples are, by default, nodes of sociability. They are places and organizations that people enter to transform their identity and to access resources and merits that are otherwise unobtainable. From this perspective, we must focus on the more dynamic interactions between temples and society.180

Drawing on Michel Foucault’s theory on discourse and language, Garrett argues that the temple regularized society through the control of language, as spelled out in the divine vows.181 It was language, to be sure, that articulated the “social position and responsibilities” of the estate officials as well as other groups in the regional space. But what lay beneath the expressions? The power of language could not have been divorced from geography. It should be recalled that some of the divine vows that the temple extracted from estate officials were stored in the sanctum of the Portrait Hall on the mountain.182

What was the significance of this? Power did not exist but had to be generated through the medium of the sacred. The temple was not static and politics unfolded on legendary land. To understand the politics of medieval Kōyasan, we must consider the armature of power alongside the tensions and contradiction that informed the political process.

With this in mind, I will discuss the relationship between Kōyasan and the regional space, including the evolving complex of power relations in the region. I will also explore the interplay between the temple and the tensions within that space. Because the temple was a hub of a regional agrarian polity, conflict over production and exploitation is critical to bear in mind.

The temple’s power in substance was to institutionalize and codify property as well as socioeconomic relations among the diverse social groups that occupied that space. These groups included peasants and local magnates in the estates, such as estate officials. I will examine the role of the temple in structuring the regional space from three perspectives. The first is the temple’s control of socioeconomic and power relations through policies. The second is the temple’s adjudication of disputes among competing groups in the region. And lastly, we look at how the temple, which became a deity-infused mechanism to institutionalize property, was used

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180 This follows Timothy Brook’s approach in his study of Buddhism and gentry society in sixteenth and seventeenth century China. Brook 1993.
181 Garrett 2013, 96.
182 Zokuhōkanshū 62-512, 513 [KM3].
by groups in their pursuit of power and wealth. Through these lenses, I will discuss how the temple’s power imbricated into the regional space and how the temple functioned as a locus of the regional political contest.

The temple had two roles to play. On the one hand, it was the key exploitive force in the region that sought to preside over the regional society as the ultimate and sole tax-collecting overlord. But in reality, there were rival forces in the local landholding strata, or the “middle layer,” that, at times, undermined its interest with their own schemes to exploit peasants. Peasants, on the other hand, held considerable power and autonomy as they organized themselves in communes (sōson 懊村) and resisted arbitrary exploitation by absconding and even using force. In other words, the regional space was highly charged with tension and conflict among competing groups and the position of the temple was relatively weak.

In that context, the temple needed to balance the interests and territories of competing groups, all the while maintaining its status as the paramount tax collecting authority of the region. The second facet of the temple’s power, therefore, was to transcend the competing groups and preside over them as the public power that arbitrated disputes and conflicts. Through these facets of power, Kōyasan entrenched its power in the regional space and integrated social groups into its system of hegemony.

The question is, what was the basis of Kōyasan’s power to codify socioeconomic relations? And how did the temple collective act as the public power that stood above and beyond competing groups in the region? What roles did the sacred and the numinous power of deities play in the workings of the temple’s political power? By what means did monks create the power to overcome the tensions of the regional space and impose order? As we shall see, it was the power of ichimi constructed through the medium of the sacred landscape that empowered the temple to rule the plains.

2.1 The Land Surveys

Let us first look at the temple’s active effort to control and codify socioeconomic relations on the ground. The most illustrative example of Kōyasan’s power to take control of land was the land surveys that it conducted in its estates. As Koyama Yasunori points out, Kōyasan carried out land surveys in many of its estates around the turn of the fifteenth century, when the turmoil in the mid-fourteenth century had settled with the consolidation of the
Muromachi shogunate. There are land registers from six estates that were produced as a result of those surveys. They were carried out from 1394 to 1432.

These facts beg the questions: how did the surveys work and how did the temple come to carry out the surveys? The surveys, which subjected land to the temple’s rule, was an expression of the temple’s mastery over land. How did the temple come to hold that power? How did they decide to commence the surveys?

In a word, the answer is ichimi. In 1384, the Kongōbuji clerics held a mass assembly to discuss the principles and rules for the surveys at the Kanshōfu estate, which was its main estate. To finalize the decisions made, they forged an ichimi and produced an ichimi-covenant which included the following items:

Item (1): …after the last land surveys, there have been many uncultivated land due to damages caused by the river…(and) to the selfish schemes (shikyoku 私曲) of deputies on the mountain and cultivators on the plains. [As a result,] taxes have been neglected and income exists in name only. Funds for the monks on the mountain have diminished year by year, undermining the venerable wish (of the emperor or rulers to have us perform ritual for them) and the temple-house itself. How is this not to be lamented? Hence, all the various members in full unity (shōshū ichidō 諸衆一同) shall be mindful of the importance of the matter and examine and match the details of the land in our estates. Then we shall thoroughly retie (land rights).

Item (2): When surveying the land, officials shall take land rosters of each village, stand at each field with landlords and cultivators and clarify (the land’s measurements, type, yield, etc.) Even if land is barren and uncultivated and even if it is a new paddy or dry field, every parcel of land must thoroughly be recorded. If there are those who resist the surveys and do not cooperate, the officials shall discard the surveys and return to the mountain immediately. The names (of those who do not cooperate) shall be displayed to the various members (everyone at the monastery) and report will be made to public persons (kubō 公方). We shall be resolved to suspend [rituals to fulfill] the venerable wish.

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183 Koyama 1998, 103-104.
We note that monks used the term “retie” (yuinoshi 結直) to describe the purpose of the surveys. This referred to the retying of land rights. At the Kanshōfu estate, surveys were conducted in 1336, but the turmoil of the era disrupted the region for decades; the data from the earlier surveys became irrelevant.

The second item, above, described land rights and types of land that were to be recorded and confirmed, including those plots that were not cultivated. This same method was employed in Hideyoshi’s surveys that were carried out two centuries later. Not only that, the incrimination of those who refused to co-operate, and the divine vow by which peasants and survey officials vowed to record data accurately, were shared between Kōyasan’s surveys and Hideyoshi’s. In that respect, Kōyasan’s surveys were highly developed for its time. But of course, the raison d’être of the surveys is encapsulated in the first item, to fulfill the venerable wish and to perpetuate the temple-house. This would set the Kōyasan surveys apart from Hideyoshi’s. This demonstrates how potent the power of the Buddhist laws as an ideological weapon that empowered the monks. And as we see in the second item, in case there were those who refused to cooperate, monks were to suspend their ritual support of the rulers and pressure the “public persons,” referring to the Muromachi shogunate, to support Kōyasan’s project.

However, the reliance on the Muromachi was intended only for reinforcement. The actual surveys were administered independently. What empowered the temple to carry out the surveys was the ritual unity of every member of the collective.

As seen in the first item, the retying of the land rights was to be conducted by “all the various members in unity.” Part of the blame for the failure of the last surveys were the “selfish schemes” of none other than the members of the temple collective who, we can imagine, were holding property outside the public system of the temple-house. It must be recognized how formidable was the task of uniting everyone at the Kongōbuji collective to make its public tax system work. The private interests of individual members had to be overcome and a means developed to bind them all under a collectivized system. The only viable strategy for them to achieve that was through the performance of the ritual unity of ichimi.

Ikagami 2004, 117-18
Item (14): The matter (decided hereby) have been discussed in assembly (hyōjō) for days and critical documents (have been written to record the decisions). Those who violate (the decisions) are enemy of the Daishi and the myōjin.

Item (15): There should be no one who objects the present measure to revive (the temple and its land). To restore the funds for those residing on the mountain and perpetuate the Buddhist law, the present law (kenpō 憲法) has been set by scrutinizing matters with all parties. There should be no aspirations for self-gain (shikyoku 私曲). Matters shall be discussed thoroughly from the bottom of the heart (shinsoko 心底) without holding anything back. Even if evil words are spoken, no grudge shall be held.¹⁸⁶

All members of the assembly were to speak their mind without hesitation and reach a collective decision that everyone endorsed. In the decision-making culture of the temple, this process was required. This was the basis of making laws. The collective decision transcended private interests. Once decisions were reached, they were absolute; no exceptions were permitted. Those who violated the decisions were labeled the enemy of Kōbō Daishi and the myōjin, the latter referring to the landlord deities. Needless to say, the decision was reached through the intercession of deities.

The items above...are laws of utmost fairness as established by the covenant of the various members in unity, hence even as years and months pass they shall never be neglected. Still, if anyone violates these decisions:

The venerable Brahma, Indra, the Great Heavenly Kings of the Four Directions and especially the Great Luminous Avatars of the Royal Capital, the great and small Earthly Deities of the entire country of Japan especially the two Great Luminous Avatars of Niu and Kōya, Twelve-Princely deities, One-Hundred-and-Twenty deities, the Great Sacred All Luminous Vajra-satta of the three lands, the various deities, sacred beings and Vajra-deities of the Two Mandala Realms shall inflict divine retribution upon the violator’s body through all of its eighty-four-thousand pores. Violator, moreover, will be withhold

from the numinious blessings of these deities in this life and the next. Such is the substance of this *ichimi* covenant.\(^{187}\)

Did they miss any deity? Here is the medieval construction of the power to demand obedience in the context of Kōyasan. The surviving copy of the vow, which is damaged, shows the signatures of about 180 monks who made the vow, but it is likely that many more were involved. They discussed the matter in the presence of deities and devised the covenant in a trance-like state of *ichimi*. In 1394, peasants of twenty villages of the Kanshōfu estate were forced to vow to the deities that they would not conceal any land before the surveys were carried out. For that, they performed the divine vow complete with the drinking of the consecrated water containing the ashes of their vow at the main shrine for the landlord deities in Amano.\(^{188}\) For Kōyasan monks, the *ichimi* ritual was needed to overcome internal differences and private interests and resolve the financial crisis of the temple as a whole. Land rights could not be “retied” without the activation of the *ichimi* power.

The surveys made possible the land registers that confirmed property rights and served as the basis for the temple’s collection of taxes. For each plot of land, be they paddies or dry fields, the register recorded “landlord” (*jinushi* or *jishu*) and “cultivator” (*saku*). These were land rights on the ground-level.

The landlord held the right to collect rent and levies from “cultivators,” who, in turn, held the right to cultivate. In reality, cultivators often had tenants work the land. The following is an excerpt from a roster of a survey conducted in 1394 in the Kechienji-village in the Kanshōfu estate.\(^{189}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kubota west</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North, first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord Inner Sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior, to the south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord Henjōson-in Cultivator Kakuzen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{187}\) Ibid.

\(^{188}\) Kudoyma chōshi, *shiryō*, 201 (*chūsei* doc. 92).

\(^{189}\) Kudoyma chōshi, *shiryō*, 201-202 (*chūsei* doc. 93).

\(^{190}\) *Bu* 歩 refers to the size of the plot. One bu is roughly 1.8 metres.
Here, the Inner Sanctuary and Henjōson-in were subtemples and functionaries of Kōyasan. In addition, they were often landlords. But temples such as the Jison-in were located in the plains, too. The Ōno, on the other hand, was probably a warrior-like local landlord. Cultivators, as can be inferred from their names, were often peasants. However, they were likely privileged among the peasants. Some cultivators were members of a religious community, such as Kakuzen. In this manner, Kōyasan recognized and codified land titles through land surveys. The legality of the rights was undergirded by the temple which enjoyed its position as the ultimate landlord. In this respect, property was bifurcated (or trifurcated) under the temple. The cultivators were responsible for remitting taxes to the public coffers of the temple, not individually, but village-by-village. The duty to remit the taxes was borne by the village head (myōshu or nanushi 名主), whose status was confirmed by the surveys. The tax income was then allocated to the members of the temple collective.

It is important to note is that land registers were stored in the sanctum of the Portrait Hall, which suggests the notion that by entrusting the record under the authority of the founder on the other side of the liminal threshold, the property relations became permanent and sacrosanct.\footnote{Zokuhōkanshā 62-512 [KM3].}

2.2 The Hidden Struggle of Peasants

The land surveys normalized and codified the temple’s systemic exploitation of peasants. However, it is not accurate to say that monks dominated peasants unilaterally or without resistance. The political environment was rife with tension and monks could not easily impose arbitrary levies or even easily carry out the surveys, for that matter. In that regard, it is important to note that the first survey at the Kanshōfu estate was not performed for ten years after the ichimi covenant of 1384.
Peasants were not passive. As the producers, they had some leverage to press their agenda against the overlord. If they fled because of unfair conditions, there was no income to pay taxes. This leverage is demonstrated in a petition by the peasants of the Kanshōfu estate, addressing the annual custodian of the Kongōbuji clerics.\textsuperscript{192} The petition was written in the sixth month of 1396, hence was written when the surveys were nearly or already complete, but it likely reflects the negotiation that took place between peasants and monks prior to that.

In the petition, the peasants condemned the “unprecedented deeds” (hirei 非例, read “evil deeds”) of the estate officials who imposed numerous levies in labour and money. These included labour for the construction of their mansions (tono 殿), digging moats, providing sake, cleaning, and a corvée called kyōjōfu 京上夫, which referred to their duties to serve the estate officials when they went to Kyoto to fulfill their military duty (gun-yaku 軍役, also “provincial duties” kuni-yaku 国役). These levies were connected to the policies of the Muromachi shogunate through the shugo. It empowered the estate officials who were vassals of the shugo. To shield themselves from the estate officials, peasants took their grievances to Kōyasan, urging the temple to intervene. They asserted that the novel levies of the estate officials prevented them from fulfilling their tax obligation to the temple. The forty-five-item petition includes the following evocative statement:

If the detail of the items stated above were to be displayed (to the assembly of the clerics), the peasants shall be at peace. Please order us to attend diligently to public duties (taxes). We have heard that with the land surveys being conducted, the various matters from antiquity would be restored. If unprecedented deeds (hirei 非例) are ended at once and for all, peasants shall be at peace. That would be auspicious for the venerable mountain (oyama 御山)….\textsuperscript{193}

It is interesting to note that the peasants called the temple the “venerable mountain,” and their petition addressed the annual custodian, who represented the mountain. In the mind of the peasants, the temple was as much a geographical entity as a social organization; they were

\textsuperscript{192} The petition, held by a local family, was first discussed by Takahashi Osamu. See Kudoyama chōshi hensan iinkai 2009, 191-92. The petition is included in Kudoyama chōshi shiryō 255-28 (doc. 109).
\textsuperscript{193} Kudoyama chōshi shiryō, 257-58 (doc. 109).
consonant with the monks’ invocation of the “entire mountain.” We note that rather than resisting the mountain, the peasants needed it to constrain the predations of the more threatening and avaricious estate officials. The mountain, on the other hand, was unable to conduct the surveys of the plains without the consent of the peasants; it was fully aware what some estate officials were up to. That is why, in the second item of the ichimi covenant cited above, monks had vowed to take the case to the Muromachi shogunate (kubō 公方) if anyone resisted the surveys. The Muromachi authority was used to keep the local warriors—acting under the shogunal policy—in check.

2.3 Peasants, Landlords and the Temple at the Tomobuchi Estate

How did the tension between the temple, local landholding class, and peasants play itself out? Are there examples that speak to the active roles that peasants played in shaping the political space of the region?

Among the estates that Kōyasan quickly took over with Go-daigo’s decree in 1336 was Tomobuchi 鞆淵. The Tomobuchi estate is located about twenty kilometres to the west of Kōyasan. Prior to Kōyasan’s takeover, it had been held by the Iwashimizu shrine in Kyoto. The Tomobuchi shrine that houses the Hachiman deity as the main deity sits on a hill among the paddies. The Tomobuchi is well-known and studied as the home of the late medieval peasant commune called the sō 惣. The sō functioned as a political unit as well as a community of agricultural producers. Based on Hideyoshi’s land surveys in 1591, Tomobuchi sō’s annual productive yield was 1,053 koku. Of course, we can only know about the political experiences of the Tomobuchi because of its documents. To that end, the ninety historical documents that were housed in the shrine provide a rich trove of records delineating the medieval experience of the Tomobuchi peasants. The documents include those that were issued by the overlord, Kōyasan, as well as those written by the members of the sō.

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194 Renjō-in documents [KMK 3-178].
The integration of the Tomobuchi into Kōyasan’s landholding was soon followed by violent conflicts between the peasants and local magnates of the Tomobuchi house who held the estate official title of the *geshi* 下司. Indeed, there had been conflict between the *geshi* and peasants since at least 1306, as documents of the Tomobushi shrine reveal. This was when the estate was under the proprietorship of the Iwashimizu shrines.\(^{196}\)

A trigger for the renewed tension in the mid fourteenth century was the imposition of new corvée duties upon the peasants by the *geshi* in 1347.\(^ {197}\) Peasants called their clashes with the *geshi* the “Tomobuchi disturbance” (*Tomobuchi dōran* 鞆淵動乱). For them it was war against the *geshi* and his league that imposed various corvée and harassed them with threats and violence. Rather than resorting to the typical method of peasant-resistance by absconding and

\(^{196}\) Atsuta 2004, 187.
\(^{197}\) Kuroda 1985, 9.
going into hiding, the peasants of the Tomobuchi sō took up arms and fought the geshi and his league. Battles were fought at a hill between the peasants’ organizational locus of the Tomobuchi shrines and the geshi’s fortress. The geshi’s house was torched and peasants were killed. An account of the event by the Kōyasan monks related that dead bodies from both sides of the conflict lay on the roadside, the result of guerrilla-like battles.198

The situation in the Tomobuchi sō must have caused much distress for the monks of Kōyasan who were doubtless seeking ways to impose their own system of exploitation upon the peasants. Kōyasan sent officials to survey the land in the sō. But the peasants did not let that happen. The surveys being a symbol of exploitation, the peasants cut the ropes that were being used to measure land. According to the claim made by the geshi, peasants tied up the surveyors, confined them in the shrine and threatened to kill them. This may have been an exaggerated account, but there is no doubt that the peasants prevented the surveys. The monks could not carry out the surveys until 1429.199

Nevertheless, the peasants relied on Kōyasan to put a check on the geshi. They ran into the temple “without a written statement of dispute” to seek mediation, which suggests that it was typical at this time for peasants to formally present petitions. They demanded that the corvée remain frozen at a rate it had been when the estate was under the control of Iwashimizu. The peasants called this the “precedent of the Hachiman.”

Aware of the peasants’ roles in the conflict and their resistance to the surveys, the response from Kōyasan was mixed. It captured the leaders of the peasants’ collective, who were deemed “eight troublemakers,” and held them hostage until peasants paid a hefty sum of forty kanmon of copper in return for their release. 200 But with the instability in the estate undermining its control of land, Kōyasan monks held a “discussion of everyone in the entire temple” (manji ichidō hyōgi 満寺一同評議) and ruled that “before the land surveys,” the levies and dues were to follow the “precedent of the Hachiman” just as the peasants had demanded.201 In adjudicating the dispute, it can be known that Kōyasan first issued a three-item memorandum (kotogaki 事書) that outlined the decisions reached by the large assembly of the temple on the twenty-ninth day.

198 Kuroda 1985, 10-11.
199 Atsuta 2004, 194-95.
200 Kuroda 1985, 11-12.
201 Zokuhōkanshū 24-313 [KM2], items one and three.
of the first month, 1351, then followed up with a more detailed thirteen-item law (okibumi 置文) after extracting divine vows from each side to abide by its decisions on the twelfth day of the following month. The memorandum includes the following item:

Since [the case has been] mediated by the discussion of all of the various members (of the monastery, shoshū ichidō hyōjō 諸衆一同評定), the geshi and the peasants shall recognize the reconciliation and harbour no rancour toward one another. From now on, (both the geshi and peasants) must dwell in the mind of restraint and humbleness and reflect deeply on milk and water...those who violate the ruling and disrupt harmony shall be deemed the enemy of the temple-house. Hence they will be severely and summarily punished by a measure taken by the ikki of the old and the young of the entire temple...

As we can see, the decision was reached through discussion with all of the various members of the Kongōbuji clerics. This vested insuperable authority in the ruling group with respect to the mediation of conflict. To violate the decision was to become the enemy of the entire monastery. In order to pressure both the geshi and the peasants to comply with the decision thus reached, Kōyasan threatened them with the following consequences for defiance:

Item: If the geshi violates the ruling (sic. the decisions reached through the discussion of all the various members, shoshū hyōgi no mune 諸衆評議之旨) and imposes unprecedented and unlawful deeds on peasants and disrupts harmony, he shall be the enemy of the temple house. Hence, his shiki shall be summarily confiscated (kaieki 改易) and he will be expelled from the estate and never allowed to return...

Item: If the peasants violate the ruling and...neglect their public duties (kuji 公事=taxes and corvées), or...start fights and disruptions to violate harmony, they shall be expelled

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202 Yūzokuhōkanshū 73-1337 [KM6].
203 Zokuhōkanshū 24-313 [KM2].
204 Yūzokuhōkanshū 73-1337 [KM6].
from the estates without exception. They shall be prohibited from staying in the temple land (and if they stay they will be punished.)

Outlined here is the power of the Kōyasan ichimi as arbiter of conflicts within its jurisdiction, the “old land” or the legendary land of the hand-print (旧領 kyūryō). The struggle here was over the allocation of prerogatives and duties. Note that the extraction of taxes and corvée by the monastery was a given; no one could question that. What was contestable and changeable was how much and by whom. The geshi’s attempt to expand his share failed and the monks’ attempt to do the same had in fact also failed when the sō members cut the ropes to prevent the surveys of their land. The temple was the key exploitive force in the local political contest that was underway, but at the same time, it transcended the sō and the geshi with its judicial authority that settled the configuration of duties and prerogatives.

The document codified the legal power of the monastery itself. The original memorandum was held by the temple and it could have been stored at the Portrait Hall. Yamakage points out that the original was delivered to the estate and stored by the sō in their sacred vault of the shrine along with other critical documents of the sō. For the peasants, the document, which embodied the power of the monastery and the collective will of all of its members, was the only legal assurance that shielded them from the predation of the geshi and his associates. They needed it to survive the hostile political environment; it was their sacred treasure.

The tension at the Tomobuchi estate did not cease. The next eruption occurred in 1423. By then, the geshi and also the estate official of the kumon 公文 had become vassals of the provincial “protector” of the shugo, the powerful Hatakeyama house. This was the house of the kanrei (deputy or vice-shogun), who were among the core members of the Muromachi shogunate that had consolidated its power.

Not surprisingly, the geshi and the kumon tried to impose new levies to fulfil their “military duties” (gun yaku 軍役) and “provincial duties” (kuni-yaku 国役) as warrior officials.

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205 Zokuhōkanshū 24-313 [KM2].
208 When the dispute broke out in 1426, the Hatakeyama was the shugo but they resided in Kyoto. The deputy shugo (shugo-dai) was the Yusa house, and the geshi and kumon organized themselves under the Yusa. Kuroda 1985, 28.
This was part of the move to extend the power of the shugo into the provinces by the Muromachi shogunate. But the attempts by the geshi and kumon to extract further dues from peasants failed dramatically in the face of a fierce resistance staged by the peasants, and a concerted effort by Kōyasan monks to contain their advances. Peasants of the sō sent a petition to the monastery and then absconded. The petition outlined a total of twenty-four items of “unprecedented deeds” (hirei 非例) of the geshi and the kumon. The peasants were determined to have the kyōjōfu terminated. The monastery, in turn, pressured the geshi and the kumon to renounce all the new levies.

The geshi responded by agreeing to give up all but the kyōjōfu, which was unacceptable to the peasants who refused to return to the fields. Kōyasan monks then forged an “ichimi of the entire mountain that was “united in mind” (issan ichimi dōshin 一山一味同心) on the nineteenth day of the first month in 1424. As a consequence, the geshi was condemned as the “enemy of the temple” and the monks vowed to expel him summarily from the temple land.209

Despite the ruling, it would not be easy to displace the geshi, due to his formal status as a warrior under the shugo. The monks then pressed the Hatakeyama to remove the geshi of his shiki and acquiesce to his expulsion. The Hatakeyama gave in to the monks’ pressure to withdraw their ritual support. The monks then mobilized their own estate officials, who wielded “divine trees” (shinboku 神木) of the Amano shrine, to drive the geshi off the temple land. The geshi fled and the house and mountain of his vassal were torched.

The expulsion of the geshi marked a milestone in Kōyasan’s control of the Tomobuchi estate. We note that the peasants merely demanded the ending of the new levies, but the monks went much further than that. This can be understood in light of the territorial politics between the monastery and the geshi. They were competing over the labour of the same peasants. Kōyasan eventually achieved a full victory in that contest and at the same time, prevented the infiltration of the shugo’s influence on its land.210

These results were achieved by harnessing the sacred powers of the mountain and its landscape. The wielding of the “divine trees” of Amano was a highly symbolic act. The branch, taken from a tree growing on the shrine land, was a lodging site of the landlord deities. Thus, as far as Kōyasan monks were concerned, their enemies were driven out by none other than the

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209 Zokuhōkanshū 25-314 (KM2).
divine landlord. In selecting the representatives of Kōyasan to negotiate with the *shugo*, they made a draw at the Amano shrine, signifying that they were chosen by the landlord deities. When they vowed to expel the *geshi*, their *ichimi* covenant began with the line “reflecting on the old records of this mountain, the land is controlled (*shinshi* 進止) by the Niu avatar and the estate has been arranged by the Kōya *myōjin*…” and ended with the names of the 375 members of the collective who shared the same goal.  

It was the power of their collective will, sanctified by the hallowed landscape of their mountain that empowered the monks to be the ultimate landlord of the region.

By persuading the *shugo* to side with them, the Kōyasan *ichimi* appears to have fully integrated the Tomobuchi estate under its singular authority when the land surveys it had long sought finally commenced in 1429. This was part of the trend observed by Nakamura Naoto that Kōyasan’s control of its local estates reached a state of stability during the Ōei era (1394-1428).

2.4 Entering the Temple

Kōyasan thus established a regional hegemony. But did that mean that tensions were contained? Did the power relations become set in stone? Did the regional space become static and stable under the mountain?

That was hardly the case. But given the intensity of the politics of the regional space, how were power and interest asserted and negotiated? Let us now turn to how the temple and the mountain were used by groups to expand their influence.

We will look at two groups that increased their power just as Kōyasan consolidated its control of the estates. The first is the so-called *gyōnin* 行人 or ascetics, which referred to the lower-rung affiliates of Kongōbuji. They were not part of the clerics but performed various administrative task for Kongōbuji. They are known to have come from humble social backgrounds of the peasant strata. The other is a group known as the *shō-shue* 小集会, which literally meant “small-assembly.” Unlike the ascetics, they were local landholding elites and members of the clerics. In spite of their different class backgrounds, both specialized in the administration of land and become indispensable to the temple.

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211 *Zokuhōkanshū* 25-314 [KM2].
2.5 The Ascetics and Historiography

A caveat is necessary here. The social history of Kōyasan has been forever skewed by the intense conflict between the clerics and ascetics in the seventeenth century. The bitter strife lingered for much of that century until a decisive ruling by the Tokugawa shogun in favor of the clerics in 1691. The historical narrative that was developed by the clerics to contain their rival has been influential. Known as the “three factions of Kōyasan,” or Kōya sankata, there were three distinct status groups. First were the gakuryo or “scholar monks,” a term often used interchangeably with the shuto or the clerics. Next came the ascetics and lastly were the hijiri or holy men.213

The narrative of Kōya sankata emphasizes that the ascetics were monks and quasi-monks of humble origin who were supposed to be subordinate to the clerics. However, they subverted the old order to gain influence in the medieval period. They eventually eclipsed the influence of their superiors at the turn of the seventeenth century when Tokugawa Ieyasu gave his personal support of a prominent ascetic. But this proved a Pyrrhic victory. In the end, after a great deal of litigation at the court of the Tokugawa state, the shogunate eventually ruled in favor of the clerics. This restored the proper order of things at the temple. This argument was the main topic of the influential early eighteenth century chronicle of the history of Kōyasan, Kōya shunjū, which was compiled by none other than a man who was closely involved in the litigation on the side of the clerics.214

Birth, it appears, was the main criterion that set the ascetics apart from the clerics. Status differences of the secular world also structured the temple society. The ascetics are said to have been from peasant backgrounds, while the clerics derived from warriors and notable families.215 A term that was used to highlight the qualitative difference of peoples based on birth was shushō, which was a translation of varna, which was the basis of the caste system in South Asia.216 A poignant example of the perceived qualitative human difference based on this criteria is seen in the description of a group known as the “sixers” (rokubanshū 六番衆), which was among the twenty-one sub-groups of the ascetics as mentioned in the clerics’ version of the nineteenth

213 For a succinct summary of the Kōya sankata, see Takeuchi 1999.
214 Wada 1999.
216 Takahashi 1984, 309.
century gazetteer of Kii province. The number indicates when the group was allowed to use the great bath at the temple in a monthly bathing of the temple members. The sixers are listed in the gazetteer as the last ones to bathe. The first ones to bathe were the head priest and elite scholars and boys of good birth (shushō shikarubeki 種姓然るべき). Then the monks among the clerics, according to their monastic rank. After the fivers, who specialized in the kendan function of policing, the sixers were able to bathe. The gazetteer says that the sixers were “lowly renouncers” (shimobōshi 下法師) who were children of “humble servants” (koshō扈従, simobe 僕) and “people of the land” (or peasants, domin 土民). The bathing order reflects the underlining notions that degrees of purity and pollution were determined by birth and social background.

The conflict between the ascetics and the clerics in the seventeenth century has tainted virtually all attempts to analyze the pre-1600 history of Kōyasan, because the historical sources that have been preserved have been affected by it. Aside from one volume in the Kōyasan monjo compiled by Kongōbuji, most historical documents of Kōyasan, including the Treasure Manuscripts Series, are documents that were held by the early modern clerics. The data on the ascetics is limited, and often skewed by the clerics’ damming attitudes toward them.

As Hirase Naoki has pointed out, the “three-faction” model is based on the organizational structure of early modern Kōyasan and should only be applied with much care to explain the medieval conditions of the temple. In fact, it may be problematic to use the category of ascetics for the medieval era, as it was a blanket status category that the clerics used in the early modern era to refer to numerous status and occupational groups that were not part of the clerics.

However, what is certain is that the sub-groups of the ascetics existed in the medieval period. These include the “hall-group” (dōshu 堂衆), “mountain ascetics” (nagatoko 長床, yamabushi 山伏), “flower league” (geshu 夏衆), and the “sixers.” These are some of the groups that are classified under the blanket category of the ascetics in the sankata model. It remains to be seen if these groups had organized themselves together into a collective of the ascetics that was separate from the clerics prior to the turn of the seventeenth century. Yet, these

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217 The description of the various groups within the ascetics is seen in the gyōnin jiraku, in KSF, vol. 5, scroll 44 (clerics), 1-19.
219 Note that “flower-group” (geshu) is written not with the conventional sinograph for flower 花・華 but a homophonic character 夏, meaning summer.
groups actually existed from at least the thirteenth century. Though they were on the margins of the Kongōbuji order, the ascetics had tasks to perform within the temple’s aggregate of duties and prerogatives.

Therefore, in this study, I will use the ascetics as a status category of monks who belonged to these functional groups. The focus in the following will be the mountain ascetics. We shall come back to the ascetics-clerics strife during the dawning stage of the Tokugawa era when they were remade into formal status groups that were recognized by the Tokugawa state. For now, let us focus on the activities of the mountain ascetics of Kōyasan in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

2.6 The Estate-Managing Mountain Ascetics

It is again to the Tomobuchi estate that we turn to learn how the so-called ascetics maneuvered the social environment of the medieval estates to gain power and influence. After the expulsion of the geshi in 1424, Kōyasan’s influence dominated the Tomobuchi estate. The geshi pleaded to be permitted to return. He received permission after the monks of Kōyasan had extracted a divine blood oath of fealty. They then re-appointed him to his post. Everyone knew who was boss in this new arrangement.

But interestingly, in 1426, the kumon transferred that shiki to the Kangaku-in 勧学院, which was a Buddhist academy set up by the Kamakura government at Kōyasan. The reason for the transfer was financial.

The kumon, a certain Hikotarō, was neglecting his payment of “rent” (kajishi 加地子) to Kangaku-in and placed the shiki as security. But because he was unable to pay the principal or the interest, the shiki was taken by the latter.220 It is not entirely certain what the arrangements were between Kangaku-in and Hikotarō was, but speculation suggests that Kangaku-in may have been lending money at high-interest rates to bankrupt the kumon. However, Kangaku-in’s hold of the shiki was brief. As Kuroda Hiroko demonstrates, the mountain ascetics wrote to the Tomobuchi commune the following notice, which was held in the sanctum of the Hachiman shrine.221 Unlike documents issued by the clerics, the notice was written in kana, Japanese syllabaries:

220 Kuroda 1985, 34.
…in regards to the *kumon shiki* of Tomobuchi, those on land (*jige* 地下, peasants of Tomobuchi) despise Kangaku-in Rinchōhō, hence the mountain ascetics…donated it to the Great *myōjin* of Amano. And it has been decided that the mountain ascetics be the deputy of the avatar. In order to have this matter displayed to the commune of the estate, this letter is presented…

The notice is damaged and undated, but Yamakage thinks it was written between 1430 and 1464. Remarkable is the statement that peasants despised Rinchōhō, the abbot of Kangaku-in. That gave the mountain ascetics the rationale to take over the *shiki*. But they did not, or could not, hold the *shiki* directly. Rather they had it donated to the deity of Amano, the landlord deity, that is. They then assumed control of it in their capacity as the deputy of the deity. Kuroda Hiroko suggests that what likely happened was the peasants resisted Kangaku-in and staged a protest or dispute and the mountain ascetics mediated the conflict and in so doing, took hold of the *shiki*. Yamakage has located a letter written by the deputy *geshi*, the heir of the *geshi* who had been expelled. He evidently blew the whistle on Kangaku-in and informed the temple officials that Kangaku-in had “usurped” the *shiki*, “deceived” the temple house to siphon income for himself and was distributing tax income to his associates at his own discretion. In other words, Rinchōhō was acting upon his private aspirations to compromise the public interest of the temple as a whole. With that accusation, he had no choice but to let go of the *shiki*.

Why was the *shiki* donated to the Amano shrine? Kuroda Hiroko reasons that the steps taken here must have been similar to what the mountain ascetics had done when they took control of the *kumon shiki* in the Ishibashiri village nearly two centuries earlier in 1258. On that occasion, they wrote as follows: “Though the Amano shrine and Kōyasan temple are not the same, they both fall in the land of held by the *myōjin*. There are many shrine priests and temple monks, but they are all nurtured by the avatars (*gongen* 権現, that is, the *myōjin*). Is it not the most logical for temple land to be donated to the shrine house?”

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223 Kuroda 1985, 35-36.
224 Yamakage 2006a, 289-91, 297 n38.
225 Cited in Kuroda 1985, 35.
Clearly, the idea that the land was held by the Niu and Kōya myōjin (myōjin kanryō no chi 明神管領之地) was the basis for the actions of the mountain ascetics, just as the same assumption was the basis for the Kōyasan ichimi’s expulsion of the geshi in 1424.

The donation of the shiki to the Amano myōjin reveals the role that landscape played in holding Kōyasan’s land system together. As I argued with the Rites of the Four Seasons, the system of land rights was premised on the logic that land was held through the medium of deities. The edifices on the mountain were sacred mediums for landholding for the Kongōbuji clerics. The mountain ascetics, on the other hand, were not part of the clerics, but they, too, had their footing firmly in the legendary landscape. They based their activity at the Amano shrine and served as deputies of the landlord deities at their main shrine. They took control of the shiki without disrupting the system.

2.7 The Late Medieval Structure of Regional Space under Kōyasan

Kuroda argues that the use of the Amano deities by the mountain ascetics reflects the ideological basis of Kōyasan’s ruling system. She argues that it was in the early fifteenth century that the Amano shrine was transformed into a tutelary shrine of Kōyasan’s estates in its entirety. Levies were imposed across the estates to finance rituals at the shrine. Thus were the deities of Amano conscripted into the control of land. The temple’s dominance had become firmly institutionalized.

However, ideology can be a limiting concept to describe the phenomena, to the extent it can lead us to imagine ideas that exist on the level of abstract reason, divorced from the material, visionary and phenomenological realities of the world. The roles of deities and their attendant narratives in politics and society can be complicated by thinking of the dimensions of place and space. Deities and their narrative of the engi were braided into the land so much so that by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they seem to have preconditioned the political struggle in the regional society. This is not to say that deities and narratives were timeless, but the engi themes were tenacious in their hold of the regional landscape. Edifices that linked the social world to the realm of deities, such as the Shrine and Portrait Hall on the mountain and the Amano shrine down below, helped to merge the two worlds. These institutions were the loci of forging the

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226 Kuroda 1985, 84-100.
political relations. Just as monks on the mountain forged an *ichimi* at the Shrine to consolidate their power, the mountain ascetics formed their own *ichimi* at Amano and organized themselves to protect their property and spaces as they astutely navigated the tensions of the regional society. Peasant communes, too, were *ichimi* that organized themselves at their tutelary shrines.

From this perspective, the regional space was an aggregate of spaces held by diverse *ichimi* groups, which were semi-autonomous social units, each with its own locus. The mountain sat atop all of them and integrated them into its system of rule. In so doing, it balanced the allocation of duties and prerogatives among them to codify their spaces within the aggregate. But to achieve that, the mountain did not simply impose its will from above. Rather, there was a mutual imbrication of power between the mountain and the plains. By adjudicating conflicts on the plains, and by integrating new groups into its system, the mountain entrenched its power in the regional space and contained the diverse groups into its system of order.

While the mountain ascetics kept this basic structure intact, they expanded their space within the system. They did so by arbitrating conflicts and navigating the tension that revolved around the exploitation of peasants’ labour. But they went further. There is a document produced in 1434 that was co-signed by four ascetics and three peasant-representatives of reclaimed land. They signed in the capacity of “adjudicators of the time” (*toki no sata-nin* 時之沙汰人), indicating their marginal status in the officialdom. Evidently, peasants working the land were being heavily taxed by collectors from the mountain. The peasants, in turn, had been grieving to temple officials but to no avail. Under the leadership of a certain Ryōchi 良智, the ascetics intervened in the situation and brought the case to the mountain. They knew the annual custodian, and held an assembly with sixty-four members to discuss the issue. Then, the decision to reduce the tax was reached. Additionally, the document states that cups that were used to measure grains given up in tax were lost during the political disturbance in the previous year. The four persons, likely the same ascetics who co-signed the document, produced replacement cups, and validated them with their signature. Notably, the document was treated as follows:

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228 The reduction was the ending of a practice known as *mushiro-tsuki* 蓼付. According to Masaki Kisaburō, this was a method of measuring tax grain in which heaps of grain that overflowed from measuring cups were taken by collectors (*Kokushi daijiten*). The new tax law outlined in the co-signed document stipulated the end of this practice once and for all; scrapers (*tokaki* 斗掻) were to be used to measure grains more accurately. However, collectors were entitled to take ten percent in excess of the set-rate. But that must have been a sizable reduction in the amount collected from peasants.
Item: In case disruptions arise on the mountain or the plains, this document shall serve as proof (shishō支証) of the decision reached herein. For that, a copy is stored on the mountain and another copy is stored in the plains. The one in the plains bears the seal of the mountain.\(^{229}\)

The assumption revealed here is that the mountain codified tax laws and the mountain ascetics used that power-geometry to arbitrate the conflict between peasants in distress and collectors on the mountain. In spite of their relative marginal status, the mountain ascetics were becoming a notable public power in the region and their influence was becoming indispensable for the maintenance of the system. They also ran their own subtemples in Kōyasan. Even as the ichimi of the “entire mountain” dominated the temple space, it remained open to different groups. Later, the ascetics became seamlessly subsumed under the mantra of the “entire temple,” and began to control it, as we shall see.

### 2.8 Landholders’ Temple

The temple influenced social groups across class lines. However, given that the myth of the landlord deity was a leitmotif of its landscape, it reflected the will of the landholding strata. That myth, it may be said, mirrored the capturing of the mountain by the landed class, who transformed it into an institution that undergirded their properties and prerogatives.

Kōyasan in the late medieval era was a “confederation of landlords.”\(^{230}\) From our discussion, using the example of Tomobuchi, we might assume that the relationship between the temple and local landholding class in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was hostile. But in reality, the tension between the two had lessened considerably from the conflicts in the thirteenth century. Rival powerholders in the late thirteenth century were often labeled “evil leagues” (akuto悪党) as the temple sought to eliminate their influence through litigation, but at other times, the temple forged a tenuous alliance with them to fight off rival common foes.\(^{231}\) But by and large, by the turn of the fifteenth century, Kōyasan had achieved mastery over the regional

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\(^{229}\) The version of the document that I referenced was held by Kangaku-in at Kōyasan. It is probable that it is the document that Ryōchi left on the mountain. Kangaku-in documents 1-45 [KM1].

\(^{230}\) Atsuta 1992, 126.

space and those who continued to resist it, like the kumon at Tomobuchi, succumbed to the unrelenting power of ichimi.

But that did not mean that the local landed elites were weakened. Rather, they themselves entered the temple to take advantage of the system. According to Hongō Kazuto, the strata of local landholders that were often called tonobara in the area, faced pressure from peasants that undermined their prerogatives. Their challenge derived not only from the material strength of the peasants, but also the pattern of the land rights.

Examining Kōyasan’s land registers of the Nate estate, which was surveyed by Kōyasan in 1432, Hongō observes that both the shiki of “cultivator” and “landlord” were often scattered and crisscrossed beyond village boundaries. Cultivators, then, held their rights in land that belonged to different landlords. But no village fell under a single landlord. Landlords, including Kōyasan’s monks, subtemples and functionaries held their titles in different villages. The tonobara, who were also the typical landlords, tended to have titles in a certain village, but the plots they owned were cultivated by different cultivators. In crisscrossed arrangements of property and cultivation rights, landlords had to be careful. If they imposed excessive pressure on cultivators (not necessarily the holder of cultivation shiki, but also the actual tenant under those cultivators), other landlords would be agitated. But working with other landlords to consolidate their power—as the kokujin-landholding strata often did in other areas—would surely trigger a concerted attack by the Kōyasan ichimi. Becoming a vassal of the shugo, likewise, would have been a viable option in other areas. But as we saw with the example of the kumon of Tomobuchi, the duties and levies that entailed the vassalage could be detrimental to their power.

However, by joining the temple, the landholding strata could make use of its system of recirculation of the peasants’ surplus produce. In particular, Hongō points out that the system known as bunden shihai or “allocation of paddies (and fields),” allowed them to decouple themselves from the ground-level relation of production and exploitation without losing income from land. In this system, taxes in grain and money were collected from villages and went into the public coffer of the temple. Then it was allocated to the members of the temple society. For that, the temple issued “allocation tickets” (bunden kippu) to the formal

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232 Hongō 1986, 80.
234 Atsuta 1986; Hongō 1986, 74. Note that Atsuta’s original work on the bunden system of Kōyasan’s estate was first published in 1959, in Hisutoria 24.
members of the Kongōbuji’s system of land control including, of course, the members of the clerics. In this system, ticket holders received income from land with which they had no connection. Their land-based income was held through the medium of the temple, which bifurcated property rights. This was what was meant by the “retying” of land rights, which was achieved through the surveys.

But how were the surveys carried out? We have looked at the principles behind the surveys that were outlined in the 1384 ichimi-covenant. In practice, it seems that pragmatic factors dictated the implementation of policies. Hongō suggests that the group that carried out the surveys, called the “paddy allocators” (bunden-shu 分田衆), were formed by a group of influential Kōyasan monks who were locally prominent landholders. The group was called the small-assembly, which was a formal institution within the clerics. As Hongō points out, other monks had asked them to carry out the surveys in the early fifteenth century. They held the power to record land on the registry—or not. They were the ones who carried out the surveys and issued the allocation tickets.235

2.9 The Small-Assembly

The small-assembly was formed by approximately ten prominent subtemples at Kōyasan. The abbacy of these subtemples were held by local elite houses on a hereditary basis.236 The small-assembly seems to have appeared alongside the large-assembly, which referred to the assembly of the entire mass of clerics in the fourteenth century. At the onset, the small-assembly was intended to serve as an administrative body under the large-assembly, but as Wada Akio reminds us, the former soon took over the control of the temple as a whole.237 The late fourteenth and the early fifteenth century was likely a turning point in their ascension to power. By that time, the scope of their influence at the temple was far-reaching.

According to Nakamura Naoto, they controlled:

- the adjudication of disputes;
- policing and punishment of criminals;
- taxation;

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235 Hongō 1986, 77.
236 These houses sent their second sons to the mountain to run their subtemples, as will be mentioned later.
237 Wada 1959, 28-30.
land surveys;
rituals and
handling of documents.\textsuperscript{238}

In short, they were at the core of the temple’s power and governed the regional space.

Where, then, did the small-assembly fit into the temple society? Their place in the temple needs to be considered in light of the rhetoric of the “entire mountain” that was at the forefront of the temple’s political power. In spite of the ritualized unity of everyone at the mountain, the temple collective in reality was a complex organization. And the small-assembly was among the many ichimi-units that formed the Kongōbuji organization. How were they able to hold the power to run the temple polity?

Simply put, the temple could not rule the plains without the leverage of the regional elites. Tax income sustained the temple and force was needed to impose order. The small-assembly monks and their families made that possible with their influence. With that, the interests of the temple and local elites were one. The small-assembly monks penetrated the kernel of the temple’s power and subsumed themselves under the ichimi of the “entire mountain.” On this, Hongō’s interpretation is compelling. For him, the small-assembly imposed their will upon the temple as a whole. That is, the ichimi of the “entire mountain” was not a wholehearted and harmonious ichimi, but a coerced unity under the sway of a league of powerful landlords.

We can discover more about who the small-assembly monks were and how they became part of the temple society through the following helpful account. Note that this is a genealogical narrative of the small-assembly that was likely written long after their rise to prominence. But it reflects the organic link between local powerholders and the temple in the late medieval era.

The period under the reign of Emperor Gomurakami (of the Southern Court, r. 1339-1368) was tumultuous. Bandits attacked and looted the temple, which caused great dismay for the clerics. To protect the temple, the clerics consulted twenty-five warlords of the province and asked them to send their second sons to Kōyasan. Large mansions were given to them at the temple and myriad matters of the mountain were entrusted to them. Then, with “the power of the ichimi of the mountain and the plains,” bandits and

\textsuperscript{238} Nakamura 2001, 64.
Evil deeds were suppressed. Because the shue (or small-assembly members) handled the administrative duties of the mountain and the plains, each of their subtemples was given a landholding of 1,000 koku.239

As we see here, the shue or small-assembly members were cognizant of their identity as sons of locally prominent warriors who enforced order and protected the temple. For that, the ichimi unity of the mountain and the plains was necessary. And that unity entailed the handling of “myriad matters of the mountain,” which came with a sizable reward in the form of land rights that were granted to the mansions on the mountain, or the subtemple that they occupied. In other words, they entrenched themselves in the aggregate of duties and prerogatives at the temple, but their prerogative was considerably more than what other member of the temple society were entitled to. And this was due to the critical nature of their functions, which sustained the temple.

Significantly, “second sons” were sent to the mountain. What this tells is that first sons inherited and ran the houses in the plains, just as the houses secured property through the subtemples on the mountain. This kind of intimate connection between houses and subtemples was part of a durable relationship that was found in many temples in Japan. In the case of Kōfukuji in the late medieval and early modern era, the system was called satomoto 里元 and teramoto 寺元, which can be rendered as “base-house.”240 At the Negoro-dera, for instance, it is known that local elite houses built subtemples which, in turn, were used for lucrative money-lending activities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.241 At Kōyasan, it is likely that the subtemples were used for moneylending as well, but this aspect requires more examination.

What is certain is that the subtemples were used by local elites in their pursuit of power and wealth. In that regard, subtemples were essential to the operation of the household enterprises. Hatakama Kazuhiro has observed with the case of Kōfukuji in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, base-houses asserted great influence over the temple during that time, and the subtemples and halls that they held within Kōfukuji were regarded as the property of those houses.242 A similar point could be made with Kōyasan. In the late medieval period, the temple was sustained through an organic link with the structures of regional society. Just as the temple

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239 KSF vol.4 scroll 43, 904. Note koku is a unit of rice. One koku is roughly 180 metric litres.
240 Hatakama 1994. For the intricacy of local houses and temples in medieval and early modern period, see Yoshii 1984.
241 Miura 1981, 355-64.
extended its control of the plains, it was embraced by the powerholders in the plains and could not exist without them.

2.10 Conflict and Order

In this manner, the temple was a focal point of the regional political contest. It is not surprising then that open conflict erupted at the precinct. In 1433, in an incident known as the “disturbance of Eikyō,” a group of sixers, along with “people of the land” and “mountain people,” launched a massive attack on the temple that left major sections of the precinct in ashes and dozens dead. Demands for Tokusei or debt cancellation were invoked by the sixers; usurious moneylending terms by privileged monks must have been a factor.

When things settled, it was the clerics who prevailed. They held an ichimi assembly in 1439 which formalized the return to the mountain of rebels. Condemning the sixers for staging their revolt just when warriors in the province were mobilized for duties in other provinces, the covenant states that they were permitted to return because they vowed never to disobey the clerics. But it also reinstated other rules. Estate officials who disobeyed temple orders were to be punished impartially; the same penalty applied to peasants who neglected their tax dues. Moreover, in accordance with the “great law of the realm” (tenka no taihō), vendetta by the master of a victim was endorsed. This was intended to prevent the harbouring of rancor, for pent-up vengeance was more disruptive than straight revenge.

The rule on the vendetta warrants a comment, both to imagine the kind of society Kōyasan ruled and to consider the significance of the clerics’ power as the entity that proclaimed the covenant which in effect was law.

Katsumata Shizuo suggests that duelling to resolve fights was commonly sanctioned in laws issued by the so-called Sengoku daimyo who ruled regional polities in the late medieval era. Importantly, as Katsumata elucidates, such a law should be understood not as rulers’ assent to violence that was originally prohibited.

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244 For the hawkish moneylending practices, and the so-called tokusei-ikki in which those who suffered from mounting debt demanded debt cancellation and launched an attack on moneylenders in Kyoto in the fifteenth century, see Gay 2001; Tanaka 1981.
245 Katsumata 1976.
246 Ibid., 197.
On the contrary, it was a measure to control the scale of violence which was commonplace on the local level. Rulers did not monopolize violence. We must account for the socio-psychological context of the time. According to Katsumata, private revenge ruled in the medieval era; this was related to the widespread ethos of self-realization. Actions of the people of the time can bewilder the modern mind with their “hypersensitivity to personal insult, their potential for explosive anger,” and their impulse to act upon “instinct for violent conflict.” To be sure, rulers had judicial systems to arbitrate conflicts, but those represented one of the viable avenues to resolve conflicts. The use of force, by and large, was deemed to be a legitimate means to resolve conflicts and protect one’s rights and honour. Additionally, social collectives of the time were tightly bound by intense cameraderie. Offence to a member was tantamount to offence to his or her cohort. Therefore, it was not unusual for a fight to escalate into a cycle of revenge between the members of the collectives to which the original adversaries belonged, or even wars between warlords.

Like the practice of duelling, the legalization of vendetta was intended to curb the vicious spiral of violence. Interestingly, the clerics’ law stated that when death occurred as a result of a fight, there would be no investigation of its cause. In other words, the clerics, as the rulers of the region, vowed to abstain from arbitrating fights. Instead, they codified the formal procedure for restoring normalcy after the disruption caused by a brawl-related death. The killing of the enemy was the preferred method. But if the enemy had fled, then the victim’s comrades were to find the family of the enemy and do something with their head—that something being indecipherable due to the damage on the document. But if the enemy had no family or relatives, then a surrogate called geshinin 下手人 (also written 解死人 or 下死人) was to be sent by the enemy’s collective. The practice of handing over a geshinin was fairly standard from the Kamakura period. In this respect, Kōyasan’s law on the vendetta was not unusual in the broad social context of the time. The clerics were presiding over a society in which “blood could only be cleansed by blood,” and governed like any other ruler in the period.

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247 The quotes are taken from a translation of a section of Katsumata 1976 in de Bary, et al. 2001, 422.
248 On the geshinin, see Katsumata 1976, 171.
249 The assumption behind this was that conflicts were settled when two sides suffered equally. Eventually, the Sengoku daimyo used this logic to ban private fights altogether in the law known as kenka-ryōseibai 喧嘩両成敗. Under it, both parties of fights were punished equally, regardless of their cause, normally by death. The purpose of this law was not simply to prevent fights, but to enforce the resolution of conflicts of interest through warlord rulers’ judicature. This, precisely, was the logic that Toyotomi Hideyoshi used to demand total peace under his hegemonic authority as he unified the country in the late sixteenth century. Takagi 1990, 14.
How, then, did the clerics’ establish such a law? Not surprisingly, the covenant concluded by evoking myriad deities, including “all the great and small deities of Japan,” “Kōbō Daishi,” and “especially the two landlord myōjin.” They were sure to punish anyone who violated the decisions outlined in the covenant. But notably, it included the following items:

Item (5): Those who inherit the clerics’ subtemples must add their signature to this covenant and follow the rules in perpetuity.

Item (6): The original of this covenant shall be deposited in the Portrait Hall. A copy (anmon) shall be displayed during the Rites of the Four Seasons.250

At the end of the day, the hallowed landscape of the temple, based on the engi, underpinned the power of the Kōyasan ichimi to rule the region.

2.11 The Mountain and Order

From the mid fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries, Kōyasan reproduced itself by absorbing the contradictions of the regional society. Being a site of deities where monks ruled through rituals, it was a ceremonial centre, but the role that it played in influencing the social relations of the region was complex. The temple reinforced the interests of the landed class. Yet it was shaped by the aspirations of various groups to survive and prosper. With relations over land being “tied” at the mountain, the mountain presided at the pinnacle of regional space. But the force to “tie” those relations did not come down from the mountain alone. Instead, there was a mutual imbrication of power from the temple above and the plains below to co-produce order in the region under the higher authority of the mountain. As the temple’s power based upon the legend was established, an orthopraxis of power dictated that no one held power or land in the region without the mediation of the temple.

This was a period of social volatility and documents that we perused are vestiges of the systematic efforts to keep the social disruption and chaos at bay. As we saw in the previous chapter, the will of the “entire mountain” was to take a full control of land rights in the region. To that end, monks carried out their land surveys that codified the relationship between production and exploitation. They recorded on the land register the names of landlords and

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250 Hōkanshū 37–443 [KM1].
cultivators for each plot of land in the estates, each of whom had his or her prerogative and or
duty guaranteed by the temple’s legal power.

But for decades they could not carry out the surveys due to their relative weakness. When
the temple’s agents did finally survey the land, it was a result of conflicts between peasants and
local warrior magnates. The latter tried to secure their prerogatives with ties to the Muromachi
government, and bled peasants dry with levies and corvée. The peasants, in turn, fought back.
But a better strategy was to seek the temple’s intervention to check their opponents’ influence.
The principal concern for the temple, on the other hand, was that peasants paid their dues and
that estate officials remained loyal to the temple and did not overstep their bounds.

The means to achieve that was by adjudicating the conflicts between them. This, in turn,
allowed the temple to establish its status as the public power that held the regional society
together through its legal authority. It also collected taxes from the peasants to operate the temple
and allocate the material boons to its members.

The estate officials who threatened the temple came from the same strata as those who
benefitted the most from it. Landlords’ right to collect from peasants was assured by the surveys,
but prominent families in the region sent their sons to the mountain and took over the temple’s
administration. In other areas, it was typical for local landed warriors to forge an *ikki* league
among themselves and establish a regional hegemony. But in the region near Kōyasan, they
assembled at the temple on the mountain to secure their shared interests. It would have been
dangerous for them to forge an *ikki* league apart from the temple. However, entering the temple
allowed them to overcome the threats posed to their land rights by peasants. The land surveys
bifurcated property and landlords could divorce themselves from the ground-level relations of
production without losing the prerogative to collect by becoming part of the highest landlord of
the region. Those in the lower-echelon of the stratified society also benefitted from taking part in
the temple’s system. The so-called ascetics were of peasant origin and adroitly navigated the
tension over land and peasants’ labour to consolidate their own property and influence. All this
made the mountain’s authority unshakable and the temple’s power pervaded the regional space
to codify property allocation.

In assessing the historical significance of the fourteenth century, the medieval historian,
Jeffrey Mass, has suggested that it was this century, not the late twelfth, that marked a break
from the past to usher in the medieval.251 Mass argued that the Kamakura shogunate had an agenda similar to that of the courtiers in Kyoto. They both sought to maintain the existing social system that was built upon the “scaffolding” of the shiki.252 But in the fourteenth century, economic development, social mobility, and that century’s war, coupled with the growing prominence of the use of force to resolve conflicts shattered assumptions and existing systems. The new era was characterized by uncertainty and disorder. For Mass, the monetization of the economy and the commodification of shiki were critical factors that eroded order. His is an exciting schema to consider the broad pattern of social change at the time. Mass’s observation highlights a widespread socio-political trend on the national level; the underlining message speaks to the decline of the estate system. In the face of that trend, however, Kōyasan had a robust system of order which had been painstakingly built upon the “scaffolding” of shiki and property.

The temple retained its estates and consolidated power as a regional agrarian polity. How was that possible?

What we have witnessed is a period of dynamic social intercourse with the environment, suffused as it was with numinous power. Underneath the scaffolding of shiki and property at Kōyasan was the geographical entity of the mountain, which absorbed the tensions of the regional society and churned out order. Society had to organize itself around land. Once the engi-based proprietorship was established, there was nothing apart from the mountain that could serve as the linchpin for the regional societal formation. The regional society, with all of its contradictions, had come to form a systematized whole under the authority of the mountain.

The rebellion of the sixers was no religious conflict, but a cry from those distressed by overbearing and systematic inequality. They defied those who reaped wealth from it. And when things settled down, they had to return to the mountain because only it assured their space, as constrained as it may have been. They were not resisting the mountain, but the ways in which social relations were established—much to their detriment.

The documents that we examined provided some of the figurative frames and joints that reveal the structure for the highly pressurized space that emerged in an organic relationship with the regional landscape. The documents issued by the mountain codified the spaces and territories

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that were held by various groups across class lines. This co-produced a three-dimensional zone that emerged atop a geography steeped in legends. The contests that converged at the mountain centred on the allocation of property and space. What empowered the temple to take control of that allocation was the social interaction with the sacred. The “entire mountain” was a highly institutionalized yet ephemeral entity that fused monks and deities. At its core was a group of privileged men who forged a tight unity through the medium of deities on the mountain to take control of the regional space.

Interestingly, the social tensions in the region, including the one between the temple and local landholding class that had competed with one another, did not undermine the grip of the plains by the mountain. By resolving conflict, the monks codified territorial allocation between different groups to embed their power into the political life of the plains. Their authority over the land was backstopped by legal pronouncements from rulers in the capital. Thus they could assert a comprehensive proprietorship of the land. It paved the way for those in the plains to take full advantage of the system for their own ends. The mountain and the plains dynamically embraced one another to make the hegemony of the temple unshakable. The temple could not carry out the land surveys without the consent of peasants and the support of powerful landlords. By absorbing such a paramount contradiction in its sacred landscape, the mountain entrenched its power in the region to establish a late medieval social system that was to endure until the emergence of the early modern state.

How, then, did the fluid power dynamics of the region, evinced by the expanding influence of the ascetics, influence the political development of Kōyasan and the regional space in the subsequent era? Is my assessment of the mountain ascetics tenable over a longer span of history? And how did the fraught and contentious nature of the regional space develop itself at the tail end of the medieval era? These are the questions that we shall explore next.
Three: Kōyasan in the Sixteenth Century

This chapter looks at the structure of Kōyasan’s space in the sixteenth century, prior to 1585. That was the year when the temple submitted to the unified regime of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. This brought fundamental changes to the temple and the regional space. Needless to say, to understand that change, it is essential to grapple with what had preceded it. Without grasping the logics and dynamics at the temple and the region in the pre-H ideyoshi era, it would be impossible to assess the impacts of the unification. Yet, to my knowledge, there is no study that examines the dynamics of power at Kōyasan in the sixteenth century, prior to 1585.

But certainly, the period is rich and important enough to warrant a full exploration in its own right. Fortuitously, Kōyasan’s documents can shed light on some of the complexities of the period. These documents offer glimpses of how people strove to manage power relations and organize their space at a politically powerful temple during the closing phase of Japan’s medieval era, known as the Sengoku era (ca. 1467-1573). For that reason, this chapter addresses some key questions. Given the political volatility of the period when competing power-blocs of warriors and religious and regional leagues staked out their power and territory against one another, how did the temple maintain its power and the control of the region? What had changed in Kōyasan from the early fifteenth century to the late sixteenth century? And what had not? Did the unity of ichimi and the construction of authority through discussion and unanimous consent of the temple collective still prevail as the ruling force? What diversity and tensions affected the power structure at Kōyasan? Did the sacred landscape still serve as the source of divine authority and order for the regional space?

To answer these questions, I will examine the documents of two groups that we encountered in the previous chapter: the ascetics and the small-assembly monks. Allow me to highlight the key features of these groups. The small-assembly were abbots of approximately ten subtemples of the clerics. They were invariably the sons of prominent landholding warrior elites of the regional society. They had taken hold of the administrative function of the temple as a whole by the turn of the fifteenth century. The so-called ascetics, on the other hand, refers to a relatively humble status group that was situated below and outside the elite group of the clerics, yet were constitutive members of the Kongōbuji organization. There were various functional

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groups within the status category of the ascetics, such as the mountain ascetics, hall-group and the sixers. We have seen how the mountain ascetics gained power and influence within Kōyasan’s political system in the fifteenth century, through their prowess in managing estates on the ground-level.

3.1 The Ascetics as Usurpers?

As I mentioned earlier, there are critical historiographical issues to acknowledge when dealing with the ascetics. One of them is the scant historical sources of the ascetics. Second, the ascetics constitute an elusive group that has been reified based on the early modern structures of the temple society. And third, the conflict between the ascetics and clerics in the seventeenth century has conditioned the narrative of these status groups in profound ways. The so-called “three factions of Kōya,” which may be better rendered as “three status groups of Kōya,” is an analytical model of the social history of Kōyasan that is essentially based on the narrative developed by the clerics (or better known as “scholar monks”=gakuryo, in the early modern era), who eventually prevailed over the ascetics through the arbitration of the Tokugawa shogunate. In short, the model is an elite-centric account that frames the ascetics as usurpers who overstepped their bounds, only to be forced into their proper place after long legal battles in the seventeenth century. But because the clerics finally prevailed after a lengthy and bitter rivalry, there is scant documentation that has survived that represents the voices of the ascetics. Historical accounts of Kōyasan are largely centred upon the clerics. We must assume a profound bias in the description of the clerics’ perennial antagonists.

Indeed, the historical inquiry of the ascetics is further confounded by the complex diachronic change of the temple, obscured by the status politics during the Tokugawa era that has irreversibly conditioned what research can be done at the temple. I will not get into the complexity of the issue, but it seems to me that at the core of the issue is the idea of usurpation, which, in medieval parlance, would be rendered as gekokujō 下剋上 or the “low overcoming the high.” In other words, the key to understanding the role and significance of the ascetics is

255 I will touch on this later.
257 Kaiei’s Kōya shunjū, printed in 1719, is a comprehensive history of Kōyasan up to his time. As Kaiei states it, the purpose of writing the book was to celebrate the clerics’ victory.
couched in how we assess _gekokujō_. In the previous chapter, I suggested that the increasing influence of the mountain ascetics constituted a _gekokujō_, but that this did not necessarily mean chaos and disorder; they served to maintain order and the existing system. We shall explore this perspective further in this chapter, but in doing so, let us bear in mind that _gekokujō_, unsurprisingly, was a term used by the elites who were threatened by the growing influence of those deemed to be below them in the established social hierarchy.\textsuperscript{259} To be sure, I have not come across the term _gekokujō_ in documents of Kōyasan, but this mentality was ingrained in the minds of the clerics by the turn of the seventeenth century. One clearly sees this attitude in the following passage from the clerics’ 1601 petition sent to the magistrates under Tokugawa Ieyasu:

…since eighty years ago, the mountain ascetics (_yamabushi-kata_) have been handling the various administrative matters of the mountain (_yamano shosata_ 山の諸沙汰). Just which son of heaven or shogun bestowed upon them the various functions (_shiki_) of the mountain? None. But they killed off the envoy of venerable Nobunga and killed many samurai in the areas around the monastery and took their land. And on the mountain they rebelled against the clerics. They decimated the small-assembly and a group called the middle custodians (_naka-gata azukari_) to take their _shiki_. Is it not through these forceful means that they have come to hold the various _shiki_ of the mountain?\textsuperscript{260}

The image that looms large here is the association with chaos and violence. That is precisely how the clerics represented the ascetics to the Tokugawa authorities in the context of a pressing dispute. But it also reveals that in spite of the alleged usurpation, the mountain ascetics were apparently handling the administrative matters (_sata_ 沙汰) of the mountain.

The passage, of course, must be taken with a grain of salt. It was produced in the context of the status politics of ca. 1600, for the sole purpose of discrediting the ascetics’ prerogatives in the context of a law suit. To understand the political dynamics of Kōyasan prior to its subjugation to the unified state, it is essential to examine the sources from that time and recover the administrative practice of the period. The question is, who or what operated the temple in the sixteenth century and how did they manage it?

\textsuperscript{259} Ebara 2003, 9.
\textsuperscript{260} Yūzokuhōkanshū 118-1881 [KM8].
These questions should be considered in light of Ike Susumu’s point on the ruling power of regional societies during the transition from the medieval to the early modern era which conventionally is marked by the unification in the late sixteenth century. His view, which echoes a recent trend in the history of regional society during the transitional period, is that regional powers should be considered as a form of “public” power in their own right. Previously, it was assumed that power simply dominated society in a top-down manner. Ike and other scholars were stimulated by Fujiki Hisashi’s reassessment of the relationship between power and society during the transitional era. He suggested that rulers had to attain consent and legitimacy to exercise their power. For that, Ike argues, it was especially important for regional rulers to maintain peace and order and resolve disputes. The ichimi of the clerics and the “entire mountain” that we saw in previous chapters can be said to have performed such a role in the regional society in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

In sixteenth century Kōyasan, who or what exercised this kind of power? Clues to the answer might be found in Ike’s line of interpretation. We can bring into the conversation the records of Kōyasan to better situate Kōyasan’s experiences in the broader sociopolitical context of the time.

In the following, I will argue that the ascetics formed the public power at Kōyasan while acting as the masters of the regional space. This argument is premised on the understanding that the office that was called the sōbun administrative office of Kongōbuji (sōbun satasho 懇分沙汰所) was formed mainly or mostly by monks of the ascetic status. The sōbun may be translated as a “thing of the commune,” and it is assumed to be the ascetics’ office in existing works, but more critical reflection is required.

I will discuss the viability of the sōbun’s link with the ascetics by examining the documents it issued. As I argue, the sōbun office replaced the clerics as the core of the temple’s power and it was not simply the administrative office of the ascetics as has been assumed, but of the entire temple and the regional society. In other words, the sōbun stood above and beyond the different status groups that co-existed in the regional space. The nature of the sōbun’s power was to manage the aggregate of duties and prerogatives that was institutionalized at the temple.

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261 Ike 2004, 1-2
262 For example, Ōta 2008; Wada 1976b; Kuroda 1985.
263 Ōta 2008; Wada 1976b.
They also codified socioeconomic relations in the region to create stability. The sōbun exercised power based on the principle of ichimi, but the role of deities and the sacred was weakened relative to the preceding century. Nevertheless, the deities remained at the core of the temple’s political power and the sacred landscape of the mountain remained the locus of regional social order.

At the same time, the power of the sōbun was not comprehensive; there was diffusion in the power structure of the temple’s space. Contrary to the clerics’ claim in the above petition that the small-assembly had been decimated, small-assembly subtemples continued to assert considerable power and influence at the temple and the region; they existed alongside the sōbun as key nodes of power. Kōyasan’s space was diverse and marked by heterogeneity; there was likely little or no intent on the part of the sōbun to take control of all social relations at the temple.

Before examining documents related to sōbun, a consideration of the following problem is due: if the sōbun was organized primarily by the ascetics as I am proposing, how did the ascetics rise to power? Unfortunately, to my knowledge, there is no record that tells us exactly when and how they took control of the temple. A possible turning point was the great fire of 1521 that destroyed much of the precinct. It is possible that the ascetics assumed greater roles in the temple society as it recovered from the ruins of the fire. That would correspond with the statement in the clerics’ 1601 petition that the ascetics had been taking control of administrative functions at the temple for eighty years. However, there is no document to attest to this. On the other hand, Ōta Naoyuki has suggested that the itinerant kanjin fundraising monks played crucial roles in the repair of the temple buildings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These kanjin monks were considered neither clerics nor ascetics.

Another factor to consider is the production and use of firearms. As we will see, the sōbun commanded force, and deployed sizable firepower. It is quite likely that the ascetics had an edge over the clerics in terms of coercive force. The nearby Negoro-dera was well-known for making effective muskets and according to Frois, the fighting men of Negoro were well-trained in the use of muskets and arrows. Similar to Kōyasan, local magnates entered the Negoro-dera. Koyama Yasunori has observed that in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the number

264 KSF, vol. 4, scroll 3 (clerics), 63.
265 Ōta 2008, 288-316.
266 Historia de Japan, 155.
of subtemples of Negoro increased markedly.\textsuperscript{267} Most of the new subtemples were built by local landholding magnates (\textit{dogō} 土豪) who controlled the subtemples on a hereditary basis. Notably, the new subtemples belonged to the ascetics, not the \textit{gakushu} 学衆 or scholar monks, who were Negoro’s counterpart to Kōyasan’s clerics.

Among those magnates was Tsuda who built the Sugi-no-bō 杉ノ坊 subtemple at Negoro. Tsuda specialized in the production of firearms. Their early modern genealogical tale (\textit{yuisho} 由緒) says that their ancestor, named Jiyūsai, had a mysterious dream in 1544 which instructed him to go to Tanegashima. That is where musket is said to have been introduced to Japan by the Portuguese. He followed the dream, and sure enough, he acquired a musket at Tanegashima.\textsuperscript{268} That was how the Tsuda lineage of gunmaking began, according to the genealogy.

The case of the Tsuda and Sugi-no-gō is suggestive of the militant power of the ascetics of Negoro, which, no doubt, was sustained by local warrior-like elites.\textsuperscript{269} We can presume a similar link between ascetics and force at Kōyasan. However, I have not located any document that provides concrete data on the production of firearms at Kōyasan, or possible \textit{satomoto} links between ascetics and warrior houses. It should be noted that martial power at Kōyasan was held not only by the ascetics but also the clerics. As we will see, some small-assembly monks were renowned for their martial prowess in the late sixteenth century, and it is quite possible that they had muskets as well.

In my view, the main factor for the ascetics’ rise to power was the nature of the clerics as an exclusive club of “noble men.” There was likely a cap in the size of its membership as well. However, those who did not meet the criteria to join the clerics could still be part of the Kōyasan society. They could be “ascetics,” though it remains to be seen if the ascetics organized themselves in a group that called itself the ascetics. It is quite possible that prior to the seventeenth century, the term, “ascetic” was more a broad category for a range of social groups than a named organization.

\textsuperscript{267} Koyama 1998, 128-35.
\textsuperscript{268} Tsuda house documents \textit{[KMk7-336]}.
\textsuperscript{269} However, we should not assume that the clerics (\textit{gakushu}) of Negoro were powerless. Kaizu Ichirō suggests that the clerics were in control of the temple in the early fifteenth century. He also thinks that the tendency to assume a clear divide between the ascetics and the clerics, and to emphasize the dominant power of the former in late medieval Negoro, is related to the developments within the temple in the early modern era. This is when the clerics tried to organize the temple society under their authority. Indeed, it is quite possible that after the unification, the clerics condemned the ascetics for their warrior-like behaviour which resulted in the destruction of the monastery. See Kaizu 2013, 222-23, 233.
However, I would stress that being an ascetic was not disadvantageous in the sixteenth century. The clerics may have commanded more prestige, and they held prerogatives over ritual and scholastic matters. But with the ethos of “self-realization” that characterized the period, the criteria for power was not ritual, scholastic prowess or status, but ability on the administrative front. Being an ascetic posed no hindrance to power. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the ascetics gained power within the temple through their administrative skills. That trend likely continued into the latter part of the fifteenth century and the sixteenth, when they had taken hold of the administration of the temple as a whole. Kōyasan’s organizational structure and the inner distribution of power changed and diversified as it absorbed people of diverse backgrounds into its space.

3.2 The Sōbun

In 1584, Tokugawa Ieyasu sent a letter to Kōyasan.

[Should you] supply 500 muskets and display loyalty [to me], a 20,000 koku of land in the Izumi province shall be conferred [to you] and the holy men (hijiri) of your mountain shall [continue to wayfare] without problems.

Tenshō 12, ninth month, thirteenth day

Ieyasu (signature)

Kōyasan
Sōbun members
Kongōbuji
Sōbun members

At the time, Ieyasu was at war against Toyotomi Hideyoshi at Nagakute and sought muskets from Kōyasan in return for land and the protection of its holy men on the road. In 1578, Oda Nobunaga carried out an atrocious mass murder of Kōya holy men when the temple refused to submit to his demands. One account has it that Nobunaga killed 1,383 holy men who were in the Kinai area.\(^\text{271}\) The document shows that the temple was among the players in the power struggles

\(^{270}\) Kōzanji documents [KMK4-91].
\(^{271}\) Gorai 1975, 268.
of the time. But our concern is the fact that the letter addressed an entity called the *sōbun* members (*sōbun-chū* 惣分中) of Kōyasan as well as that of Kongōbuji. Why did he address two *sōbun*? Were there two separate *sōbun*? The answer, I think, is that Ieyasu did not know who he was dealing with, but he knew that Kōyasan was governed by a *sōbun*. With the temple’s collective administration, its structure was opaque and ambiguous to outsiders.

Similarly, Nobunaga’s correspondence with Kōyasan addressed the *sōbun*.²⁷² Needless to say, these warlords addressed the temple collective rather than individual monks, because the temple polity was governed by the collective. We can also establish that the *sōbun* played diplomatic functions with outside powers.

Atsuta Kō’s succinct sketch of the organizational structure of the temple organizations of the Kii province of Kōyasan, Negoro-dera and Kokawa-dera provides a useful point of reference to consider the place of *sōbun* in Kōyasan’s space.²⁷³ According to him, the temple organizations had two broad status groupings that specialized in 1) rituals and studies and 2) defence and the administration of land. The former was typically called *gakushu* or *gakuryo*, which meant scholar monks, and they were also known as *shuto* or clerics. The latter was called *gyōnin* or ascetics. But each of these was composed of multiple sub-groups that administered themselves through their own assemblies and which were organized under the assemblies of the two groupings as a whole. But above them was the “assembly of the entire temple” (*manji shue* 満寺集会), which acted as the highest public power of the temple that embodied the “will of the entire mountain” (*issan no ishi*). There were leaders with influence, but because the lateral principle was robust, the temples were administered collectively and everyone was bound to the decision made by the assembly of the “entire temple.”²⁷⁴

At Kōyasan, the “entire mountain” and “entire temple” were used almost synonymously and as we saw, that represented the highest authority at the temple in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But regarding the structure of the late medieval Negoro-dera, Atsuta and Koyama suggest that the *sōbun* of the Negoro-dera represented the ascetics, which held the military power. They further posit that there was a higher assembly called the “assembly of the entire temple” (*manji small-assembly* 満寺集会) that stood above and beyond the ascetics and the

²⁷² *Ekō-in documents* [KMK4-548].
clerics. In this vein, the sōbun of Kōyasan seems to be understood as the office on the ascetics’ side of a divided internal order.

Why is the sōbun understood as the office of the ascetics? It is because the early modern ascetics called themselves the sōbun and their office the sōbun administrative office. With that, the assumption seems to be that the sōbun before and after the temple’s transformation under the unified state referred to the same thing. I think this this assumption is mostly valid, but the problem is that the roles of the pre-unification sōbun have not been examined carefully. As a result, the power structure of Kōyasan in the late sixteenth century remains unclear, which has also obscured the transformation that followed in the subsequent decades.

But the ambiguity of the sōbun as an office derives from the meaning of the term itself. Literally, sōbun means the “thing of the sō,” and sō, according to Nihon kokugo daijiten, means “everything, all things and the whole” (subete no mono, arayuru mono, zentai すべてのもの。あらゆるもの。全体). Kuroda Hiroko, a medieval peasant specialist, defines sō as self-governing organizations that were recognized as public in the late medieval era. While the sō is most commonly associated with peasant communes (sōson 惣村), wards, counties, provinces, temples and status groups administered themselves by forming sō organizations. All in all, sō was a grass-roots public entity that may have been more relatable and meaningful to medieval people than the other term for public, kō 公, which has received more historiographical attention.

3.3 The “Eight Fortunes” Seal

Fortunately, there is an unmistakable clue that allows us to confirm that certain documents were issued by the sōbun administrative office. A special seal can be seen in the microfilm copies of the manuscripts of the Kōyasan monjo edited by the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University, which derives from the Treasure Manuscripts Series at Kōyasan. The seal was used by the office when it issued documents, and consisted of sinographs “eight” 八 and “fortune” 吉 enclosed in a double-line square borders. The seal is only seen in the

275 Koyama 1998, 133.
276 KSF vol. 5 (ascetics).
277 Nihon rekishi daijiten.
278 For example, Ikegami 2005.
microfilm copies that are made available through the Historiographical Institute’s online database of historical documents. The book version of the Kōyasan monjo in which documents are transcribed shows the seal simply as “black seal” (kokūin 黒印).

Documents bearing this seal were issued by the sō bun office, which I suggest was organized principally by the ascetics for the following reasons: The first is that they lack the signature of the “three secretariats,” the distinctive mark of the clerics’ documents. Instead of those signatures, the seal served to authenticate the documents. These include documents that were issued to the annual custodian and the clerics. Given the nature of the documents bearing the seal, they were issued by a public office that stood above different status groups and there simply is no other viable organization that would have held that kind of power aside from the ascetics. This is not to suggest that the clerics were entirely excluded from the sō bun. Their role in the sō bun is uncertain, but it is clear enough that the sō bun was a separate office from the clerics, while the latter continue to operate their own collective.

The second reason for my assessment of the identity of the sō bun has to do with how the documents were preserved. There are very few sō bun documents bearing the seal and those that I have identified were kept not by the issuer but by the recipient as proof documents. It may sound odd to expect the issuer to keep copies of the documents it issued. But the clerics archived the documents they issued in their manuscript system since this was necessary for administrative purposes. If the “eight fortunes” documents were issued by the clerics, it is natural to assume that more of the type would be included in the Kōyasan monjo. Instead, the “eight fortunes” documents that have survived are those that were kept by the recipients. Given the temple’s manuscript culture, the sō bun (the ascetics), too, likely had a manuscript system in which the documents it issued were stored. Without it, the sō bun probably could not claim the legitimacy to rule. But the documents may have been lost or destroyed during the critical junctures of ascetics’ history. In 1692, when 627 ascetics were exiled by the Tokugawa shogunate for adamantly

279 Historiographical Institute, The University of Tokyo, http://wwwap.hi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ships/db.html.
280 Maeda Masaaki has made a note of this seal, but the sō bun documents bearing this seal do not appear to have been examined and discussed in existing studies. Maeda 2010.
281 It will be noted that there is a volume in the Kōyasan monjo edited by Kongōbuji that features documents related to ascetics: KMK4. But most of the 552 documents in that volume are those that ascetics received and kept, not documents that were issued by them. In fact, it only features one document that was issued by the sō bun. While it may appear to indicate that the ascetics did not keep the documents they issued, I would suggest otherwise. In my view, the lack of the sō bun-issued documents in that volume likely reflects both the preservation of the ascetics’ documents after the Meiji turn and/or the selection during the editing process of the aforementioned version of Kōyasan monjo.
refusing to kowtow to its ruling.\textsuperscript{282} Nearly two centuries later, in 1869, the Meiji government abolished the “three factions” system at Kōyasan and the head temples of the respective groups of the Seiganji and Kōzanji were forced to merge and become the Kongōbuji, the current head temple.\textsuperscript{283}

With that in mind, let us turn to sōbun documents. Based on the documents that I examined, in the late sixteenth century, the sōbun-issued laws, controlled land in the plains, taxed peasants, commanded force, settled disputes and handled diplomacy with outside powers.

### 3.4 Sōbun, Temple Duties and Laws

An early example of sōbun document is a five-item law (sadame 定) dated Bunmei 9 (1477).

Lamentably, the temple duties that have been established in ancient times are being neglected in recent years. In particular, the penalty for absence must be imposed in accordance with precedents, but this has not been the case. This is unpardonable. From here onward, the precedents of the temple-house must be followed without playing favourites.\textsuperscript{284}

The document does not state to whom it was addressed, but it was likely a set of rules that monks established for themselves. The key phrase here is temple duties (jiyaku 寺役). Just what these duties entailed is not clarified, but they likely referred to rituals. More important is the logic behind it: the various groups that made up the temple collective were allotted formal duties to perform, which were vital to the maintenance of the temple-house. Apart from those duties, monks may have operated their own substtemples and pursued their own “private” endeavours, but to the extent that they were part of the formal organization of the temple-house, it was necessary that they attend dutifully to their formal roles. Here, the sōbun was acting as the authority that managed the aggregate of duties and prerogatives. It was demanding that groups not neglect their formal duties. The mention of the penalty tells us that duties were often neglected and there was

\textsuperscript{282} Tsuji 1970c (kinsei 3). 59.
\textsuperscript{283} Koyachoshi hensan iinkai 2009.10.
\textsuperscript{284} Kangaku-in Documents 1-49 [KMK1].
a need for a public authority that demanded obedience from all members. This was the role that the sōbun played.

In the same law, the sōbun stated that taxes (nengu 年貢) must be collected, ritual regimen at the Inner Sanctuary must be strictly followed, and matters pertaining to the sōbun office were to be determined by lottery (kujitori 鬮取). In addition, a set amount of fees must be collected when new monks were initiated. These were matters at the heart of the temple administration. The use of the lottery is interesting, but it was likely used to make appointments within the sōbun office. The lottery was a way of drawing out the will of deities. Furthermore, we see that the sōbun held authority over both “worldly” affairs of managing land and “religious” affairs of overseeing the transmission of the Shingon dharma. Let us observe how the law was established.

Above items have been in a state of negligence. Thus all the various members in unity (shoshū ichidō 諸衆一同) have established them as law. These shall be strictly followed.

Bunmei 9 (1477), ninth month, twelfth day  sōbun
Kaishun “eight fortunes”

The sōbun that (re)promulgated the law was an assembly of everyone and decisions were made through discussion and unanimous consent. Though the term, ichimi, is lacking, the process we see here is nothing but an ichimi formation. It also resembles the modus operandi of the clerics’ exercise of power, but with two important exceptions. First, the signatures of the three secretariats are missing. Instead, it was sealed with a “black seal” bearing “eight fortunes,” which is seen clearly in the microfilm copy held at the Historiographical Institute.

Second, there was no divine vow. Did that mean that monks were no longer making vows to deities? We cannot make this conclusion from this document alone, but it presents an interesting case of the displacement of deities from administrative documents. At the same time, the use of the lottery indicates the continued importance of deities in making decisions. We shall return to this issue.

285 Sakai 2004, 236.
286 Kangaku-in Documents 1-49 [KMK’1].
3.5 Sōbun and Arbitration

While the above document demonstrated the legislative power of the sōbun, there are other documents that show the sōbun in action to resolve problems. The following was issued by the sōbun to the “scholar monk faction” (gakuryo-kata 学侶方), which we can assume was part of the clerics.

Law; the old and young of the entire temple have discussed [and reached the following decision]. Twenty-five koku… [will be remitted from] toll stations…. The holy-men (hijiri) group shall remit ten koku. Disbursement to the hall-group (dōshu 堂衆) shall be one third. With that, various temple duties must be performed. This is the decision reached by discussion of the old and young of the entire temple.

Scholar monk faction

Sata office of the entire temple (manji 満寺) “eight fortunes”
Elders of the same “eight fortunes”

Tenshō 5 (1577), oxen – hinoto, intercalary seventh month, twelfth day

This document does not include the word “sōbun.” But it was issued by the “sata office of the entire temple” (manji satasho 満寺沙汰所) and the “eight fortunes” seal was pressed below its two co-issuers; the “sata office of the entire temple” and the “elders and young” of the same office. What this suggests is that the term “entire temple” and “sōbun” was used interchangeably and the office that had the “eight fortunes” seal represented them both at the same time.

The document does not provide its context, but what is certain is that the “sata office” had the power to allocate funds and levies among the different groups of the temple society: the holy-men (hijiri), the “hall-group” (dōshu) and the scholar monks (gakuryo).

We are now encountering as yet another group of Kōyasan, the “hall-group.” Indeed, they were one of the sub-groups of the ascetics. At Kōyasan, they appear in documents from the late

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288 Zokuhōkanshū 51-467 [KM3].
twelfth century.\textsuperscript{289} They performed policing duties for the temple. According to the early nineteenth century gazetteer of Kii province, there is a thirteenth century document that says that the hall-group was dispatched by the temple to expel from its land outlaws as well as peasants who neglected their taxes dues.\textsuperscript{290} In a recent study, Adolphson has analyzed the \textit{dōshu}, which he translates as “hall clerics,” of Hieizan and Kōfukuji in the early medieval era of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{291} For the sake of consistency, I will call the \textit{dōshu} “hall-group.” As Adolphson puts it, the hall-group was among the “voiceless groups” of complex medieval monastic societies. This is because records that were produced by them do not exist today, and what we can know about them is based on accounts of them by others. The “hall-group” performed a range of duties and functions that blur the conceptual boundary between the religious and secular. But Adolphson observes that the “hall-group” generally came from local families—in some cases from prominent ones. They often retained lay names. It was typical for them to serve as menial workers within the temple compound and act as tax collector and estate agents, but in some cases they attained religious ranks and performed ritual roles. But they were often armed, and constituted the militant element of temple organizations.

The “hall-group” of Kōyasan likely played similar roles to their counterparts at Kōfukuji and Hieizan. But at Kōyasan, they never had their own estates as Hieizan’s hall-group did. Hirase Naoki suggests that other similar groups of Kōyasan, such as the “flower-group” \textit{(geshu 夏衆)}, were organized independently under the clerics who were called “masters” \textit{(shishō 師匠)}. The former served the latter at their subtemples, and attended to policing functions in addition to their formal role to present flowers to buddhas and deities.\textsuperscript{292} The “hall-group,” too, may have been organized under the clerics in that manner. Indeed, categories such as “hall-group” and “flower-group” are ambiguous. With limited records, it is difficult to grasp their identity and duties, and how those might have shifted over time. Temple societies were complex, and the details of their inner stratification are difficult to recover with precision. Of course, it does not help that the descriptions of the ascetics’ sub-groups that are available to us are those that were produced by the clerics. It is uncertain if the “hall-group” ever considered their identity to be ascetic.

\textsuperscript{289} Hirase 1988.
\textsuperscript{290} KS\textit{F}, vol.5, scroll 44 (clerics).
\textsuperscript{291} Adolphson 2012.
\textsuperscript{292} Hirase 1988.
At any rate, what we can establish is that the “sata office” was situated above the three groups mentioned in the above document. Its main concern, moreover, was to ensure the continued performance of the “temple duties” by the scholar monks. What this suggests is that there was likely a dispute that involved the scholar monks and the hall-group, and they may have protested by refusing to perform their duties. Given that the solution to the problem was economic, they were likely protesting the lack of funds and they may have taken their grievance to the sata office. The office, in turn, had the duty to resolve problems that disrupted the operation of the temple. To that end, the “old and young of the entire temple” held a meeting to decide on the solution. It is notable that the sata office extracted funds from the holy-men (hijiri). The holy-men are thought to have been outside of the Kongōbuji organization, but the power of the sata office extended over them as well. Moreover, the “sata office” was evidently controlling toll stations (関 seki), which were a source of income for the temple.

A clearer role of the sōbun in resolving conflict is the following document that was issued to the Takeda warlord of Kai province. There was a conflict between two subtemples over the patronage of the Takeda and in particular, the prerogative as the “temple-lodge” (shukubō 宿坊) of the Takeda house when they came to Kōyasan on a pilgrimage. This conflict was arbitrated by the sōbun office and the document was sent to the magistrate of the Takeda’s domain to determine which of the two subtemples they were to patronize on an exclusive basis. The document does not provide the year, but it was likely produced shortly before 1582. That was the year the memorial services for Takeda Katsuyori were conducted at the subtemple that won the dispute, the Indō-in.²⁹³ Katsuyori was defeated by Oda Nobunaga in the famous battle of Nagashino in 1575.

With regard to the temple-lodge of the Takeda, it is clear to the entire mountain (manzan 満山) that Indō-in has been, since antiquity, the Takeda’s temple-lodge. There is a proof document to attest this. Seikei-in has been making an unfounded claim to the contrary. In the previous year when Nobutora climbed the mountain, the matter was rectified and the decision was reached for him to stay at Indō-in. This is clear to everyone. Hence, the

²⁹³ Jimyō-in documents [KMK3-200, 201].
“entire temple” (manji 滿寺) has now carried out a discussion to adjudicate the matter and forged an ichimi to confirm that Indō-in shall be the Takeda’s temple-lodge forever…294

The document was issued by the monk, Seiyo, who represented the Kongōbuji sōbun administrative office. It was sealed with “eight fortunes.” What is interesting to note is that not only was the power of ichimi the basis for resolving conflicts among competing members of the temple society, but monks expected an outsider to accept as absolute the decision of the ichimi. Moreover, remember that this was a document issued to the Takeda. Members of the “entire temple” likely performed an ichimi ritual to fortify the decision before this letter was sent to the Takeda.

Then why was the document kept at Kōyasan? The reason, I think, is because a copy was kept by the Indō-in as a proof of its prerogative, meaning that the power of the sōbun as the codifier of prerogative was well-recognized.

Given the prominence of the Takeda, the dispute was likely related to the wealth and prestige that its patronage brought. It is interesting to note here that the subtemple Seikei-in, whose claims to the Takeda-patronage were thoroughly denied by the sōbun, was an ascetic, while Indō-in appears to have been a cleric.295 On the other hand, the monk, Seiyo, who represented the sōbun, was an ascetic and he became a key figure in the subsequent transformation of the temple under Tokugawa Ieyasu’s influence, as we shall see. The sōbun, then, transcended the divide between the ascetics and clerics and actually represented the will of the “entire mountain” in late sixteenth century Kōyasan.

That would be confirmed by the following document issued by the sōbun to the annual custodian, that is to say, the clerics. It also shows the sōbun’s control of land and taxation, for tax income was to be allocated to the clerics for the purpose of funding a special ritual to bring on the rain. The document is damaged and does not indicate the year. But what is visible in the microfilm copy is the top-left corner of the seal, which resembles the outline of the sōbun seal.

294 Jimyō-in documents [KMK3-199]. Microfilm copy of the original on the online database of the Historiographical Institute, the University of Tokyo.
295 On Seikei-in’s affiliation with the ascetics, see Kangaku-in Documents 92 [KMK1]. As for Indō-in, the temple that held the sōbun document was Jimyō-in, a clerics’ subtemple, which may have been another name for Indō-in.
... the severe drought this year is causing great difficulty for the growth of crops. It is urgent to perform a rain-making ritual...Ritual fees will be allocated from the temple-land based on tax yields. Please commence the ritual immediately. Respectfully.296

The use of the term “temple-land” (jiryō寺領) suggests that the sōbun had control of the temple’s land as a whole. And given that it grasped the tax yields (takatsuji高辻), it must have held the land registers and probably carried out the surveys as well. It also had the responsibility to address problems such as a drought that threatened crop growth. For that, the blessings generated by the rituals were needed, but the clerics had the prerogative to perform rituals. The sōbun was in a position to order the clerics to perform such rites and provide them the funds to do so by taxing peasants. With that, we can establish that the sōbun had the power to manipulate the public coffers of the temple to address problems.

As seen above, the sōbun was the regional public power that presided above the diverse social groups at the temple and the plains. It made decisions through discussions and acted upon the principle of ichimi. But the disappearance of the divine vow from its documents marks a notable departure from the administrative practice of the clerics in the previous two centuries. On this, Ikeda Hitoshi has argued that the ascetics did not use divine vows because they were highly pragmatic.297 Ikeda is suggesting that the ascetics overcame the spectre of the divine wrath with their rational approach to administration. Was this the case? This point requires further analysis, but the missing divine vows seems to indicate a relative decline in the role of deities in the administration of the temple. Are there documents that tell us of the role of the numinous landscape and deities in the production of the sōbun’ power?

3.6 Sōbun, Force and Deities

The following document gives hints to address that question. The document relates to the use of force to defend the temple and the region. Like other temples in the region, Kōyasan was armed in the sixteenth century. Negoro-dera was well-known for its armed forces, as Frois had noted.298 The “religious republics” of Kii province, like many other religious organizations at the

296 Zokuhōkanshū 51-466 [KM 3].
298 Historia de Japan.
time, had to be armed to defend their interests. At the same time, the force that Kōyasan mobilized was a natural result of its role as the hub of a regional polity. Kōyasan did not occupy a “religious” sphere, but ruled the region as a whole and had martial elements to protect itself. Some Kōyasan monks, like those of the small-assembly, were from warrior houses. There were many local warriors (jizamurai) who were part of Kōyasan’s social system. The following document shows how the sōbun commanded force. It was likely produced in 1581 when Nobunaga invaded the region. In it, the sōbun addressed two men who commanded troops at battlefronts: the warrior, Kōno and the monk, Monju-in. Monju-in, we are quite certain, also went by the name of Seiyo, who had issued the document to the Takeda that was featured, above.299

An urgent message to be conveyed: lord Sabee [whose troops are, or will be engaged] in an all-out battle with the Saika league (and) Ne and Ko (Negoro and Kokawa temples?), will soon advance toward your front; so we have heard. Hence, this memorandum concerns the muskets [that you will use to fight Nobunaga’s force]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item:</th>
<th>Muskets</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Makuni estate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ujiudo group (shrine parishioners)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Shikano village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ujiudo group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>This estate (your estate?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Ujiudo group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Ogawa estate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You shall command the above. Based on the enemy’s move, take appropriate actions. The sōbun is sincerely satisfied with your numerous feats [thus far]. A messenger will be sent with the details. Since yesterday, sōbun monks and elders have all assembled at Amano to discuss the above matter in front of deities (goshinzen 御神前). More than ever, be earnest in your endeavor. Respectfully,

Second month, fourth day                          Yūson (black seal)

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299 Seiyo was the abbot of the subtemple, Monju-in. It was typical for a monk to be addressed by the name of his subtemple.
The mood at Amano must have been intense. Monks and elders gathered there to decide what course of action to take to confront the challenge that threatened their lives. Their method, not surprisingly, was the age-old practice of discussion (shūgi 集儀) and collective decision-making. But they did so at the interface with the realm of deities at Amano, the home of Kōyasan’s landlord deities.

The sōbun assembly likely drew out divine oracles, discussed their options and made their decision in union with the landlord deities. They also likely also performed the ichimi rite to drink the holy water. The document tells us that the core of Kōyasan’s martial force was a subliminal collective that was fused with the sacred landscape. And let us note that this was an emergency assembly held at Amano and the sōbun made sure to inform Monjui-in and Kōno that their mission was supported by the backing of the sōbun ichimi. The troops that the two men commanded were part of a unified group under divine oversight.

The structure of Kōyasan’s force needs to be clarified. The ujiudo 氏人, which I am translating as shrine parishioners, were seen at Negoro-dera and Kōyasan. These were formed by the members of peasant communes who entered the temple to become monks. But they remained in their villages to assert ceremonial and political influence. On the ceremonial front, they performed ritual duties at the tutelary shrines. At the Tomobuchi shrine, as Kuroda Hiroko has discussed, the ujiudo were responsible for making offerings to deities and managing the “roof-changing” ceremony in which the shrine was repaired on a regular basis to purify and rejuvenate the sanctum. On the political front, they were involved with administration and the resolution of disputes with other villages. The ujiudo were integral to the social and political life in the commune, but there was often tension with the more organic shrine council of peasants, because the former was a system established by Kōyasan to assert influence over the commune.

300 Kōno house documents 390 [KMK7].
Shrines, it must be recalled, were loci of the communal organization. Social functions of tutelary shrines for peasant communities in the late medieval and later periods were multifaceted. As Hitomi Tonomura elucidates in her study of Imabori sō in the Ōmi province in the late medieval era, the “shrine combined the functions of a city hall, court house, notary, tax bureau, bank, fairgrounds, church, center for the performing arts, tavern, and playground, among others.”302 Villagers organized their community in relation to tutelary shrines. The administrative body of village communities were the shrine councils (miyaza 宮座) that held ritual prerogatives at tutelary shrines. As Tonomura puts it, “(T)he primary religious purpose of the miyaza was to reinforce the sense of ritual community—encompassing both deities and human beings—by sharing the circulation of food and drink.”303 Indeed, the somatic union with the deities at their abodes of the shrines was a key component in the communal life of villagers, and intramural relations were institutionalized through the medium of the shrine. By setting up the ujiudo system, Kōyasan manipulated social relations at the shrines to entrench its power in village spaces.

To fight off Nobunaga, Kōyasan was able to mobilize the ujiudo and by extension the communes and villages in the estates. The document shows that a sizable number of muskets were allotted to villages, indicating that warriors and peasants were integrated into Kōyasan’s force. But also notable is the distinction that the document makes between “monks” (bōzu 坊主) and “elders” (toshiyorishū 老衆). From these clues, we can intuit that the sōbun collective was formed by monks and non-monks, which, of course, is also reflected in the men that the document addressed.

The identity of the Kōno is interesting. In fact, the only reason we have the document in question is because the Kōno preserved it as part of their treasured house documents. The Kōno were said to be the descendant of the warlord, Kōno, who controlled the Iyo province in Shikoku in the late medieval era. What happened, according to Nakata Hōju, who likely referred to the genealogy of the Kōno, was that when the warlord, Chōsokabe, of the Tosa province, invaded Iyo in 1570s, the Kōno fled their home province and settled at the foot of Kōyasan.304 Though this account might be best taken with a grain of salt, we can assume that the Kōno moved into

303 Ibid., 52.
304 KMK7, 467-68.
the region in the late sixteenth century and that Kōno was likely from Iyo, where he was connected with the lordly Kōno in some capacity. In other words, he was a mobile rōnin warrior. He later became a local warrior in the area under the Kii daimyo in the early modern era.

The temple was defended under an umbrella of diverse social groups that lived in the region, including monks, peasants and warriors. This was a regional ikki that was organized under the temple on the mountain. This unified political unit was facilitated by the organizational practice of ichimi and the ritual construction of the subliminal collective that ruled the plains in unison with the deities. The main role of peasants was to remit taxes, not fight wars. But by manipulating the shrine-based organizations in the estates, the sōbun managed to mobilize them and integrate them into the ikki forged around the deities of the land.

Therefore, the ritual creation of unity and power remained at the core of the regional society in the late sixteenth century. But even as ritual and deities were important for the temple’s regional hegemony, it managed society through pragmatic administrative practices. With that in mind, let us consider why the Kōno preserved the above document. For the Kōno, the document was a “proof document.” It attested not only to an important episode in the house’s history, but also served to safeguard its prerogatives. Hence, the Kōno had kept the above document together with the following one:

Previously when Nobunaga invaded, [you] performed various exceptionally loyal services for the mountain. Gratitude for that should have been conveyed at the time, but that was delayed. Recently in your estate...there was a subversive plot carried out against the temple. The culprits should have been punished summarily but there was a delay. And now, when we instructed you to punish them, we have learned that you have already killed them, seven in total, including a father and son. This is a truly commendable deed of great loyalty. We are much impressed by your continued service. Therefore, from now onward, you shall be exempted from all new taxes and dues and the rice levy of the current [tax cycle] will also be exempted. Moreover, though it is a small amount, one thousand hiki of copper coins are presented [to you]…the above was discussed in assembly.

Tenshō 17 (1589)
First month, twenty ninth day
Kōzan High Priest
Ōgo (signature)

Dated Tenshō 17 (1589), this document was issued eight years after Nobunaga’s invasion and after the temple came under Hideyoshi’s rule. The signature—not the black seal—was of the monk, Ōgo, who co-issued the document. This reflects the rupture of the sōbun organization after the temple came under Hideyoshi’s rule. Nevertheless, the sōbun’s power was still in evidence. It was still central in codifying prerogatives and duties and by doing so, organized social relations that constituted the regional space. It was able to exempt taxes (kuji 公事) because it controlled taxes. And it rewarded the Kōno for their service. For the rōnin, Kōno, Kōyasan was another lord to serve.

Let us now come back to the issue of the deities’ disappearance from sōbun documents. We saw that the sōbun held an emergency assembly at Amano, in front of deities, to decide on the course of action required to fend off Nobunaga’s invasion. The document it issued to command force specifically indicated that the decision was made with the deities. What this suggests is that in more ordinary circumstances, there was either no need to make decisions with the deities and perform a formal ichimi ritual, or even if the deities were involved and the ichimi rite was performed, this was not usually indicated in documents; it was just generally assumed. The production of administrative documents by the sōbun became routine and stamping the “eight fortunes” seal sufficed to legitimize documents.

But the seal packed layers of significance. It embodied the authority that derived from discussion and ichimi unity and also the power of deities that undergirded the decisions made by the sōbun, which acted as the representative of the “entire mountain.” All in all, in spite of the

305 Kōno house documents 391 [KMK 7].
306 In a different document from the same year, issued by the sōbun to a certain Magoemon of the Arakawa estate, the sōbun is seen imposing taxes for the sale of rice wine and prohibiting residents from buying sake in other places. See Tsuda house documents [KMK7-327].
307 Ito 1999.
lack of deities and divine vows, Kōyasan under sōbun was still a polity that sourced its power from the sacred landscape of the region.

However, the influence of the sōbun was not comprehensive in the late sixteenth century. Next, I will briefly discuss the diffused power structure at the temple at the time.

3.7 The Proclamation on a Late Sixteenth Century Danjō Garan Signboard

Law

Item: Do not cut branches of trees in Danjō Garan
Item: Do not argue, fight, have sumo wrestling bouts, or sing song and poems when ritual services are held
Item: Do not buy and sell things in Danjō Garan
Item: Do not take soil
Item: Do not bring horses into Danjō Garan

Renjō-in
Bensen
Tenshō 7 (1579), third month, third day

The above is a copy of a signboard that was erected in 1579 at the Danjō Garan. It is included in the Takamuro-in Documents, the copy of which is housed in the Samukawa-city Library & Archives. The Danjo Garan was the central ritual space in the precinct where prayer rituals for rulers and the state were performed. The Portrait Hall and the Shrine are located in this ritual space. However, as we see in the signboard, the space was rife with popular energy. The fact that such a signboard had to be erected is indicative that the very activities that were prohibited were being carried out. Was the signboard effective in controlling the behavior of the people who contributed to the dynamic and diverse space? We have no idea.

Kōyasan, of course, was not simply about the control of land and regional politics. It was a place where diverse groups of people went to pursue varied goals. Its space was much richer

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308 Takamuro-in documents 171: 12478.
and more diverse than this narrowly focused study can portray. But to generalize, the structure of Kōyasan’s space can be conceived as a complex of loci of social organization. The precinct of Kōyasan was a rich terrain consisting of hundreds of halls and worship sites. In fact, according to Fujikawa Masaki, a record from 1645 shows that there were 7,301 monks and their servants that lived in 1,941 subtemples. These were condensed in the precinct that was organized into twelve valleys that were like wards of neighbourhoods. All the subtemples, sub-sections of the precinct, the valleys and the like were places where people formed social relations. At the same time, all of these sites were thresholds to the otherworldly realm of deities and spirits. Kōyasan was a lively space that can be called a temple city that was situated deep in the mountains.

For the current analysis, what is most notable is the fact that such a signboard, which proclaimed a law (okite 掟) in the sanctum of Danjō Garan, was erected not by the sōbun or temple collective, but by a named monk of the subtemple, Minami-Renjō-in 南蓮上院, Bensen. Evidently, Bensen’s authority was recognized and he was called upon to maintain order at Danjō Garan. The Minami-Renjō-in was a subtemple of the small-assembly. From here, we will simply call it Renjō-in.

Who was Bensen? In the Tenshō Kōya Jiranki, which is an account of Kōyasan’s defensive battle against Nobunaga’s invasion in 1581, we find that Bensen was a son of the warlord, Yusa. It tells us that he had ruled the Nate estate for a long time. In the same text, we read that Bensen was one of the commanders of Kōyasan’s force that was mobilized to defend the mountain from the invasion of Oda Nobunaga in 1581. It is said that he was selected by the monastic assembly to lead the temple’s force. Kaiō, who was the abbot of a different small-assembly subtemple called Keō-in 花王院, also commanded troops in the battle. Kaiō’s background was similar to that of Bensen. He was a son of the warrior house of the Hatakeyama and is said to have held a large plot of land worth 3,500 koku in the Hota estate. The Tenshō Kōya Jiranki was a literary text that was written in the early eighteenth century, but these are indicative of the roles small-assembly monks played as defenders of the temple and the prerogatives that they held in the sixteenth century.

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309 The source that he cites is the Kōyasan kyūki, held at the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University. Fujikawa 2006, 107. The number of the subtemples is probably fairly accurate. A map that was presented to the Tokugawa shogunate in 1646 show a total of 1,865 subtemples. Yamakage 2006b, 44.
310 Kudoyama chōshi, shiryō, 366 (doc. 13)
3.8 The Small-Assembly Monks in the Late Sixteenth Century

Bensen and Kaiō may have wielded exceptional power and influence among the monks of Kōyasan in the late sixteenth century. But the organic link between regional elites and the temple was the structural feature of the regional society handed down from the preceding centuries. That was common in the “religious republics” of Kii, as Atsuta noted.311 But there was a distinctly Kōyasan flair in the consummation of local elites and the temple in the late medieval era. A 1602 memorandum written by the small-assembly monks offers an interesting case. This involved a dispute with a group of scholar monks.312

The memorandum was submitted to the magistrates under Tokugaw Ieyasu, but its versions in the Takamuro-in documents include drafts that have been edited. The editing was likely performed by the small-assembly monks themselves as they tried to polish the text to strengthen their case. In the following translation of the opening passage of the memorandum, the small-assembly monks explain their identity and history to the Tokugawa magistrates. In the translation, I emulated the format of the original manuscript, which shows the edits made with lines crossing out words and passages being squeezed in between the lines to revise the text. The edits, I think, reveal how the small-assembly monks reasoned. In particular, the sections that they wrote in between the lines after the text was first written, I suggest, were things that were so self-evident and natural to them that they did not think of first writing them in their draft. Yet the addition elucidates their sense of legitimacy and identity, which was rooted in the medieval experience and the collective memory that they inherited. Though the memorandum is contained in the Takamuro-in documents, it originally belonged to Renjō-in and was likely kept and perhaps even edited, by a monk who succeeded Bensen.

In ancient times, the clerics of Kōyasan were preoccupied night and day with the issuing of laws and the handling of various matters (sata) at the mountain and the plains. Hence they had no time for studies. Therefore… with the discussion of everyone… those connected by genealogy to the founder and or the landlord of the mountain and thus having the same surname as them…[were] nominated…to handle the various matters on the mountain and the

312 Takamuro-in documents 171.
plains...The Buddhist law was maintained because the small-assembly handled “worldly” matters (seken no gi 世間の儀).\textsuperscript{313}

The language here is very similar to the clerics’ petition that condemned the ascetics: the small-assembly, like the ascetics, handled administrative and worldly functions (sata). And they co-existed. The small-assembly’s influence must have weakened from what it had been in the early fifteenth century, but still, they commanded considerable power and privilege in the late sixteenth century. The relationship between the small-assembly and the sōbun is not clear, but the former was probably not part of the latter. This hint is found in the mention in the memorandum that the small-assembly performed “sō-like” duties for the clerics (shuto-chū sōnami no jiyaku 衆徒中惣なみの寺役). The subtle nuance of this expression is indicative of the complexity of the power structure of Kōyasan and it is likely that the sōbun and powerful small-assembly monks like Bensen and Kaiō had mutually understood boundaries of their power and territory within Kōyasan’s space. Renjō-in likely had a recognized prerogative over Danjō Garan, or certain sections of it, which the sōbun and others recognized.

The petition also shows that the small-assembly monks claimed to have genealogical ties with the “landlord of the mountain” (tōzan jinushi 当山地主) and the “founder” (kaiki 開基). They also shared the same surname as them. This identity seems to differ from what we saw in the other genealogical narrative of the small-assembly, which said that the small-assembly monks were from twenty-five warrior houses in the province. Could it have been true that the small-assembly monks were actually related to Kōbō Daishi? And does the “landlord” here refer to the landlord deities? These remain moot. But there was more to the small-assembly’s genealogical claim. In the memorandum, they wrote of the estate officials of the Kanshōfu estate as follows:

The estate officials of the four places are from the Saeki clan. They accompanied Kōbō Daishi from the Sanuki province to reside on the foot of Kōyasan. Then, in the same mind with the small-assembly, they guarded the plains by punishing criminals and policing the area. Each year without change, they climb the mountain many times to

\textsuperscript{313} Takamuroin documents 171: 12554.
perform temple duties. If they do not come to the mountain the temple duties cannot begin...The abbacy of the small-assembly [subtemples] are inherited (sōzoku 相続) by these houses...  

The Saeki was Kōbō Daishi’s paternal house and allegedly, the estate officials were related by blood to him. The Kanshōfu estate officials, it will be noted, were the local warrior houses of the Takabō, Tadokoro, Oka and Kameoka. These were the same houses that devastated peasants in the late fourteenth century with various levies. At that time, the relationship between Kōyasan and these houses was tense. Two centuries later, they had become descendant of Kōbō Daishi and subsumed themselves into the legendary landscape.

The small-assembly monks’ claim that they, too, were linked by blood to the founder was based on their blood ties to the estate officials. As the small-assembly monks tell us, the estate official houses were base-houses (satomoto) of some of the small-assembly subtemples, meaning that the abbacy was held by those houses on a hereditary basis. Indeed, according to an early eighteenth century document that was held by the Oka house, each of the four estate official houses held (shoji 所持) a small-assembly subtemple at Kōyasan: the Takabō held Chishōgon-in; the Tadokoro held Sanbō-in; the Oka held Shūzen-in; and the Kameoka held Fuji-no-bō. It is not certain when these houses took control of the subtemples, but it is reflective of the broad trend in which the mountain was captured from the plains in the late medieval era.

Speaking of the genealogical claims of the estate officials, Iwakura Tetsuo suggests that it was likely a fabrication. Be that as it may, given the importance of the engi in the region, it would not be surprising if they were recognized and thought of themselves as, descendants of the founder. I suggest that the genealogy was a social reality and considering why it was important helps us to understand the richness of Kōyasan’s space in the sixteenth century.

There were at least two reasons for their becoming Kōbō Daishi’s descendants. The first is an obvious one: it naturalized their prerogatives. In fact, the small-assembly subtemples held a greater amount of land than other subtemples. The small-assembly monks were compelled to write their memorandum in 1602 because some scholar monks felt that the small-assembly

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314 Takamuro-in documents 171.
315 The document is a memorandum that was signed by the head of the each of the estate official houses in 1724, and it was intended to be a record for their descendants. Oka house documents, Kudoyama chōshi, shiryō, 969-70 (kinsei, i ewake doc #71)
316 Kudoyama chōshi hensan iinkai 2009, 213.
subtemples held more land than they deserved. They had taken the case to the judicature of the Tokugawa regime. Alarmed, the small-assembly defended their entitlement in the memorandum. At that time, the small-assembly’s specialization in worldly duties and their warrior-like identity had become problematic, because the unified state demanded that monks be disarmed and devoted to rituals and studies. According to the memorandum, the small-assembly monks had lost much land when Hideyoshi carried out his land surveys in 1591 and 1592, but even after that, they still held more land than most other monks. Before Hideyoshi’s surveys, the small-assembly’s landholding was much greater, as was their influence. Later, we will see how one of the small-assembly subtemples remade itself in the seventeenth century.

Indeed, local prominent houses used the subtemples on the mountain to hold property. The small-assembly and the estate officials were likely merely a tip of the iceberg in the organic connection between local elites and the mountain; the former invested in the latter to bolster the property and the well-being of their households.

3.8 Kōbō Daishi and the Estate Officials

All the same, the link between the estate officials and the legendary landscape had to do with their “temple duties.” The small-assembly memorandum does not state what these duties were, but evidently their duties were important enough that other “temple duties” could not begin without them. Estate officials are known to have been mobilized to guard the temple during certain important rituals, but the one that the four estate officials of Kanshōfu had special ties with was the robe-changing ceremony of the mieku. Let us recall that the mieku rite was performed every year in the third month on the anniversary of Kōbō Daishi’s entry into the state of eternal meditation. During the ceremony, a special robe made at the subtemple Hōki-in was presented to Kōbō Daishi at his Mausoleum in the Inner Sanctuary, then brought to the Portrait Hall and taken into the hall’s inner cloister by the side of his portrait.

In the Oka house documents, there is a memorandum dated Ōei 13 (1406) on the duty during the mieku. Written by the then head of the Takabō house, the Oka house in the early modern era treated it as an authoritative record on the duties of the four estate official houses during the ceremony. According to it, five persons were to attend, each wearing an eboshi hat.

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317 Kangaka-in documents 1-60 [KMK1].
318 Oka house documents, in Kadoyama chōshi, shiryō, 951-52 (doc. 2).
Each was to hold a specified item. The items were 1) a great dagger (*tachi* 太刀), 2) a long dagger (*chōtō* 長刀), 3) an umbrella-shaped arm called *tategasa* (立笠) 4) a shoe-box (*kutsudai* 岡台) and 5) an iron rod (*kanabō* 金棒). The duty of the five was to hold these items during the ceremony, but also to place their hands on the “venerable tray offering” (*gozenku* 御膳供) and enter the hall. Then, later, they were to take a seat inside the hall.

What was done in the *mieku* is not clear from this record alone. Still, we can surmise that their duty was to guard the ceremony with the arms that they held, then oversee the entry into the hall of the “venerable tray.”

The description of the *mieku* in the early nineteenth century gazetteer of Kii province helps to understand the significance of the temple duty. According to the gazetteer, of the calendric rituals held at the mountain, the *mieku* stood out in terms of the food offerings that were involved. The *mieku* was carried out on the twenty-first day of the third month, but starting on the sixteenth day of that month, crops and fruits of paddies and fields, as well as wild fruits and nuts and seaweed were collected at temples in the temple’s land. Then in the morning of the twenty-first day, they were brought up the mountain and placed in the Great Stupa in Danjō Garan. There, the food items were inspected carefully by a certain Nakahashi. The Nakahashi, like the estate officials, was a descendant of Kōbō Daishi’s family, but of the founder’s maternal house of the Ato. In fact, the Nakahashi administered the temple-shrine complex of Jison-in on the foot of the mountain, where the future Buddha Maitreya was the main image. The Maitreya, according to the *engi*, was in fact, Kōbō Daishi’s mother who was transformed into the Buddha by her son’s magical powers.

The inspection of the food offering by the Nakahashi during the *mieku* seems to have symbolized and enacted the mother feeding her son, though it was the male head of the Nakahashi who was on site for the duty. Then what of the roles of the father? The gazetteer says that the food offerings were circumambulated around the Danjō Garan on a palanquin. But the quantity of the food should be mentioned. They were to cook three *to* of rice, or roughly fifty-four metric litres. The procession carried the food in a ceremonial container, passing by the Golden Hall, the Shrine, then to the Pine of the Trident *Vajra* in front of the Portrait Hall. There,

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319 *KSF*, vol. 4, scroll 3 (clerics), 61.
320 According to the gazetteer, a great pot was used to cook the rice. The pot bore an inscription that stated that the pot was made in 1197, specifically for use in the *mieku*, by an itinerant fundraising monk (*kanjin* shōnin 勸進上人).
designated monks, called tenaga 手長, (long-hand) were to place their hands on the container as it was carried into the hall. Meanwhile, the four estate officials stood at the side and oversaw the entry of the food into the hall. Then, the Portrait Hall custodians (Miedō azukari 御影堂預) were to take the container into the inner cloister and present it to the Portrait.

There was a slight difference between the role of the estate officials during the mieku in the early nineteenth century, as described in the gazetteer, and in the early fifteenth century, as recorded in Oka’s documents. In the later period, the estate officials only saw the food being taken into the hall, while in the earlier time they actually placed their hands on the food container itself. But either way, this was a critical duty. They had to be there, or else the ritual could not be performed properly.

The mieku served to embed the estate officials into the ritual and institutional structures of the temple. Their status was confirmed by their duty and they were directly linked with the sacred core of the temple-house. The prodigious amount of food that was carried into the hall only makes sense if there was a communion afterwards. That is likely why the 1406 memorandum advised them to enter the hall after the food tray was taken in. The mieku, then, not only filled the Portrait Hall with the living presence of the patriarch, but facilitated a visceral union between him and the members of the temple society. For the estate officials, the duty in the ritual and the genealogy provided a somatic link with the sanctity of the mountain, which in turn helped them to maintain their power and influence throughout the medieval era.

3.9 Sōbun and the Estate Officials

The relationship between the estate officials and the sōbun is not clear. But it seems that the estate officials held their power without being part of the core members of the sōbun assembly. What I mean is that they were not in the position to act as sōbun representatives or issue documents bearing the “eight fortunes” seal. Why? First of all, they had forged an ichimi with the small-assembly monks, some of whom were their own family members. The small-assembly monks, I have suggested, were not part of the sōbun. Second, they carried out administrative action on their own without the oversight of the sōbun. And third, the estate

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321 For example, in a 1566 document, the Takabō and Oka are seen mediating a dispute between two villages over ritual prerogatives at a local tutelary shrine at Jison-in. The sōbun is not mentioned in the document, in which the Takabō and the Oka arbitrated the conflict through a discussion with estate elders, and forged an ichimi with them to impose their ruling. It shows that
officials were closely connected with the clerics. In the journal of the clerics’ head priest from 1545, we discover the head priest dispatching delegates with gifts for the Takabō and Tadokoro in the New Year. In return, the gift recipients hosted the delegates with a feast of food and drinks.\(^{322}\) This was not a one-time event, but a regular meeting between the head of the clerics and the estate officials in the plains.

Given that, the estate officials held power and influence in the region and performed administrative actions alongside the sōbun. But the two were likely not antagonistic. The spatial configuration of the two can be conceived as follows. The estate officials were robustly integrated into Kōyasan’s landscape and held a notable “chunk” of power within the space of the mountain and the plains.\(^{323}\) And they were only loosely integrated under the sōbun, which did not interfere with their space (or “chunk”). The sōbun was not an actively oppressive or coercive power toward other powerholders at the temple. But it was expected to intervene when conflicts arose and when it adjudicated disputes, its rulings were meant to be authoritative. That is what happened in 1587 when the sōbun arbitrated a conflict among powerholders in the Arakawa estate over ritual prerogatives at a tutelary shrine. Among the parties involved was the small-assembly subtemple Shūzen-in, which was held by the Oka and which was entitled to income from that estate under the authority of the sōbun. It also shows the Oka listed as one of the six to receive a stipend from the estate.\(^{324}\)

### 3.10 Kōyasan in the Sixteenth Century

How different was Kōyasan in the late sixteenth century compared to the early fifteenth? The control of the temple and the regional society by the sōbun marked a major departure. The sōbun acted as the public authority of Kōyasan and the regional society in the late sixteenth century. It controlled land, issued laws, commanded force, mediated disputes, granted perquisites, and stood above the different status groups of the temple. It also managed the aggregate of prerogatives and duties as well as codifying socioeconomic relations in the regional

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\(^{322}\) Yūzokushōkanshū 66-1231 [KM6], in Kudoyama chōshi, shiryō, 357-62.

\(^{323}\) Here, I am borrowing the term, “chunk” from Nicholas Blomley’s discussion of the theory of property by Thomas Merrill and Henry Smith. See Blomley 2016, 227.

\(^{324}\) Tsuda house documents [KMK7-327].
space. With that, the *sōbun* had effectively replaced the admistrative duties of the clerics from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

If the *sōbun* was an ascetics’ office, then the rise to prominence of the *sōbun* in the late medieval era constituted a *gekokujō*. This seems valid, especially since the clerics were situated under the administrative authority of the *sōbun*. As I argued, the *sōbun* was the office of the ascetics and of the “entire mountain” at the same time. Clerics and the old elites were now under the authority of the *sōbun* and the ascetics. Yet, when we turn to *sōbun* documents, it is clear its primary function was to maintain order. That was its *raison d’être*. On a structural level, the basic apparatus of power in the region was retained from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The ascetics entered the core of the temple’s power without dismantling it and worked with other groups to maintain the existing system. In spite of the harsh condemnation of the ascetics by the clerics in the 1601 petition, the clerics kept documents issued by the *sōbun*, because the former had recognized the latter as the public power that governed Kōyasan in the sixteenth century.

They maintained order through the practice of *ichimi*. The organizational mode of the *sōbun* was very similar to that of the clerics. They overcame problems that arose by holding a discussion and making decisions based on the agreement of all involved. The *sōbun* represented the will of the “entire mountain,” and through that logic, presided above the different social groups of the temple and the plains. Its authority was embodied in the “eight fortunes” seal that it used to authorize the documents it issued. Notably, documents issued by the *sōbun* do not include a divine vow. This is suggestive of the declining role of deities in the administration of the temple and the region. At the same time, it also informs us of a systematization of documenting practices and that vows could have been eliminated from administrative documents. *Ichimi* vows of the “entire mountain” were still made when resolving conflicts, indicating that the unity of the “entire mountain” was entrenched as the basis for legitimate regional governance. And in times of extraordinary threat, the *sōbun* collective made decisions with the deities.

But the structure of Kōyasan’s space was diverse and complex; the extent of the *sōbun*’s power was limited. Kōyasan was constituted by multiple and co-existing nodes of power. The small-assembly monks who had been at the centre of Kōyasan’s power in the late fourteenth century onward still retained their power and influence. The estate officials, who worked closely
with the small-assembly, also retained their influence. They even held some of the small-assembly subtemples.

The landholding warriors, however, did not hold power and influence outside of the temple’s system. Rather, they naturalized their influence by subsuming themselves in the legendary narrative of Kōbō Daishi. That was because they performed a formal ritual duty at the mountain that was dedicated to Kōbō Daishi. Ritual prerogatives and political power of the estate officials to perform administrative tasks came in hand-in-hand and the temple served to institutionalize power relation that structured the regional space.

I began part one with an excerpt from Luis Frois’s account of the Kii province. Kōyasan was described as one of the “religious republics” in the region. We have, in the foregoing, examined how that “republic” operated. Frois’s basic sketch was quite apt. He said that Kōyasan was a place in the mountain where Kōbō Daishi worshippers organized themselves to manage a system of controlling and safeguarding land, assets and/or prerogatives. The sacred landscape of the mountain was based on the engi of Kōbō Daishi’s original founding of the temple. This was at the core and foundation of the regional political formation from the fourteenth to the late sixteenth century. But such a political order was not a given, but was a product of the concerted effort of Kōyasan monks in the fourteenth century and the political forces that converged at the mountain in the two centuries that followed. Kōyasan retained its power not in spite of the tensions and contradictions in the space it controlled, but because of them. For powerholders in the region, there was nothing that they needed more than the temple and they created their regional polity through the medium of the sacred. Underneath that political development were the legends of Kōbō Daishi that were enacted on land through Kōyasan’s ritual system.

In short, the late medieval experiences and process at Kōyasan resulted in a robust integration of the regional society under the authority of the temple. For many in the region, the temple was a higher authority that they needed to safeguard their space and territory in the fluid and contentious dynamics of the period. Absorbing the social tensions within the region and undergirding order, the temple was, in a sense, the crystallization of the regional society. And the principle of collective administration and the subliminal collective fused with the deities based on the hallowed engi remained the highest political authority, in spite of the inner changes that unfolded over time.
But a major turn in this organizational mode was just around the corner when Bensen’s signboard was erected in the Danjō Garan and the sō bun assembly held their special meeting at Amano shrine to defend their space from Nobunaga’s invasion. That change, of course, was the subjugation of the temple by the unified state under the warlord unifier, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. The new regime did not tolerate any powerholder, religious or not, holding autonomous power apart from it. Kōyasan was integrated into Hideyoshi’s scheme of domination in 1585. What happened to Kōyasan as a result is our next topic.
Part II: The Rupture of Unification

The next two chapters examine Kōyasan’s encounter with the warrior state that unified the country in the late sixteenth century. Before turning to Kōyasan’s experiences of the early modern state formation, here, I deliberate on the broad social significance of the unification, and identify problems that will be explored further in the remainder of the study.

The emergence of the unified state in the late sixteenth century was a major historic event. In a short span of time, from 1570 to 1585, all temples and shrines that held notable political power were subjected to the mighty warrior unifiers.325 By any yardstick, this wrought major shifts on the political life of the religionists. Their institutions were disarmed, new legislation regulated their conduct and their self-sufficiency diminished when their traditional landholdings were replaced by state-issued grants.

It is tempting, then, to apply an interpretive model of the structural tension between the state and the church, or kingly law and the Buddhist law, to explain what happened to temples and shrines during the crucible of the late sixteenth century. But this frame can lead us to imagine that the unified state was a secular one, which it was not.326 The notion of Buddhist law being supplanted by kingly law reflects the popular academic opinion, but this model has been established with little effort to understand the actions and experiences of the religionists.327 We should also keep in mind that Buddhism is now said to have truly flourished in the early modern era.328 To understand what happened to temples and shrines as a result of the unification, it is necessary to consider the dynamics from within their spaces and scrutinize them in relation to the new policies.

325 1570 is when Nobunga’s campaign against the Pure Land Buddhist confederation began. In 1585, the “religious republics” of Kii province submitted to Hideyoshi.
326 Ōkuwa 2012; Ooms 1985.
327 For example, Tamamuro 1971 and 1987; McMullin 1984. It should also be noted that Kuroda Toshio offered a similar line of interpretation when he stated that what brought the demise of the kenmitsu system and the power of temples and shrines was the martial power of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. Kuroda 1975b, 289-90.
328 The backdrop to this understanding is the previously-orthodox interpretation that Buddhism became moribund in the Tokugawa era. This was the thesis that was systematically presented by Tsuji Zensosuke in his magnum opus on the history of Buddhism in Japan. See Tsuji 1970a, b, c. For studies in English that debunk the “moribund thesis” to demonstrate the importance and vitality of Buddhism in the Tokugawa era, see Ambros 2008; Hur 2000; Williams 2005. However, Tsuji’s “moribund thesis” does nothing to diminish the immense achievements of his works.
Overcoming the Medieval

Rather than thinking of the unification as the state’s overcoming of religion, it is more instructive to consider the event as the state overcoming the socio-political conditions of the late medieval era. The medieval historian, Nagahara Keiji, discussed the unification from such a perspective.\(^\text{329}\) The socio-political condition of the Sengoku era (1467-1573) was characterized by division. Diverse and competing regional powers co-existed without being bound to a whole. From the angle of a national-level history, the late medieval was an era of division, fluidity, and wars. But on a local level, there were robust systems of powers and hegemony that sustained order. Sōbun in sixteenth century Kōyasan is an example. But across the country, there were similar socio-political systems that administered their territories in a self-sufficient manner. Examples of these include the communes (sō惣) and leagues (ikki一揆) of peasants, warriors, townspeople, and religious organizations. In addition, there were the regional polities ruled by powerful provincial warlords known as Sengoku daimyo. The unification was a complex process of integrating them into a singular structure of power.

Tenka 天下 was a key concept in the politics of unification. Literally meaning “under heaven,” tenka derives from ancient Chinese thought. According to it, the heaven ruled the world, and the son of heaven governed the world with a heavenly mandate. The term was used in Japan since ancient times, but from ca. 1570, it was exploited by Oda Nobunaga in his bid for domination.\(^\text{330}\) According to Asao Naohiro, tenka as it was used in the late sixteenth century, “had acquired four concentric layers of meanings:

1. Japan and the people who lived there;
2. Kyoto and its environs, the locus of the regime that ruled the nation;
3. the regime itself; and
4. the individual rulers of the regime.”\(^\text{331}\)

Nobunaga tried to unite the tenka through military might, but died before realizing it. Hideyoshi and Ieyasu succeeded Nobunaga and achieved the unification; hence they were known as the “tenka persons” (tenka-bito天下人).

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\(^{329}\) Nagahara 1987, 204-10.

\(^{330}\) In the eighth century royal chronicle, Nihon shoki, it was read “ame no shita.” Nagahara 1987, 200.

\(^{331}\) Asao 1991, 80. Spacing between the four points has been altered by author.
Buddhist organizations were active players in the power struggles that culminated in the unification. Among the most formidable foes in Nobunaga’s bid for domination was the Pure Land league, which was a transregional religio-political confederation organized under the supreme authority of the patriarch of the Honganji temple.\textsuperscript{332} It took Nobunaga ten years of intermittent savage violence to make them submit in 1580. Notoriously, Nobunaga also “torched” the traditional Tendai headquarters and the powerful Hieizan in 1571 for siding with his opponents and refusing to heed his demands. It is said that the precinct became filled with corpses after it was razed by Nobunaga’s forces.\textsuperscript{333}

Indeed, the unifiers did not tolerate religious groups that defied them. But when they were targeted, it was more for their politics than religion; there is no indication that the unifiers wanted to destroy Buddhism. Hideyoshi said the Pure Land leagues became a “menace to the tenka” (tenka no sawari 天下のさわり) when they began to take control of land (chigyō 知行).\textsuperscript{334} The problem was not Pure Land Buddhism, but how Pure Land groups organized themselves. The task of the tenka persons was to subjugate these groups and sift them into the space they administered. Most religious groups did not fight the unifiers.

\textbf{Tenka and Numinous Powers}

Tenka can be considered as Japan’s space as a whole. The unification was a process of reorganizing all power relations in the country under the new regime. The question is, how did this come about? Needless to say, force was the fulcrum that initiated the new order. However, after the raw power struggles, the gains made on the battlegrounds had to be converted to a durable system of order. Without doing so, the system would not have endured for as long as it did—over two-and-a-half centuries. Hideyoshi and Ieyasu established administrative practices and deployed cultural strategies to assert mastery over the tenka. Among them, I consider 1) the state’s ritual relations with deities and divine powers in the here and now, and 2) the arbitration of local social tensions to be the key factors in assessing the state’s impact on temples and shrines.

\textsuperscript{332} The patriarch, called shūsu 祖主, was a position held on a hereditary basis by the house that descended from the founder of the True Pure Land sect, Shinran (1173-1262). See Asao 1988, 50-60; Tsang 2007; Kanda 1995, 20-43.
\textsuperscript{333} Asao 1988, 39-41.
\textsuperscript{334} As emphasized by Fukaya Katsumi. See Fukaya 1981, 106. This is taken from Hideyoshi’s red-seal memorandum that proclaimed the prohibition of the spread of Christianity and the expulsion of missionaries in 1587. The full transcription of the memorandum is featured in Kirishitan kenkyū, 268.
The term tenka alludes to a holistic vision that saw the world suffused with subliminal powers. It warrants a consideration for the religious imaginaries and worldviews that were related to the political practices at the time. How did people of the time, including the tenka persons, situate themselves in the world around them? What kind of exceptional powers did they see, feel, or imagine to be at work in the space that they occupied? How did those powers influence political decisions and processes?

Herman Ooms argues that the political order that was constructed through military might came to be regarded as an expression of a universalized “heavenly principle” (tentō 天道).\(^{335}\) As Maruyama Masao articulated, in the tentō thought, ethics and politics were linked with nature in the naturalist ontology that he gleaned from Neo-Confucian philosophy.\(^{336}\) In these interpretations, political order was naturalized and sanctified through monistic metaphysics and abstract ideology. The material power of the tenka persons was augmented with cosmic powers to establish insurmountable order.

But that begs the question of the geographical and material manifestations of religion, and the power of deities that had for so long influenced society. Did these have a place in the tenka? Were they simply overcome and displaced?

Indeed, as Ooms discusses, all the unifiers became deities.\(^{337}\) The apotheosis may appear as though they supplanted religion and deities.\(^{338}\) According to Luis Frois, Nobunaga built the temple Sōkenji—“see all temple”—next to his great castle in Azuchi, and he declared himself as the shintai, or the divine body of that temple.\(^{339}\) Nobunaga as a living god propagated his own miraculous power to dispense various forms of this-worldly blessings, such as longevity, cure from illness, fertility and good fortune, while vowing to punish the wicked. These attributes of Nobunaga’s divine powers closely resemble typical kami and buddhas that attracted worship from across the social strata.\(^{340}\) His alleged plan to bring sacred images from around the country to his own shrine suggests that he situated himself above other deities. However, it is difficult to argue that he tried to remove or divorce deities and divine powers from politics.

\(^{336}\) Maruyama 1952, 25-37.
\(^{337}\) Ooms 1985, 45-62.
\(^{338}\) For instance, Asao Naohiro states that “the actual guardian deities of the land of the gods were no longer the spiritual kami but, rather, the men of the realm (tenka) who had assumed that responsibility.” Asao 1991, 83.
\(^{339}\) They Came to Japan, 101-102.
\(^{340}\) Ian Reader and George Tanabe suggest that central to the common religion of Japan, which spanned across the social strata, is the belief in the ability of deities and rituals to dispense various forms of practical benefits in this life and the next. See Reader and Tanabe 1998.
The blurring of the boundary between human and superhuman realms by the *tenka* persons is indicative of the ambivalence with which these men and the regime that they founded engaged with deities and their extraordinary powers. They acted like gods. At the same time, they needed divine powers to sustain their practical power to rule. All in all, their deification was not a displacement of the existing pantheon, but the entry of the warlords-cum-gods into the rank of deities that animated the geography of the *tenka*. Given the pervasive influence of deities in social life at the time, their deification was almost inevitable—to justify and rationalize the ultimate power they commanded—so far beyond the experience of other mortal men.341

In the eyes of the *tenka* persons, deities animated the land and space that they conquered. It should be noted that both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi supported the repairs of the Ise shrines as well as the Tōdaiji temple.342 These were ritual sites that had been associated with national rule and protection since the Nara period (710-784).

The old notion of *shinkoku* is most instructive in examining the place of deities in the new order.343 This idea was marshalled by Hideyoshi, then by Ieyasu and the Tokugawa state in order to eradicate Christianity in Japan.344 The state consolidated its power over land by acting as the guardian of the Buddhist and native deities that dwelled on the Japanese archipelago. Naturally, vitalization of the country’s numinous landscape was essential to administration.345 As Hideyoshi said, missionaries and Christian converts who “destroyed temples and shrines” and “injured the Buddhist law” had no place in Japan.346 This alludes to the crucial roles that temples and shrines played in mediating the regime with the realm of deities. However, this topic has not been sufficiently explored. As I demonstrate with the example of Kōyasan, temples and shrines played important roles in the creation and sustenance of the new order. Their transformation during the period should be understood in relation to the state’s ritual engagement with earth-bound deities that were inextricably connected with the body politic of the early modern state.

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341 Ōkuwa Hitoshi argues that the deification of the unifiers was their response to the religiosity of common people. The daily lives of the latter were based upon religious cosmology, hence the rulers needed a mechanism to absorb their worldview and create a transcendental polity. See Ōkuwa 2012, 114-15.
343 According to Kuroda, *shinkoku* thought in the medieval era referred to the notion that was commonly held among the elites that land, people, and the polity of Japan were protected by deities. See Kuroda 1975a, 328.
344 Hur 2007, 33-47.
345 As Nam-In Hur puts it, “Ieyasu linked the socio-political order of Tokugawa Japan with the ‘natural self-working’ of the gods and buddhas.” Hur 2007, 47.
**Tenka Space**

The *tenka* persons were seasoned warriors who ruled with pragmatism. They were preoccupied with taking control of the political relations, and dealt with ritual matters to the extent that doing so augmented their power and buttressed order. Their goal was to sit atop the complex of power relations on the national-scale, and keep it that way.

To achieve that, they unleashed the power to codify socioeconomic relations in the space that they ruled. Hideyoshi’s separation of warriors and peasants is a classic example. It clarified and imposed the socioeconomic prerogatives and duties attached to various social groups based on the institution of social status. Warriors performed military duties and received land and stipends; peasants paid taxes and held the right to cultivate; and religionists performed their ritual duties and received stipends, too. Hideyoshi’s land surveys also codified the allocation of socioeconomic prerogatives. The purpose of these policies was to create an integrated system that allowed the state to mobilize the resources of the country for military goals. The means to do so was by formalizing the prerogatives and spaces held by diverse groups that were constitutive members of the unified society. Hence, the kernel of state power was to codify duties and prerogatives to reorganize the *tenka* space under its paramount power.

But **caveats** are necessary.

The first pertains to how Hideyoshi carried out the two policies mentioned above, the land surveys and the separation of warriors and peasants. When he carried out the land surveys, he did so in the name of presenting the *gozenchō* (御前帳), or land register of the nation, for the “royal viewing” (*eiran* 響覧) by the emperor. It supported the rationale that “every inch of land in Japan” was subject to his measurement. According to Takagi Shōsaku, this was related to the emperor’s traditional role as the country’s high priest who placated the deities and spirits that dwelled on land. Divine powers were inseparable from Hideyoshi’s disarmament of peasants as well. In his so-called “sword-hunt decree” of 1588, he declared that the confiscation of arms from peasants would “help peasants not just in this life but the next” because the metal would be repurposed to make nails and joints for the construction of a statue of *daibutsu* 大仏, the Great

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347 This interpretation is related to the analysis of the social system under the Tokugawa shogunate, especially regarding the system of status and duties as discussed in Bitô 1992, 18-42; Howell 2005, 21-41; Takagi 1987.

348 As I will discuss on page 161. Zokuhôkanshū 37-338 [KM2].

349 Takagi 1990, 11-18.
And by devoting themselves to cultivation of crops, Hideyoshi declared, peasants would “prosper in eternity over generations,” and establish the “foundation for the peace of the national-land and everyone’s happiness.” Certainly, as Hideyoshi stated in the decree, his goal was to disarm the peasants, and prevent them from forging *ikki* and refusing to pay taxes. At the same time, implicit in the decree was the understanding that the physical statue of the Great Buddha served as a link between Hideyoshi’s ruling power, the space of the *tenka*, and the ineffable power of the Buddha and the divine realm.

**Local Space, Order, and Arbitration**

In addition, we should not merely assume that the unified state simply dominated society unilaterally. Here, we need to adjust the focus from the state and consider the role of local politics in forging change. The unification, again, was a process of integrating what had been autonomously controlled regional spaces into a unified one. Like Kōyasan’s *sōbun*, there were localized schemes of power that administered regional spaces, and they sustained order not simply by imposing power from above, but by maintaining peace and stability, not least by resolving conflicts. Such regional powers, to borrow from Niki, can be considered as “public authority from below” in contrast to the “public authority from above” of the new state. The key to understand the transition to the new order lies in assessing how “public authorities from below” were imbricated, reorganized, mutated or co-opted by the ruling power of the state from above.

We might be mistaken to assume that the key tension at the time was that between the fledgling state and society. In reality, tensions that mattered to people often lay elsewhere. The saying, “All politics is local” seems particularly relevant here. It was within the course of daily life that people staked out their positions amidst threats, challenges and opportunities. The question is how local tensions were dealt with by the new system of rule.

However, the role of local politics in the formation of the new order has tended to be overlooked. Mary Elizabeth Berry has examined the documents issued in 1583 and 1584 by Hideyoshi’s Kyoto magistrate, Maeda Gen’i. Interestingly, Gen’i never failed to confirm

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352 Berry 1983.
commercial and property rights of guilds and religious institutions in Kyoto. While Berry notes that the documents were judicial pronouncements, she stressed how Gen’i’s unfailing support of the privileges that were granted by the authorities of the past served to “camouflage the gravest discontinuities with a traditional coloration.”

Using the French Revolution as a point of reference, Berry suggests that Hideyoshi’s “embrace of the past” was related to his “pursuit of both political legitimacy and a healing revitalization of the symbols of national union.”

This might offer a compelling explanation of the motive of Gen’i and his lord. However, what do we make of the fact that the documents in question were Gen’i’s arbitration of disputes? He did not simply embrace the past, but confirmed the privileges that were outlined in old proof documents that disputants presented to him. What does this tell us about the nature of the regime’s power and its relations to the society it ruled? The groups in Kyoto had been wielding documents to assert and protect their socioeconomic spaces—the “chunks” of the world that they occupied—and they did the same when Hideyoshi came into power. For them, it perhaps mattered little that Hideyoshi was a relative upstart who used brutal and bloody means ascend to power. What was critical was whether or not he could protect their spaces from the threats and challenges that they faced while trying to eke out a living. For his part, Hideyoshi willfully dispensed his power to resolve conflicts, and Gen’i’s office served that function.

What is missing in a top-down analysis of state formation are the quotidian experiences of the people who lived through that age. It begs the question of how people made their own history during what appears to have been a dramatic time of change. The unification was not simply a construction of new political institutions, but a process that reconstituted the social life of the ruled. If local conflicts linked social groups with state power, it also warrants an assessment of what state power was from the perspective of the ruled. Local spaces had always

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353 Ibid., 85.
354 Ibid., 84, 89.
355 Berry also stresses that in 1591 Hideyoshi cancelled all land taxes and imposts in Kyoto. She assumes that the support of precedents, after all, was a short-term strategy adopted by the regime during its early stage (79, 83). But that was not the case, at least insofar as its policy toward temples and shrines are concerned. According to Itô Shinshō, Gen’i and the Toyotomi regime always ruled in favour of the old elites of temple societies when resolving temples’ internal conflicts, at least to 1599. See Itô 2003, 201-40. Kodama Kōta’s study on the landholding system of the Kamigamo shrine 上賀茂神社 in Kyoto should be noted here. According to Kodama, the Kamigamo shrine administered a landholding system in which income from the shrine’s land was allocated to the members of its assembly. The system was likely in place since 1303. After Hideyoshi’s surveys in 1591, the shrine was granted 2,500 koku of land and the landholding system continued to operate. A rupture to the system was a dispute between “shrine attendants” (ujibito 氏人) and “ritual officiants” (shashi 社司) of the shrine, which was adjudicated by the Tokugawa authorities in 1664. See Kodama 1937. By and large, the methodical support of documented precedent, and of the old elites of diversified temple societies, were adopted by the Tokugawa state in its dealing with temples and shrines. See Yoshii 1984.
been contentious, and it remained that way under the new ruler. This is not simply because people are self-serving and utilitarian, but because the problem of co-existence in a space is a perennial one for humanity. People need space and territory to survive, and seek ways to obtain them in the face of various threats. If there were systems that sustained regional order in the pre-unification era, whatever inequalities that they may have perpetuated, they were the achievements and results of the hard-fought struggles and negotiations of the people who produced these results over the course of the preceding centuries.

The question, then, is what happened to those local systems? And what was the unification for the unified?

Needless to say, there would be many different answers to these questions. The experience of the unification would have varied among the different social groups that were affected by it. For the most part, such experiences are lost to history, forgotten and forever unrecoverable. We simply have no access to the voices of the great majority of the people with first-hand experiences of the unification.

The answer that I present in the two chapters to follow is a highly selective one that pertains to the social groups of Kōyasan, and mostly the privileged ones among them. It must also be stressed that it focuses almost entirely on the political and economic aspects of their life. I am omitting their devotional life and religious pursuits which were likely important factors for many of the monks who occupied Kōyasan at the time. My selective focus is related to the documents that I have had access to. As with those records alluded to in the previous chapters, the ones that I will cite in the analysis to follow concern the power and socioeconomic relations that animated the temple space.

At the same time, they speak to us of the pressing issues that monks faced as they witnessed their old customs and traditions came under attack by an unbeatable foe. Did their deities protect them? Some might argue affirmatively. Others might assert that one Ōgo was worth a parade of deities. The documents also tell us how the monks adapted to the new reality, the compromises required in the face of irrevocable historical currents and how they remade themselves and their temple.

To situate Kōyasan’s place in a range of possible experiences of the unification, Itō Shinshō’s comments on the temples and shrines during the reign of the Toyotomi regime is
instructive. He suggests that if we follow the dominant account of the relationship between temples and shrines and the unified state—what he calls the “discourse of the defeat of temples and shrines”—we might expect a notable rupture at temples and shrines across the transition of the unification. He questions if such an assumption is valid, because the model is built on the selective cases of the few temple organizations that resisted the unifiers, and were thus defeated. Most temples concluded resistance was futile and did not resist. According to Itō, temples of all sects in Kyoto received land grants from the Toyotomi regime, and were treated as rightful overlords. There were considerable negotiations of interests between members of the temples and shrines in Kyoto and the Toyotomi regime through the office of the Kyoto magistrate.

Kōyasan’s experience was somewhat unique. It resisted Nobunaga, and were it not for Akechi Mitsuhide’s seditious plot that cost him his life early in 1582, Kōyasan may have been destroyed like Hieizan. It again came close to being crushed by Hideyoshi in 1585. But that time, the monks chose to surrender. Hideyoshi both regulated and supported the temple. Indeed, his policies triggered a far-reaching change at the temple that can only be described as a great rupture. All the same, the change was propelled both by Hideyoshi’s policies and forces that welled up from within the temple space. As we shall see, it unravelled the complex system of order that the monks had developed and honed through their long medieval experiences.

Four: The Hideyoshi Rupture

In the third month of 1585, the warlord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, invaded the Kii province. Following Nobunaga’s footstep, Hideyoshi had his eye on unifying the nation; he was close. But the religious “republics” of Kii remained outside of Hideyoshi’s control. Thus he set to “pacify” them through military force. The Negoro temple and the stronghold of the Pure Land league at Saika resisted. They were summarily destroyed. Then he flooded the castle of Ōta in present-day Wakayama city to deal a final blow to the remnants of that league.357

Kōyasan was next. The monks knew that there was no chance against him. They surrendered without a shot being fired. Thus ended the temple’s medieval mode as an autonomous regional power. From that moment to the fall of the Tokugawa state in 1868, the temple was subsumed under the ruling system of the unified state of early modern Japan.

What happened to the temple as it entered the new political order is the topic we shall explore in this chapter. While this might seem a simple question and while there are several important studies that deal with Kōyasan during the Hideyoshi years, the topic has not been directly addressed.358 Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction, historiography of temples and shrines during the period has been limited largely to the analysis of state action; what happened to the temples is a question that has been overlooked.359 There is little doubt that the new rulers established a new power relationship with the temples. The experiences of Kōyasan reveal deeper and more complex changes that unfolded during the period than can be contained under the rubric of domination. Also, it seems to me that Buddhism at Kōyasan reached its true golden age in the Tokugawa era. To understand how that was possible, it is essential to come to terms with what happened to the temple during the dawning stage of the new order.

This chapter examines Hideyoshi’s impact on Kōyasan. We will focus on the critical years from 1585 to 1600 and explore the following questions: What did Hideyoshi do to the temple and how did he change it? What role did the deities and the temple’s landscape play in linking the temple and Hideyoshi? What was the relationship between Hideyoshi’s ritual politics and the temple? What happened to Kōyasan’s ichimi and the monks’ relation to the sacred landscape that was at the heart of their medieval politics?

In hindsight, Hideyoshi changed Kōyasan forever when three new policies were instituted. The first was the disarmament of the temple and the separation of monks and warriors. He confined Kōyasan into a sphere of “rituals and studies,” and removed it from the domain of hard-politics. To put that differently, he imposed a novel threshold of acceptable behaviour and action on the members of the temple. They were now made to serve the formal duty of performing rituals to protect the country. Second, he carried out his own land surveys on temple’s land and subjected its landholding to the system of land grants that was administered by his regime. As McMullin has argued, these measures nullified the autonomy of the temple and undermined its economic independence. Third, he empowered a single monk to rule the temple under his authority. This disrupted the long tradition of collective administration that the temple had practiced throughout its medieval experience, and heralded the emergence of a hegemonic monk who presided over the temple space as a whole. Mokujiki Ōgo 木食応其 (1536-1608) was the name of that monk and we will examine the role he played in linking Kōyasan to Hideyoshi’s regime and in facilitating Kōyasan’s transformation from its medieval to the early modern mode.

Combined, these policies created a dramatic rupture in the history of the temple. It is standard to discuss the emergence of the unified state under Hideyoshi and Ieyasu as the realization of order and stability. But the case of Kōyasan suggests that the opposite could be true. The pressure of state formation set in motion a dissolution of internal order at Kōyasan. By the time Ieyasu grasped power in 1600, the temple had plummeted into a state of near-total chaos. This was not the intent of the rulers. Nor was it caused by their measures alone. Rather, it was a result of the interplay of policies, and forces and dynamics from within the temple society. All the same, the tension between the new ruler and the temple was absorbed by the sacred landscape of the temple and the mountain, which became an indispensable part of the ruling system created by Hideyoshi.

4.1 The Hideyoshi Pressure

The structural tension between the unifying state and Kōyasan came the fore when the latter submitted to the former. After leaving the Negoro temple in ashes and destroying the bastions of the Saika leagues in the Kii province, Hideyoshi delivered a seven-point demand to

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360 Kasahara 2009.
361 For instance, Butler 2012, 311.
Kōyasan on the tenth day of the fourth month, 1585. This was an ultimatum for the temple. The demands spelled out the basic attitudes of Hideyoshi toward the temple and they concerned the temple’s landholding, use of force and the sheltering of those who opposed the *tenka*.

To dismantle the temple’s autonomy, he prohibited the latter two and subjected the first to his approval. This was a historic event for Kōyasan. No ruler before him had constrained the power and space held by the temple. But now, Hideyoshi simply threatened to destroy the temple if his demands were not heeded. His threats and military might brought the temple to its knees.

Nevertheless, a close reading of the demand reveals that Hideyoshi was quite strategic in dominating the temple and naturalizing his power by using the tradition of the temple itself. Hence, he began as follows:

Item: Since the temple’s land is clearly shown on Kōbō Daishi’s hand-print, that land shall be held by Kōyasan.
Item: If Kōyasan has usurped land, it would mean that the temple has violated Kōbō Daishi’s hand-print. This will eventually result in the destruction of the temple.
Item: It is an evil subversion that temple monks, ascetics and other monks not only neglect studies but also make and keep arms and guns.
Item: In accordance to the laws of Kōbō Daishi, temple monks, ascetics and those below must devote themselves to Buddhist matters (*butuji* 仏事=rituals)…

The mention of the temple’s land in the first two items is indicative of the centrality of land for both Hideyoshi and monks, but note that Hideyoshi confirmed the temple’s landholding legitimacy based on Kōbō Daishi’s hand-print. What this means is that the demands were not devised by Hideyoshi alone, but through negotiation with monks. Monks, facing the biggest threat yet to their land, resorted to their ultimate defensive measure: the hand-print legend. It worked. Needless to say, they brought the artefact out of the Portrait Hall for viewing by the warlord. That gave Hideyoshi justification for his demands on the hallowed tradition of the temple. Similarly, the demand to disarm was justified by the “laws” of Kōbō Daishi. This was not arbitrary either. By this time, Kōyasan monks had been hearing Kōbō Daishi’s injunction

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362 *Kangaku-in documents* 1-66 [KMK1]; *Zokuhōkanshū* 71-822 [KM3].
against the use of arms on a routine basis for over two centuries; it was the first item in the 1348 *ichimi* covenant that was recited during the Rites of the Four Seasons.\textsuperscript{363}

As such, Hideyoshi shifted Kōyasan into his political order through leveraging Buddhist rituals and the spirit of Kōbō Daishi. This was not unique to his treatment of Kōyasan. He used a similar strategy to dominate and control other temples. The 1594 law handed down to temples of different sects in Kyoto is a case in point.\textsuperscript{364} In it, he demanded monks attend rituals and studies of their respective sects without negligence. It also prohibited sex with women and the eating of meat. The concern here was the monks’ behaviour and action (gyōgi 行儀). To ensure that there was no misbehaviour, he ordered that the high and low within temple societies subject themselves to a rigorous mutual surveillance. Moreover, he ordered monks to present “a slip” (issatsu 一札) to the “Buddha and the founder” (busso kaizan 仏祖開山) once a month, then submit a divine oath to the deputy annually. What was to be written on the slip and presented to the Buddha and founder is not stated, but we can assume that it was to be a form of vow to commit to Hideyoshi’s laws.

This suggests the importance of the “Buddha and founder” for temple societies. Hideyoshi co-opted them to implement his policy. But these were not simply a Buddha and founder, but images that were enshrined as key objects of worship of temple societies. Monks were to place their vow in the sanctum of the most important deities of their establishment and the latter were to ensure the monks’ compliance with Hideyoshi’s rules. With that, he used the numinous power of the temple to impose his demands. Moreover, by demanding monks submit a divine oath, monks were to treat Hideyoshi like their Buddha and founder.

In this manner, Hideyoshi retained the organic element of temples to bring them under his control. For Hideyoshi, the Buddha and the founder were a given; they were a critical part of monks’ social existence. As we will see, the fusing of the deities and Hideyoshi’s will was evident at Kōyasan as it became firmly integrated into the latter’s political system. But why would Hideyoshi behave so seemingly traditionally and demand attendance to rituals and studies? According to the 1594 law, it was to permit Buddhist law to revive and thrive.\textsuperscript{365} Why

\textsuperscript{363} *Kongōsanmai-in documents* 356 [KMK2].


\textsuperscript{365} For instance, the law of 1594 mentioned above concludes by saying that by adhering to the rules stated therein, pilgrims from town and country and myriad people high and low would be moved to tears, the temples would recover their patrons, and the Buddhist law would prosper.
was this? How was it in his best interests to ensure that the Buddhist law prospered in the tenka? We shall come back to this.

To be sure, Hideyoshi’s power was absolute. The 1585 demands were concluded with the statement that if everyone at the mountain submits a document of their complete acceptance of each of his demands, “Hideyoshi will make arrangements to let the mountain stand” (*tōzan aitate sōrō yō Hideyoshi chisō subeki koto 当山相立候様秀吉可馳走事*).\(^{366}\)

This is perhaps the clearest expression of the power relation between the two. Hideyoshi held the power to determine whether or not the mountain could survive. He reminded the monks that Heizan and Negoro-dera were destroyed for opposing the tenka. It was clearly understood that the tenka was the new primary consideration. The temple’s own system of autonomous order was now history and its dissolution a precondition for its existence in an altered form. With that, he forcibly transformed the temple from a bastion of hard-political power to a “religious” institution that served the regime through its ritual performance.

But within that framework, Hideyoshi was to “let the mountain stand.” In substance, this meant two things. First, by prohibiting the temple from using force, Hideyoshi vowed to enforce order with his own might. Hence, within two weeks of the temple’s acceptance of Hideyoshi’s demands, Hideyoshi’s signpost was erected *in the precinct*. It proclaimed: 1) a ban on violent and disruptive behaviours; 2) those who caused troubles were to be taken to him; and 3) thieves were to be summarily executed. These laws were vested with Hideyoshi’s power, embodied in the “red seal,” for all to see.\(^{367}\)

Second, he assured the economic viability of the temple with his land grants. For as long as monks could remember, the control of land was among the most urgent task that had to be realized and maintained through their own efforts. But now, land was guaranteed by the state. Therefore, his land grants presented a major break from the past. Hideyoshi issued three separate grants.

1. 3,000 *koku* in the Uchi county of Yamato province and Ito county of Kii province on the eleventh day of the sixth month, 1585.\(^{368}\)

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\(^{366}\) *Kangaku-in documents* 1-66 [KMK1].

\(^{367}\) *Kangaku-in documents* 1-68 [KMK1].

\(^{368}\) *Kōzanji documents* 9-70 [KMK4].
2. 10,000 *koku* or 27 villages in the vicinity of Kōyasan on the twenty-first day of the tenth month, 1591.  

3. 10,000 *koku* or 14 estates in the vicinity of Kōyasan on the fourth day of the eighth month, 1592.

Aside from that, he had granted 1,000 *koku* for Ōgo. The latter two grants replaced the first one and with that, the total amount of his grants were 21,000 *koku*. Though the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu, added 300 *koku* in 1649, Hideyoshi’s grants were the basis for Kōyasan’s landholding until 1871 when its land was confiscated by the Meiji government.

But in issuing these grants, Hideyoshi cloaked his action with the temple’s tradition and embedded his power in its holy landscape. He recognized the hand-print legend as legitimate, and did not survey Kōyasan’s land until the fall of 1591. But his first land grant was issued before that, on the eleventh day of the sixth month in 1585. Notably, that grant was issued not directly by him, but by Emperor Ōgimachi (1517-1593). Hideyoshi gave an instruction to his deputy in Kyoto to have an imperial grant given to Kōyasan in the amount of 3,000 *koku*. This land included the Uchi county of Yamato province—where Kōbō Daishi met the Hunter deity in the *engi*. Evidently, the grant was Hideyoshi’s response to the submission to him of a divine blood-oath by “everyone in the entire mountain” (*manzan ichidō* 満山一同) in which they vowed never again to take up arms and instead devote themselves to Buddhist rituals to protect the country. But at the same time, the grant was also arranged for the purpose of making merit for his mother’s afterlife, prior to her actual death in a practice called *gyakushu* 逆修. To generate that merit, income from the land was to be used to repair the Golden Hall. Indeed, ritual for afterlife salvation had been Kōyasan’s specialty since the Heian era and Hideyoshi designated Kōyasan as the prayer temple for this and the afterlife of his own house.

Hideyoshi’s power was now embodied in the Golden Hall, as was his mother, Naka, for whom monks directed their ritual power. The trend continued in 1592 when Hideyoshi issued the

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369 *Renjō-in documents* [KMK3-178].
370 *Zokuhōkanshū* 37-339 [KM2].
373 *Kōzanji documents* 9-70 [KMK4]. Hideyoshi’s instruction to Maeda Gen’i to have the court issue the grant is featured in *Kōzanji documents* 9-69 [KMK4].
374 *Kōzanji documents* 9-69 [KMK4].
375 *Zokuhōkanshū* 37-337 [KM2].
376 *Zokuhōkanshū* 51-406 [KM3].
second of the two 10,000 *koku* grants, which was issued to finance the construction of the temple Teihatsuji. The purpose of this was to make merit for the afterlife care of Naka, who had now died.\(^{377}\) As the temple for Hideyoshi’s mother, the Teihatsuji enshrined her relic—in the form of hair that Hideyoshi is said to have brought to Kōyasan during his 1594 visit.\(^{378}\) Naka was now physically subsumed into Kōyasan’s landscape.

Hideyoshi evidently took Kōyasan’s ritual efficacy seriously and Naka appears to have been a devout worshipper of Kōyasan. Like Empress Bifukumon-in, the Kamakura and Muromachi shogunate, Emperor Godaigo and other rulers and political figures, Hideyoshi robustly supported Kōyasan and wanted to reap its ritual blessings. Unlike the rulers before him, he dramatically hollowed out the temple’s power. Yet, even his land grants, which decisively dismantled the temple’s autonomy, did not present a clear-cut structural tension between his ruling power and the temple. That tension was absorbed by the temple’s sacred landscape, which connected the monks with the hegemonic ruler and the material resources that he bestowed.

### 4.2 The End of the Hand-Print Legend and the Domestication of the “Entire Mountain”

However, there remained a dangerous tension between Hideyoshi’s system of order and the temple’s. This is revealed in the following excerpt from Hideyoshi’s red seal document that addressed “everyone at Kongōbuji” (*Kongōbuji sōchū 金剛峯寺惣中*). It was issued on the twenty-fourth day of the tenth month, 1591, three days after his first 10,000 *koku* grant.

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Item: Recently, I punished the Negoro and Kokawa temples as well as the Saika league. Kōyasan should have been destroyed, too, but Kōzan high priest (Ōgo) expressed remorse. He vowed to rectify the corrupt practices of the temple by purging arms from the temple, punishing rebels and have monks devote themselves to Buddhist matters (*butsuji 仏事* = ritual) and studies without negligence. That is why I let the temple stand and land worth 3,000 *koku* was granted to that end.

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\(^{377}\) *Zokuhōkanshū 37-339 [KM2]*. The details of the actual grant can be found in *Zokuhōkanshū 37-340 [KM2]*.

\(^{378}\) *KSF*, vol. 5, scroll 7 (ascetics).
Item: The land surveys are being conducted to list every inch of land in Japan on the venerable book (nihon kokunai sundo shakuchi nokosazu matsudai toshite gozenchō aisadame rare ni tsukite gokenchi ōse tsukeraru tokoro 日本国內不殘寸土尺地、為末代御前帳被相定ニ付て、御検地被仰付處). I am utterly shocked to find that Kōyasan has held 50,000 koku of land in addition to 3,000 koku that I granted. Is this to say that grant was given in addition to the “old land” of the temple? In the various provinces, when fief-holders receive grants, they list the yield of every plot of land regardless of whether or not they are new or old land. To say that [the previous grant] was separate from the “old land” is an unpardonable offence.\footnote{Zokuhōkanshō 37-338 [KM2].}

Here, Hideyoshi’s claim to control “every inch of land in Japan” clashed with what he regarded as the temple’s concealment of its “old land” (kyūryō 旧領). The monk, Ōgo, cushioned that tension between the two. The logic of the clash was Kōyasan’s “old land” pitted against the “venerable book.” The book referred to the land register of the entire country that was to be present for the “royal viewing” (eiran 敏覧) by the emperor. That was Hideyoshi’s stated purpose for carrying out the surveys.\footnote{Takagi 1990, 11.} Hideyoshi was uncompromising in asserting mastery over every inch of land in Japan, but through the royal authority. On the other hand, the “old land” referred to the temple’s landholding based on the hand-print legend. To be sure, in the 3,000 koku of land given in 1585, Hideyoshi clearly stated that the land was given in addition to the hand-print land.\footnote{Kōzanji documents 9: 69-70 [KMK4].} Six years later, however, that no longer mattered. For Hideyoshi, no landholding was allowed unless he codified it.

This represents the moment when the political utility of the hand-print legend ended. Hideyoshi trumped the legend and replaced it with his own grant. He achieved that in two ways. One was the strategy of the “venerable book,” which had a ritualistic element. According to Takagi Shōsaku, the common religious imaginary of the time saw land and nature as being inhabited by deities and spirits that needed to be placated.\footnote{Takagi 1990, 15-16.} The traditional role of the emperor was that of a high priest who mediated the social world with the awesome power of nature and
its deities. Hideyoshi used the emperor’s ritual mastery over land in order to carry out the surveys. To me, this is a point of critical importance.

Even as Hideyoshi defeated his enemies with military might, ritual was part of his scheme of hegemony. He did not assert a political mastery over land without ritual engagement with the subliminal quality of the land that he ruled. And the ritual authority of the emperor gave him the cultural leverage to contain Kōyasan’s medieval land claim.

All the same, the subjugation was achieved through an outright threat of destruction. But this, too, had a ritualistic consequence. In the above red-seal document, Hideyoshi forced monks to submit a divine oath to swear loyalty to the state.

That was not the first time that Hideyoshi extracted a divine oath from Kōyasan monks. As noted above, in 1585, Hideyoshi had received a “divine blood-oath” from “everyone at the entire mountain,” in which they vowed to renounce arms and devote themselves to Buddhist rituals and the protection of the state. The extraction of divine vows was a strategy that Hideyoshi used to control other groups as well, but at Kōyasan, it violated the monks’ relation to the deities. In the medieval era, what ruled the mountain and the plains was the subliminal ichimi of monks that was fused with the deities of the mountain. But now, monks were forced to vow their subservience to the ruler in the name of those deities. With that stroke, Hideyoshi co-opted the deities and domesticated the power of ichimi that was at the heart of Kōyasan’s autonomy. After all, Hideyoshi had brought the “mountain” to its knees. Included were humans, edifices and deities.

As such, Kōyasan was subdued under Hideyoshi’s might while retaining its pantheons. The basic features of its landscape and worship were unaltered. However, with his land surveys, Hideyoshi maimed the temple society at its heart. Up to this time, the source of the temple’s claim to land were deities and legends. The land was the basis for the regional political formation in the previous era and the temple had survived because it was the proprietor of that land. But now, Hideyoshi inserted himself as the ultimate source of land. His grants became the basis for the aggregate of duties and prerogatives which structured the temple space. State power had displaced the engi as the focal point of the temple’s economic life.

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383 Kōzanji documents 9-69 [KMK4].
384 For instance, Nagahara Keiji mentions the divine oaths that Hideyoshi extracted in 1595 from warlords to secure their loyalty to his heir, Hideyori. Nagahara 1987, 215.
There was another rupture that the surveys wrought. In the previous era, the temple carried out the surveys to “retie” land rights on their own. But the new surveys were conducted by officials dispatched by the Toyotomi regime, who went into villages with standardized rods and ropes to measure land.\textsuperscript{385} The new registers, moreover, recorded the name of the person responsible for remitting tax for each plot of land, together with the size of the plot and the estimated annual yield. This simplified the recording practices, since the old registers recorded “landlord” and “cultivator” for each plot of land.\textsuperscript{386} What this means is that the temple’s power over the plains was decidedly weakened; it no longer controlled land rights. The state codified property allocation and became the master of the regional space.

The temple’s direct control of land became a thing of the past. Kōyasan only held land through the medium of state power. We shall come back to the consequence later.

All in all, from 1585 to 1592, Hideyoshi imposed new boundaries of the space that was occupied by Kōyasan. The temple was disarmed, removed from hard-politics and confined to the sphere of “rituals and studies.” The members of the temple society could no longer defend their interests or realize political goals on their own. Hideyoshi’s grants were lucrative, but his new regime reduced the temple’s land by more than half.

4.3 Mokujiki Ōgo and Hideyoshi’s Ritual Politics

Kōyasan’s transformation under the unified state would have been very different were it not for the monk, Mokujiki Ōgo (1536-1608). He saved the temple from destruction by Hideyoshi. Ōgo entered the temple late in his life. He practiced asceticism and was a kanjin monk, who specialized in raising funds to repair buildings. He was not part of the ascetics, clerics, holy-men or sōbun, but a “visiting monk” (kyakusō 客僧) who occupied a space outside the established organization of Kōyasan. His rather marginal status did not hinder his power at all.

Little is known of Ōgo before 1585, but a stupa dedicated to him, in the Inner Sanctuary of Kōyasan, says that he was from the Sasaki house in the Ōmi province.\textsuperscript{387} The Sasaki was likely a warrior house and Ōgo is said to have renounced the world and come to Kōyasan at the

\textsuperscript{385} Kudoyama chōshi hensan iinkai 2009, 249-51.
\textsuperscript{386} For instance, the land register of the Kanshōfu estate in 1394 shows “landlord” and “cultivator” for each plot of land, whereas the one for the Kosawa village in Kudoyama in 1591 lists only one titled person. Kudoyama chōshi, shiryō, 201-206; 372-79.
\textsuperscript{387} Maeda 2010, 35; Wada 1976b, 244-45.
age of thirty-eight in 1571 to memorialize his deceased lord. The earliest surviving record that Ōgo produced seems to be a letter that he wrote to the subtemple Kongōsanmai-in in 1575. In it, Ōgo mentioned that he had repurchased a ritual hall (dōjō 道場) in the merchant city of Sakai and that he wanted to borrow an image of Kōbō Daishi from Kongōsanmai-in to enshrine in there. This suggests that he was a mobile monk with a network beyond the confines of the temple. Since he referred to himself as Mokujiki Ōgo of the Golden Hall, he must have been an ascetic fundraising monk who based his activity at the Golden Hall in Danjō Garan. The next record is from 1583 and is a copper plaque that was placed in the Shrine after its repairs were completed. The plaque states that Ōgo managed that repair and he dedicated his work for “the peace and stability of the temple and the flourishing of the Buddhist law.” These suggest that Ōgo was likely quite influential among the fundraising monks of Kōyasan at the time.

But Ōgo came to true prominence after 1585. When Hideyoshi invaded Kii, Ōgo is said to have negotiated and pleaded with him not to destroy the temple. Hideyoshi, in turn, saw in Ōgo a man fit to rule the temple and rid it of its practices of acting like a warrior power. Hideyoshi evidently was very fond of Ōgo. Famously, he boasted in front of an entourage of monks and warlords at his castle in Osaka:

Kōyasan has been allowed to stand for Ōgo and Ōgo only. One should not think of him as Ōgo of Kōyasan. Rather, Kōyasan is Ōgo’s.

With Hideyoshi’s endorsement, Ōgo ruled Kōyasan from 1585 to 1600. Why did Hideyoshi give Ōgo his public and unconditional backing? The answer to these questions holds the key to understanding the political context of Kōyasan’s transition under Hideyoshi.

There are two reasons that we can consider.

388 Kongōsanmai-in documents [KM2-330].
390 Zokuhōkanshū 37-338 [KM2].
391 This statement is based on Ōgo’s own record of Hideyoshi’s words, at his castle in Osaka, in front of Kōyasan monks and an entourage of regional daimyo warlords in 1586. The spatial configuration of what appears to have been Hideyoshi’s performance of domination is interesting. According to Ōgo, he, the Tendai priest, Shōgo-in Dōchō, and renowned renga poets were seated in the seats of honour by Hideyoshi’s side. Kōyasan monks were seated below them. Then the daimyo were gathered in the next room. According to Ōgo, Hideyoshi made the statement that it was not Ōgo of Kōyasan but Kōyasan of Ōgo twice, likely for all in the audience to hear. Given Hideyoshi’s strong support of Ōgo, and Ōgo’s character, Ōgo’s record probably reflects what Hideyoshi actually said. As a side note, the editors of Kōyasan monjo at the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University included a copy of the original manuscript in the third volume of their version of Kōyasan monjo. Zokuhōkanshū 51-406 [KM3].
First, as Pak Such’ǒl has pointed out, Ōgo was an advocate of the idea that monks ought to devote themselves to studies and that they should refrain from worldly pursuits. Such an idea was closely related to the status policy that Hideyoshi implemented, but as Pak sees it, Ōgo was behind the Toyotomi state’s formal adoption of academism in its policy. What Hideyoshi really demanded from monks, according to Pak, was the dutiful performance of rituals. But because the emphasis on academism matched Hideyoshi’s agenda perfectly, it was taken up in his general policy toward temples. The 1594 law issued to temples in Kyoto, as we saw, demanded that monks engage themselves in studies based on their sects. The emphasis on studies was inherited by the Tokugawa state as well. Buddhist academism became a major ideological force in the early modern transformation of temples. If Pak is correct, Ōgo played a critical role in the emergence of a new orthodoxy for Buddhist monks.

The second and more profound reason in my view, is hinted by Ōgo’s priestly title. He was called Kōzan shōnin 興山上人, literally meaning “Mountain Reviving high priest.” The title was granted by the court and related to one of the large temples that Ōgo built on Kōyasan, the Kōzanji, which was located next to Teihatsuji. But it is also indicative of the actual role that Ōgo played in reviving the temples. He carried out the construction and repair of numerous buildings at Kōyasan, including the Teihatsuji, the Portrait Hall, the Shrine and the Great Gate. He was also instrumental in the renovation of the so-called Arakawa Stupa that was built initially by Empress Bifukumon-in in 1159—when she commended the Arakawa estate to Kōyasan to make merit for the afterlife salvation of the retired Emperor Toba. But he also was in charge of the repair and construction of numerous temple and shrines around the country, including the Great Buddha in Kyoto, Zenkōji, the Yoshida shrine in Kyoto, the Portrait Hall of Tōji, the Golden Hall of Daigoji, the Itsukushima shrine in the Aki province and so on.

Hideyoshi took these works seriously. In fact, in the 1591 red-seal mentioned above, in which Hideyoshi condemned monks for concealing land, he stated that he spared, once again, the temple-house from destruction not simply because of Ōgo’s plea, but also because Ōgo had so auspiciously constructed and restored halls, stupas and temples. Why did it matter for

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392 Pak 2000.
393 Pak 2000, 42.
394 KSF, vol. 5, scroll 7 (ascetics).
395 The list of repairs and construction conducted under Ōgo’s management is found in Zokuhōkanshū 54-491 [KM3]. The list was written by his assistant, and was signed by Ōgo in 1607.
396 Zokuhōkanshū 37-338 [KM2].
Hideyoshi that temples were constructed and repaired? What was in it for Hideyoshi? Whatever the answer to this may be, it seems to be related to Hideyoshi’s insistence on rituals and studies.

4.4 Hideyoshi and Sacred Sites

An answer is found in Hideyoshi’s words when he supported the reconstruction of Hieizan in 1584, which had been destroyed by Nobunaga:

This mountain is different from other temples. It is the demon gate (kimon 鬼門) of the royal capital and a numinous place of deities that protect the tenka (tenka anzen o mamoru reichi ni sōrō 天下安全ヲ守ル霊地ニ候). Hideyoshi has pacified the towns and provinces and now seeks the ritual protection of the country (kokka chingo 国家鎮護). Hence, he shall restore the old ruins.397

According to Kitajima Manji, the significance of Hideyoshi’s support to rebuild Hieizan was that it turned him into a protector of shinkoku 神国, or the “country of deities.”398 This was the idea that Japan was a country protected by deities. But as Kuroda Toshio has put it, shinkoku was first and foremost an understanding of land.399 For Hideyoshi, like those before him, it was taken for granted that land and nature were animated with deities and it was a simple and visible fact that thresholds to the realm of deities of temples and shrines were ubiquitous on the land he ruled. Shinkoku thought provided Hideyoshi with a framework with which to grasp the landscape of the tenka. But underneath it was the undercurrent of a common religious imaginary of the time that saw the world as being suffused with subliminal powers that were to be embraced rather than resisted or slighted.

Shinkoku, then, was a ritualized mode of engagement with geography. It was not simply an abstract idea, but a political praxis. Hideyoshi and ritualists in service of his regime created a holistic ruling system in which temples and shrines had vital roles to play. The numinous power of the tenka landscape needed to be sustained and revitalized to consolidate the political order that Hideyoshi hammered out with force. More importantly, the medieval iteration of shinkoku

397 Enryakuji documents, cited in Kitajima 1986, 245.
398 Kitajima 1986, 245.
399 Kuroda 1975a, 527.
took root in a political environment characterized by division. The emperor was the key to the *shinkoku* thought, but the court lacked political power. According to Kuroda, the *shinkoku* concept was exploited by elite temples and shrines in their attempt to control estates.\(^{400}\)

However, temples and shrines were not united, but organized in different sects and institutions that vied for power. Ironically, the political and ritual mastery over land came together for the first time, excepting the ancient emperor, in the person of Hideyoshi, who quickly rose up the imperial ranks to become the imperial regent (*kanpaku* 関白) in the seventh month of 1585.

By the time Hideyoshi uttered the words cited above on the reconstruction of Hieizan in 1584, he was working closely with the Tendai princely monk, Dōchō 道澄, of the noble cloister, Shōgo-in 聖護院 in Kyoto. Kitajima points out that Dōchō influenced Hideyoshi with the *shinkoku* thought. Dōchō, like the Zen monk, Seishō Jōtai, was employed to advise Hideyoshi on diplomatic matters.\(^{401}\) To that end, it is noteworthy that he was behind the drafting of Hideyoshi’s 1591 letter to the Jesuit viceroy in Goa that threatened to totally exterminate (*zokumetsu* 族滅) missionaries who entered “this realm” (*konokai* 此界) to spread the “heterodox doctrines” (*jahō* 邪法) on the basis of the incompatibility between Christianity and *shinkoku*.\(^{402}\)

As Nam-lin Hur points out, Buddhism was made to protect *shinkoku*.\(^{403}\) The purpose of that was to assert a full mastery of what is called “this realm,” which is none other than the space of the Japanese archipelago that Hideyoshi presided over. That space was constituted by social groups and deities, and was inseparable from its supernatural geography.

If *shinkoku* can be understood as a praxis and a mode of engagement with the subliminal quality of geography, how did that inform Hideyoshi’s scheme of hegemony? On that, let us note Hideyoshi’s use of the term *reichi* 霊地, which I translated as “numinous place of deities.” According to *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, this term means “place of buddhas and kami with rich miraculous power” (*shinbutsu no reigen arataka na chi* 神仏の霊験あらたかな地). Simply put, *reichi* is a sacred site and a threshold to the powers of divine entities. For Hideyoshi, Hieizan, as a “demon gate” that protected the capital, was a special kind of sacred site that protected the

\(^{400}\) Kuroda 1975a, 267.
\(^{401}\) Kitajima 1986, 246-47.
\(^{402}\) Kirishitan kenkyū, 271-72.
\(^{403}\) Hur 2007, 44.
But such a protective property of a sacred site was of course not limited to Hieizan. Other temples and shrines could deliver protective powers as well, so long as proper rituals were conducted. Was this not the basis for Hideyoshi’s insistence that monks attended diligently to rituals and studies? Studies were likely seen as a prerequisite for proper rituals. It seems to me that Hideyoshi was trying to activate the ritual potential of the tenka landscape and fill the realm with divine blessings. That would allow him to assert complete mastery of the country and entrench his regime at the heart of the ritual life of the religionists who ran their temples and shrines.

A case in point is Hideyoshi’s Great Buddha in Kyoto, in the Hōkōji temple. This was a new temple that Hideyoshi decided to build in the Higashiyama area of Kyoto in 1586. But apparently, he spoke of the intent to build a Great Buddha like the one in Nara at a reichi in Higashiyama. Above, I mentioned that the Great Buddha was used by Hideyoshi to disarm peasants with the logic that the Buddha would generate blessings to help peasants achieve salvation in this life and the next, bring happiness to everyone and assure peace and stability in the realm. It was also designed to ritually support for the flourishing of the Toyotomi house in this life and the next. All in all, the Buddha was to bless his polity, peasants and everyone in the realm, and fill his tenka with auspicious power.

It was none other than Ōgo, who Hideyoshi put in charge to build the Great Buddha. Dōchō, on the other hand, was the abbot. Ōgo was, by now, experienced and competent in the construction of temples. According to Miki, Ōgo was in charge of a team of fifty magistrates, 300 helpers, and 350 small workers who supervised the works of craftspeople. Ōta Naoyuki has suggested that the labour force for the project under Ōgo comprised the lowly ranked ascetics and the kanjin fundraising monks at Kōyasan.

Ōgo, then, was a person who realized Hideyoshi’s vision of the numinous tenka. The purpose of the Great Buddha to protect the country and ritually undergird the prosperity of the Toyotomi was much the same as what he wanted from Kōyasan and Ōgo’s construction works. They maintained and rejuvenated the tenka landscape and created a robust link between Hideyoshi’s polity and the realm of deities.

404 Tsuji 1970a (kinsei 1), 374.
405 Miki 1986.
However, rituals had to be performed to activate the numinous powers of the Buddha. Therefore, when the Great Buddha was completed in 1595, Hideyoshi commenced a “thousand-monk ritual” (senzōe 千僧会). As Tamamuro Fumio discusses, this was a monthly ritual performed to memorialize the ancestors of the Toyotomi house. All the major sects—Tendai, Shingon, Ritsu, Zen, Pure Land, Nichiren, Ji and True Pure Land—were ordered to participate by sending one hundred monks each to the ritual that involved the “speed-reading” (tendoku 転読) of the Dainihannakyō (Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra). Tamamuro has observed that the ritual was held continuously on a monthly basis for twenty-one years until 1615. With participation of monks from various sects mandatory, this was a formal public performance for the memorialization of the Toyotomi ancestors and the protection of the tenka.

That, indeed, is how the Nichiren monk, Nichiō, understood it. Nichiō refused to participate. His rejection was based on the teaching of the founder of his sect that prohibited its members from going to temples that did not take the Lotus sūtra as the only true teaching, let alone perform rituals for patrons associated with other sects. Nichiō wrote to the Kyoto deputy, Maeda Gen’i, to say that “the Buddhist law that protects the tenka shall only be that of the Lotus sect.” Four years later, he was exiled by Tokugawa Ieyasu, who labeled him as the “demon-king of the Lotus sect” who “took the pretense of the Buddhist law to confuse people,” and really “injured the Buddhist law.”

There is an interesting episode related to the Great Buddha that speaks to Hideyoshi’s religiosity that informed his policy. A mere year after its completion, the Great Buddha was destroyed by an earthquake. Soon after that, Hideyoshi wrote a letter to Ōgo to tell him about his dream in which the Zenkōji Nyorai, or the secret Amida Buddha of the Zenkōji temple in Shinano, appeared. It revealed to Hideyoshi its intent to be relocated to the foot of the “Amida Mountain” (Amida-mine 阿弥陀峯) in Kyoto. In the letter, Hideyoshi summons Ōgo, together with Dōchō, to his castle in Osaka to discuss the plan to move the Amida. The foot of the Amida

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408 Tamamuro 1987, 26-37. For Hideyoshi, generating merit for his mother was also a factor in the Great Buddha project. Initially, the opening ceremony of the Hōkōji was planned for the twenty-second day of the ninth month, which was the anniversary of Naka’s death. See Miki 1986, 206.

409 According to the journal of the princely abbot of the Daigoji temple, Gien 義演 (1558-1626), Shingon sect sent 100 monks for each service until at least 1598. Tamamuro thinks that in the beginning, each sect sent one hundred monks each for the service, but the number of monks declined as time wore on. Records from the fourth and sixth months of 1612, and the fourth month of 1613 show that a total of 575, 537, and 566 monks attended the service, respectively. See Tamamuro 1987, 32-33.

410 Cited with an image of the original letter held by the Myōkakuji temple, Tamamuro 1987, 31.

411 Cited in Tamamuro 1987, 37.

412 Zokuhōkanshū 38-358 [KM2]. The document bears the date of the eighth day of the ninth month, but without the year.
Mountain, of course, was where Hōkōji was situated and aside from installing the Great Buddha, it also became the site of Hideyoshi’s own shrine in which he himself was the deity.

Underneath the ideological layers of shinkoku thought and the ritual protection of the state was a raw sense of the power of divine things that inspired him to act. Dreams were the link between him and the Buddha. He was moved by a visceral, phenomenological sensibility toward the ineffable power of deities. Such a power was not abstract, but tangible as it was embodied in a material object. It was not placeless, but had to be situated in a specific location, one infused with spiritual significance. At this time, the Amida had been moved for political purposes by Takeda Shingen and also by Nobunaga, who housed it in his home province in Mino. But for Hideyoshi, it had to be at Hōkōji to replace the ruined Great Buddha. Miki suggests that the site of Hōkōji, situated to the southeast of the imperial palace and Hideyoshi’s great palace of Jurakudai, was meant to work together with the “demon gate” to the northeast of Hieizan to protect the capital from various calamities as well as to purify the realm and protect the country. But more broadly, the Amida Mountain likely had been, for long, an interface to the realm of deities. Hideyoshi transformed the place into a great reichi of the Toyotomi, the power of which was tapped to consolidate his mastery over the tenka.

Soon, the Amida arrived with much pomp and fanfare. Ōgo’s letter to the annual custodian of Kōyasan dated the sixth day of the seventh month of Keichō 2 (1597), just before its arrival, tells us what was planned to celebrate the occasion. The Amida was to enter Kyoto via Ōtsu in a great procession. To welcome it, the top-tier religionists of princely monks (monzeki), along with Ōgo and his associates, were to await for the Amida in Ōtsu and accompany it down to the capital. Music was to be performed along the way in what was to be “the most festive event in the tenka” (tenka ichi no hare naru koto). Ōgo ordered all the “scholar monks” (gakuryo-shu) of Kōyasan, save the head priest and the sick, to come down to Kyoto to participate in the ceremony. Among them, 150 were to come in especially nice ritual robes (ichidan kirei ni arubeku sōrō). Kōyasan monks were to await the procession at the Sanjō bridge in Kyoto, then lead the Amida to its new home.

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413 Miki 1986, 187.
414 Miki 1986, 206.
415 Zokuhōkanshū 51-412 [KM3].
According to Seishō Jōtai’s (西笑承兌, 1548-1604) account, the 150 Shingon monks, along with 150 Tendai monks, led the Amida procession from Sanjō Bridge to Hōkōji.\textsuperscript{416} With thousands of guards and servants, princely monks and courtiers, and of course the Amida in a palanquin, it is said that the massive procession stretched all the way from Ōtsu to Hōkōji. Countless spectators filled the roadsides.\textsuperscript{417} Such a performance was a public spectacle that turned Hideyoshi’s regime into a subliminal polity that was fused with the numinous power of the \textit{tenka} landscape. And note that Ōgo demanded that “scholars” lead the procession. This was because scholars held the greatest authority over ritual matters. For Ōgo, studies were not the end but the means to tap the blessings of the deities to provide divine support for the peace and prosperity of the \textit{tenka}. Pak assumes that studies and ritual were separate, but in fact, they were two sides of the same coin.

While the Amida procession was an extraordinary event, the “thousand-monk ritual” was designed to have a similar effect of ritually constructing the subliminal polity on a routine basis. Monks from all the major sects offering their prayers during the monthly rite meant that they brought with them the power of the buddhas, deities and \textit{reichi} they controlled—and we can assume that constituted a sizable segment of them. The \textit{reichi} of Hōkōji was a condensed focus of \textit{tenka}’s ritual power that supercharged the Toyotomi and its regime with divine protection.

Why, then, did Hideyoshi need the Buddha? What was behind his orchestration of the Amida procession? Of course, the original Buddha of Hōkōji had to be replaced, but there are pressing pragmatic issues to be considered. In 1590, Hideyoshi had achieved the unification by subjugating the powerful Hōjō of Odawara and the Date in the Tōhoku region. Yet his system was designed to mobilize, and there was no end to war. Just when the Amida was rolling into Hōkōji, people of the \textit{tenka} were being mobilized in Hideyoshi’s second invasion of Korea under his grand scheme to bring Ming China under his heel.\textsuperscript{418} With the land surveys establishing the tax yields of the regional fiefs governed by his warlord vassals, Hideyoshi ordered the warlords to serve their military duty and deploy troops, labourers and provisions to Korea.

But as Fujiki Hisashi tells us, the duties were exorbitant and far exceeded what the warlords could muster without triggering widespread dissent.\textsuperscript{419} For example, the Shimazu lord

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{416} Cited in Tsuji 1970a (kinsei 1), 403.
\item \textsuperscript{417} Tsuji 1970a (kinsei 1), 402.
\item \textsuperscript{418} Asao 1988, 277-93.
\item \textsuperscript{419} Fujiki 2005, 384-390.
\end{itemize}
of Satsuma province deployed a total of 12,433 people in the invasion of 1597. Of those, only 1,727, or fourteen percent, were classified as being in the warrior class. They were assigned 4,806 subordinates of obscure social backgrounds. Separately, 5,900 peasants and fishermen were mobilized to supply transportation and menial labour. As Fujiki shows, such a use of common people by warlords to fulfill their military duties was not unique to the Shimazu but standard. Indeed, the onus of the war was being shouldered by common people. Under the dire circumstance, peasants were fleeing. Local warriors in Satsuma staged an ikki to refuse Hideyoshi’s demands to sail toward Korea. Rumours spread that Hideyoshi would be toppled by another lord.\(^\text{420}\) It must be noted that the invasion caused catastrophic sufferings for the people in Korea. Countless innocent people were brutally killed by Hideyoshi’s troops, who sent mutilated parts of their victims to Japan as evidence of their feats.\(^\text{421}\) Moreover, as villages were razed and looted, Japanese human traffickers systematically kidnapped local residents, especially children, and sold them as slaves.\(^\text{422}\)

Hideyoshi must have been acutely aware of the anxiety, tension and dissent that were boiling in the realm under his freshly crafted mechanism of domination. Behind Hideyoshi’s dazzling display of ceremonial authority was his deadly struggle to stay on top, and contain the tension under his unquestioned authority. To that end, Hideyoshi turned to deities. On the one hand, he sanctified himself. In his 1590 letter to the Chosŏn court that demanded the latter’s subservience to Hideyoshi and to guide his troops into China, he declared that he was a divine child conceived by sunlight.\(^\text{423}\) He styled himself as a human manifestation of shinkoku as much as its protector. At the same time, he entrenched his power in the the numinous geography of the country, and melded his polity with the divine blessings that suffused the realm. By doing so, he naturalized his power, and vested his regime with unsurpassed mastery over the realm.

Seen from this perspective, the analytical frame of pitting the state against religion or temples and shrines is limiting and misleading. Religion was far larger than what can be contained within the confines of institutions or sects. Religious powers were constitutive elements of space. Temples and shrines were not mere institutions and social groups to be controlled, but dynamic interfaces between Hideyoshi, the realm of deities, and the subliminal

\(^{420}\) Fujiki 2005, 393-401.
\(^{421}\) Asao 1988, 292.
\(^{423}\) Kitajima 1986, 216.
powers of the land he ruled. Hideyoshi’s policy on temples and shrines was part of his ritual engagement with the holistic environment in which he situated his state. He consciously used the sacred landscape of the country as a scaffolding upon which to consolidate his power.

But of course, Hideyoshi was a mere mortal. There is an anecdote on his death that is suggestive of the ambivalent place of deities in his polity. The year after the Amida procession, Hideyoshi became sick. It was thought that the illness was caused by the anger of the Amida, which was dismayed with the move. Accordingly, the Amida was taken back to its home temple in Shinano, but to no avail. Hideyoshi died shortly after on the eighteenth day of the eighth month, 1598. As a result, the next thousand-monk ritual, which took place four days after Hideyoshi’s death, was held without the main Buddha (*honzon*). It is quite possible that the spectre of the Amida’s wrath haunted Hideyoshi in his last days. The move of the Amida back to Zenkōji is suggestive of the perceived inseparable link between divine powers and geography, which was to be respected. At the end, Hideyoshi was bound by the ineffable powers of the deities and the sacred landscape of the country that he unified.

We are witnessing a familiar pattern of the sacred landscape absorbing social contradictions, and serving as the protean foundation of political formations. Kōyasan was tightly integrated into Hideyoshi’s ritual scheme of domination. What, then, happened to the space of Kōyasan?

### 4.5 Ōgo and the Kōyasan Space

With Hideyoshi’s backing, Ōgo was like no other monk at Kōyasan. He presided at the pinnacle of power and issued laws, settled disputes, launched reforms and connected the temple with the Toyotomi regime. Such a singular exercise of power was new and contravened the principle of collective administration that was honed at the temple in the previous era. How did Ōgo’s power influence the Kōyasan space and what happened to the principle of *ichimi* during Ōgo’s hegemony?

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424 This is based on Gien’s journal. See Tsuji 1970a (kinsei 1), 403-404.
4.6 Ōgo and Temple Laws

Ōgo’s power is apparent in the laws that he promulgated at the temple. These were part of his project to reform the temple and rectify what he regarded as the moral laxity of its monks. To that end, he sought to instill academic rigor and enforce diligent performance of rituals.

In 1589, Ōgo promulgated a seventeen-item law (okite 推) for the Kongōbuji clerics. In the law, Ōgo reprimanded the clerics for the widespread negligence in attending to ritual duties. Evidently, it was quite common for monks to send young surrogates to attend ritual services in their place. This was a practice that Ōgo did not tolerate. Hence, he imposed fines for absence, part of which was to be used by Ōgo for his repairs projects at Kōyasan. Then he criticized the laxity with which the clerics have been handling the initiation of various ranks. Initiations, or a formal transmission of the Shingon doctrine, were being conferred too easily and at rates that Ōgo deemed to be too low. To raise the level of engagement in the initiation, Ōgo set up standardized rates and demanded that the clerics submit a divine oath to Ōgo to pledge a strict adherence to the new rules. Evidently, initiation was commodified. But the following is suggestive of Ōgo’s effort to invigorate academism.

Item. The inheritance (sōzoku 相続) of subtemples shall be based on documents of bequests (yuzurijō 譲状). However, it is destructive to the Buddhist law to bequeath subtemples through family ties and influence, to those without learning. From now on, persons suitable for subtemples shall be selected based on their ability. And divine oath must be made to ensure that there is no partisanship in the selection of abbots.

Addendum: if a person of influence is needed to repair a subtemple that is badly damaged, the subtemple shall be inherited by that person. But after one generation, it must be inherited based on learning.

As we saw earlier, subtemples were commonly used by locally prominent houses to hold property. But Ōgo considered the worldly influence on subtemples to be detrimental to the Buddhist law. He wanted to empower scholar monks and tried to change the system of

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425 Zokuhōkanshū 40-368 (KM3)
inheritance. But this attempt met with resistance. After all, learning was a new criteria for power and scholar monks had exercised little power in the previous era. But Ōgo was persistent. In 1593, he reinforced his policy on inheritance and denied the use of documents of bequest to demand that inheritance be based strictly on learning. Then, he threatened the monks to comply with the following statement.426

The above items have been expounded many times but to no avail. Kōbō Daishi, the myōjin and the lords of the two Mandala Realms have known and seen, hence they will discard the clerics if even a single item is broken…At the end, the matter will be taken to the lord [if negligence continues]…

As Pak argues, Ōgo stressed that his demand was ultimately supported by his lord. But what is also noteworthy is Ōgo’s invocation of deities. Kōbō Daishi and the myōjin, referring to the landlord deities, were now aiding the project to instill academism and shed the monks’ worldly pursuits. With that, these beings were now lined up with Hideyoshi’s ritual politics. Ōgo’s mention that that these deities “know and see” (gochiken 御知見) suggests that Ōgo forced the clerics to submit a divine oath. There seemed to be a general understanding that monks were working in concert with the deities and relied on the latter’s auspicious support. Given that Kōbō Daishi and the landlord deities (myōjin) had been at the core of Kōyasan’s autonomy in the previous time, Ōgo’s usage of them constituted a radical change in the political orientation of the deities. However, for Ōgo, his reforms were intended to restore the luminous powers of Kōbō Daishi and the landlord deities and to revive the Buddhist law that had been corrupted by the worldliness of monks.427

Ōgo’s laws were epochal in at least two ways.

First, Ōgo installed learning as a criteria for power and gave the institutional basis to empower scholar monks within the Kōyasan space. Ironically, this was only possible because the mountain was sustained by Hideyoshi’s might. In the previous era, what maintained the mountain was Kōyasan ichimi, but truly, it was those who attended to the administrative functions and the control of land that enabled the temple to exist as the regional overlord. Stated

426 Zokuhōkanshū 51-421 [KM3].
427 As stated in the closing statement of the 1589 law. Zokuhōkanshū 40-368 [KM3].
simply, those who controlled land controlled the temple. But now as the temple was transformed into a ritual edifice for the tenka, learning and ritual prowess became the source of power. Here was a reversal of the hierarchy of function within the aggregate of duties and prerogatives that structured the Kōyasan space.

Second, the laws were issued under Ōgo’s single name, or more precisely, under his title as the “Mountain Reviving high priest.” Rather than the sōbun seal or the mention of ichimi of the “entire mountain,” his signature alone authorized the laws. As Wada Akio points out, this was a radical departure from the collective administration of the medieval era. For Wada, this was more than just a matter of a change in the organizational mode, but the denial of the self-governance that the temple had practiced for centuries. The assembly system of medieval temples emerged alongside the estate system. That is to say, the self-governance and the principle of collective administration developed in order to control land. The estate system ceased with Hideyoshi’s land surveys. When that happened, collective governance appears to have come to an end.

Wada sees in Ōgo the end of the medieval at Kōyasan. On the other hand, Pak, who argues that Ōgo was behind Hideyoshi’s adoption of academism, implies that Ōgo represented the beginning of the early modern.

However, I would argue that elements of the medieval persisted and endured robustly into the last decade of the sixteenth century. Kōyasan’s transition under Hideyoshi’s tenka can be better understood when we consider Ōgo’s roles in the codification of socioeconomic relations within the Kōyasan space. Namely, where did the power to codify socioeconomic relations lie?

4.7 Ōgo and Sōbun

Though he single-handedly undertook radical reforms, Ōgo also worked with the sōbun, which ran the temple in the sixteenth century. Wada’s argument that Ōgo fundamentally disrupted the assembly system is true, but Wada was referring to the assembly system of the

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428 In making that argument, Wada places a special emphasis on how Ōgo set up a new assembly that was intended to function as the administrative body of the temple. Ōgo’s seventeen-point law of 1589 included the stipulation that an assembly was to be formed by fifteen or sixteen competent persons who were to be chosen from among the scholarly elites of the clerics. Zokuhōkanshū 40-368 [KM3].


430 Wada 1976b, 243-44.

431 Maeda 2010.
clerics; he considered the sōbun solely as the organization of the ascetics. But as we saw in the previous chapter, the sōbun stood above the clerics in the sixteenth century and acted as the public power of the temple. Ōgo’s hegemony undermined the principle of collective administration, but the sōbun continued to function alongside Ōgo. The principle of collective governance did not break down entirely.

There are two related documents that were issued on the twenty-fourth day of the first month in 1589 that reveal an interesting relationship between Ōgo and sōbun. The first was co-issued by Ōgo and a representative of the sōbun assembly. It is sealed with the “eight fortunes.” It addressed the clerics and it exempted the clerics from certain levies.

Since ancient times, one-seventh of various expenses had been paid by your venerable group. While the various temples and mountains in the tenka have been ruined in recent years, this mountain alone is thriving. This is due to the greatness of Kōbō Daishi and myōjin as well as the blessings of the radiant dharma light. Therefore, your group shall be forever exempted from the expenses mentioned above. On this, a divine oath has been produced and the mind of the group is united in one (gungi ichidō 群議一同). Nothing that contradicts this decision should arise. Hence, this document is presented as a proof for later generations. Such is the matter that was discussed in our assembly.

Sōbun assembly members
Kyōei (“eight fortunes”)

Tenshō 17, First month, twenty-fourth day

Mokujiki Kōzan High Priest
Ōgo (signature)

Venerable members of Scholar Monks

The “various expenses” (irime 入目) seems to have referred to fees for repairs that had been collected from different groups of the temple society. Interestingly, the clerics were exempted from it because the deities had ensured the prosperity of the mountain with their blessing (kaji 加持). In making the decision, there was a discussion and the ichimi ritual of

\[\text{Zokuhōkanshū 51-409 [KM 3].}\]
attaining a unanimous consent, complete with a divine oath. And that process was undertaken by the sōbun assembly.

Thus Ōgo did not manipulate the aggregate of prerogatives and duties on his own, but through the sōbun’s discussion. And a proof document bearing the sōbun seal was needed. What, then, was the purpose of the exemption? Another document issued by Ōgo on the same day gives an answer:

Item: The permanent exemption granted by the sōbun is truly auspicious. From now on, devote (yourselves) to studies day and night and rectify the scholar monks’ name.
Item: As (I have) stated many times, attend dutifully to the perpetual service in front of the treasures of the Golden Hall, the Shrine and the Portrait Hall.…

The exemption was granted to allow scholar monks to study. But for Ōgo, studies and rituals were inseparable. It had to be the scholars who offered ritual services to deities in response to their blessings (kaji加持). The relation between deities and monks was reciprocal; if rituals were neglected, the deities would neglect monks. The emphasis on studies, therefore, was intended to augment the efficacy of rituals. Herein, Ōgo was creating an institutional basis for scholar-ritualists to attend to their prerogatives properly, to revive the mountain, the Buddhist law and protect the realm.

The exemption issued by the sōbun was notable. For Ōgo, such a power was beyond his jurisdiction. But given its agenda, the exemption must have been devised by Ōgo. What this suggests is that Ōgo was able to impose his will upon the sōbun and forced them to forge an ichimi in support of his reform. And the lateral principle of collective administration and the singular power of Ōgo, as contradictory as they may seem, co-existed.

Such a working relationship between Ōgo and the sōbun was not a one-time affair. As we saw in the previous chapter, a similar was exemption granted to the rōnin warrior, Kōno, in 1589. He had led Kōyasan’s forces to defend against Nobunaga’s invasion. This exemption was issued jointly by the sōbun and Ōgo. Later, in 1596, the sōbun granted the Kōno a “permanent exemption from various taxes, as instructed by Ōgo,” for the “various displays of loyalty” of the

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433 Zokuhōkanshū 40-369 [KM3].
434 Kōno house documents [KM7: 390-391].
Kōno toward Kōyasan. On the same day, Ōgo also wrote to Kōno, stating that the exemption had been granted to recognize the Kōno’s recent punishment of a certain rebel and for the former’s support of repair projects. These show that the hegemonic monk, Ōgo, and the assembly of the sōbun continued to work together to manage the aggregate of prerogative and duties. Ōgo and the sōbun needed one another to control the regional space. The spirit of collective administration was still alive at Kōyasan under Hideyoshi’s tenka.

4.8 Ōgo’s Burden

The biggest challenge that Ōgo faced was caused by the change in the temple’s relation to land. In the previous mode, the source of land was the sacred. The hand-print legend did not belong to anyone but to the “entire temple,” which administered land and property allocation collectively. But after the land surveys, Ōgo monopolized the link with Hideyoshi, the source of land. From this point on, he began to mediate the temple society with land, just as the land was being reduced. If we take Hideyoshi’s statement as an indication, the temple’s total landholding was reduced from about 50,000 koku to 21,000 koku. With that, monks began to take their demand for more land to Ōgo, who was asked to take up the delicate task of allocating property to the different groups of the temple.

For example, in his letter to the annual custodian in the twelfth month of what was likely 1591, Ōgo wrote the following note, just after the first grant of land:

> In regards to the allocation of various ritual stipends and the like, [though I want to] discuss the matter [with you, I am] currently on the road with Asano Nagamasa. Hence, I have entrusted the matter to Monju-in and Godai’in, [so please] do not be concerned. On my part, I tried to benefit your group, but the worldly ones (sekensha 世間者) have considered that to be lopsided, hence I wish to benefit both [groups], but such is difficult….[I shall have] the lord [grant more land and] distribute it little by little to the worldly ones.

435 Kōno house documents [KMK7-392].
436 Kōno house documents [KMK7-393].
437 Zokuhōkanshū 50-402 [KM3].
Here, Ōgo was responding to the pressure for more land by both the clerics, to whom the letter was addressed and the “worldly ones,” which likely referred to the ascetics. According to Nakata Hōju, Ōgo was under considerable pressure from the ascetics after the first grant. Thus, with the next grant of 10,000 koku, issued on the fourth day of the eighth month, 1592, Ōgo arranged a more equitable allocation between the two at 7,500 koku per group.\(^{438}\) What this suggests is that in spite of Ōgo’s emphasis on academism, he sought to balance the interests of various groups that shared the temple. He had issues with scholar-ritualists neglecting studies, but was fully aware that running the temple required more than studies and rituals. In administering the temple, we saw how he worked with the sōbun, but he also worked closely with the monk Monju-in, whom Ōgo mentioned in the above letter. This likely was the same Monju-in who fought alongside the Kōno to defend the region from Nobunaga’s invasion in 1581. He was also called Seiyo, the same monk who represented the sōbun in the letter to the Takeda which had settled the competing claims over the Takeda patronage.

How, then, did Ōgo oversee the allocations? As suggested in the above passage, it was through the old method of “discussion.” There is a record of a discussion of land allocation within the clerics that Ōgo oversaw. The following letter is dated the sixteenth day of the eighth month, Bunroku 1 (1592), less than two weeks after the second 10,000 koku grant by Hideyoshi.\(^{439}\)

It is auspicious that various matters were settled yesterday. Your views are indeed commendable. The inclusion of land and stipend for Amano shrine and Jison-in is auspicious. All in all, things are looking propitious. Regarding Chishōgon-in, as everyone knows, it is a house that does not blend with others. Hence, in addition to the allotment that was established yesterday, ten koku has been added. Had he (Chishōgon-in’s abbot) been alive, [his] wish [would have been fulfilled]. Aside from that, regardless of whom and whatever the circumstance, the decisions that were made last night must be strictly followed. No seeking of favours is permitted. Various matters shall be handled based on yesterday’s discussion (hyōjō 評定) and matters that have yet to be decided on are to be

\(^{438}\) Nakata 1976, 345-56.
\(^{439}\) Zokuhōkanshū 51-410 [KM3].
resolved through discussion. Neither you nor I should contravene yesterday’s decisions.
As for temple duties and laws, old examples are to be followed…Respectfully,

Eighth month, sixteenth day Ōgo (signature)

Scholar Monks
Members of the venerable elders

Herein we see a combination of the principle of collective decision and Ōgo’s capacity to override it. What the letter tells is that the night before, the clerics and Ōgo held a discussion on the allocation of land to the different functionaries and subtemples. But it seems that the clerics led the discussion and the decision-making (hyōjō 評定) and Ōgo largely approved the decisions. While the decisions reached through discussion were considered absolute, Ōgo went ahead to manipulate the allocations and added more land to the subtemple Chishōgon-in. Ōgo, indeed, overrode the collective decision of the clerics. What should be pointed out here is that Chishōgon-in was among the small-assembly, and its abbacy was held by the Takabō house, the estate official of the Kanshōfu estate. What this indicates is that the small-assembly subtemples were considered as “special case” among the clerics. In spite of Ōgo’s attempt to shed the secular influence on Kōyasan subtemples, he was not antagonistic toward the small-assembly monks, who represented the worldly influence on the temple. On the contrary, he accommodated their interests as he sought to create a new balance in the allocation of land from a reduced new pool allotted by Hideyoshi.

Ōgo was both assertive and careful in determining the allocation of land, but this task proved to be a formidable one. Monks protested the reduction of their allotments and they went to Ōgo to have that rectified. As the middle-man between the grants and the groups of Kōyasan, he had to absorb the dissent caused by the reduction of land. Monks also staged protests against Ōgo. In the tenth month of 1592, a group of “middle-ranked” monks among the clerics descended the mountain in protest, which suspended rituals. Such resistance caused Ōgo to become increasingly agitated. His sentiments in that vein are expressed in his letter to the annual custodian dated the eighteenth day of the tenth month, likely in 1592.

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440 Kudoyama chōshi shiryō, 969-70 (doc. 71).
...It is utterly troubling how everyone brings [to me] the issue of subtemples’ land. From now onwards we will not intervene in these matters. You resolve them accordingly and make decisions and [be sure] not to violate precedents [with respect to] laws and various matters...I have presented [my views] with divine oaths, hence there is nohing remiss on my part…There are excessive demands for more land and stipends and studies are neglected. [You] are becoming more and more worldly with ever expanding greed…

By pledging to deities, Ōgo demonstrated he took seriously his role as arbiter of land allocation. But he could not satisfy the demands for more land, which Ōgo saw increasingly as a sign of monks’ worldly behaviour. Ōgo’s condemnation of “worldliness” and the valorization of “studies and rituals” came hand-in-hand, just as he bore the brunt of the structural tension between Hideyoshi and the temple.

But the demands of the monks were unrelenting. They took their grievances to officials under Hideyoshi, such as Ichigosai Yoshinaka (Nōtoku). But as we can see in the following letter from Yoshinaka from 1594, the Toyotomi state reinforced Ōgo’s role as the head of Kōyasan.

In regards to Kōyasan’s land, the Taikō (Hideyoshi) had decided last year that it should all be subject to Ōgo’s discretions. Among the clerics, there are those who have devised evil schemes and followed the way of thieves (to resist Ōgo and demand more land). And the remaining members have forged ichimi with them. Hence there is nothing that Ōgo can do. In any event, the disruption at Kongōbuji must be ended, or else it might cause the demise of Kōyasan...

The clerics were now forging an ichimi to resist Ōgo. Yoshinaka condemned this, not for the act of ichimi itself, but for refusing to comply with Ōgo and thereby disrupting order at the temple. The Toyotomi state endorsed internal settlements of disputes and did little to intervene in internal affairs. Kōyasan was firmly integrated into the Toyotomi state, but the complex of power relations within the temple was managed in-house and under the authority of the hegemonic monk, Ōgo.

442 Zokuhōkanshū 51-408 ([KM3]).
443 Zokuhōkanshū 47-376 [KM3].
That was how Hideyoshi controlled the temple. This does not mean that the Toyotomi state lacked the power to resolve conflict within the temple society, or intervene in its internal affairs. As Itō Shinshō has discussed, the Toyotomi regime resolved numerous conflicts that were brought to it by temples in Kyoto.\footnote{Itō 2003, 201-39.} When resolving these conflicts, moreover, the regime always ruled in favour of the established elites within the complex temple societies. If that were the case, why did Hideyoshi deliberately refrain from settling disputes among Kōyasan monks? One possible reason is that he wanted to maintain Ōgo’s absolute authority over Kōyasan for the economy of rule. But it is probably more accurate to say that for Hideyoshi, Ōgo was part of his own regime and he did not tolerate anyone undermining his authority. In Hideyoshi’s tenka, Kōyasan was Ōgo’s and it was to be kept that way.

However, the internal tensions caused this model to collapse. In face of continuing demands, Ōgo eventually decided to withdraw from his role as arbiter of property allocation. Ōgo’s letter to the annual custodian, written in the fifth month of 1599, indicates that another dispute was taken to him. Ōgo, in Osaka at the time, expressed his intent to be released from his responsibilities to handle these matters in a letter that was to be displayed (hiro 披露) to the assembly of clerics.

In regards to the current dispute at the temple…messengers have informed me of the details. Yesterday, Masu-u (Mashita Nagamori) has ordered [me] to speak on matters pertaining to Kōya without change, but now, with the casting of the Great Buddha (in Kyoto) and the important repairs to Tōji, Ishiyama temple, Sanjūsangen hall, Saga and other places, [my] days and night are full without a single moment to spare. Further, I have gotten old and am exhausted with various matters. I shall be released from [the responsibilities] with respect to the mountain…Various matters shall be handled by Nagamori.\footnote{Zokuhōkanshū 51-417[KM3].}

By this time, Hideyoshi had died and Ōgo’s leverage over the temple had waned as a result. The relations between Ōgo and both the clerics and ascetics had deteriorated.
4.9 Post-Hideyoshi (Dis)order at Kōyasan

Kōyasan witnessed its internal order implode in 1599. What had caused it? Strands of the well-braided interests began to unravel. There were multiple factors at play, but if we were to point out a direct cause, it was not Hideyoshi’s domination of the temple, the disarmament, or Ōgo’s singular power. Rather it was the breakdown of a system that allocated material resource (property) among the different members of the temple space. The sheer reduction of the pool of resources by the land grants was certainly a factor, but more important was that the source of land had changed.

Up to this time, the temple’s source of land was the sacred, but that had morphed to a human ruler. With that, the organizational pattern of the temple came under a great strain. Up to this time, conflicts and decisions over allocations were resolved through discussion and consent in an assembly that represented the will of the “entire mountain.” Such a model worked because the source of land was the sacred, which was, simultaneously, an entity which stood above and beyond the different members of the temple space and the core of the societal formation that united the diverse groups together in the regional space.

Had Hideyoshi retained the engi-based landholding, the sōbun would have continue to intervene in the allocation of land and would have had the power to demand obedience from the different members of the temple society, including the clerics and ascetics. But it could not, for the source of land was out of its hands and into Hideyoshi’s. That meant Ōgo was the master of territorial allocation, a task that he performed earnestly. But with the incessant demands from monks for more land, combined with the sheer paucity of land, he was unable to fulfill that role; eventually, he refused to play the embattled middleman. Monks took their cases to the regime, but it, too, refused to intervene. There was no longer any power or authority to resolve the tensions of the space. The pressure was bound to blow a gasket somewhere.

The imposition of Hideyoshi’s land grant system left Kōyasan crippled by eroding its ability to resolve inner contradictions. Monks no longer had the ability to impose order within their local space. With his grants, Hideyoshi entrenched state power at the heart of the temple space and displaced the sacred as the source of resources and order. Hideyoshi never denied ichimi or collective administration, but that mode of organization did not work when a human ruler supplant the deities as the absolute source of property.
4.10 Hideyoshi’s Legacy

So, by the year 1600, how had Koyasan been transformed, compared to its state in 1585? Allow me summarize the most critical elements that came into play.

On a structural level, the shifting of Kōyasan into Hideyoshi’s tenka meant two things. First, the temple was disarmed and could not claim land apart from Hideyoshi’s grants. With that, the temple’s medieval mode as an autonomous regional polity ended. But second, that meant that it was reborn as a ritual institution to support the tenka; it was thus integrated into Hideyoshi’s ritual domination of the country. Kōyasan became part of the numinous landscape of the tenka that generated merit to protect the unified polity that he cowed with force. This served as a “scaffolding” to consolidate Hideyoshi’s power.

Hideyoshi needed, or at least, supported Kōyasan in order to tap its thaumaturgical powers. This created a tension between his domination of the temple and his support of what he considered to be its “proper” traditions of Kōbō Daishi, the Buddhist law and death rites. Therefore, rather than resorting to sheer might alone, he used the temple’s tradition as a medium to assert his hegemony.

For Hideyoshi, moreover, those traditional elements were both a given and a boon. He did not tolerate the behavior of the temple’s affiliates that blurred the boundary between monks and warriors. His assertion that he had mulled over whether to let the mountain stand or not speaks to the power relation between the two, yet when he forced monks to submit to his power, it was Kōbō Daishi and the Buddhist rituals that he used as a lever. Land grants, too, were issued in the name of Buddhist and death rituals. As a result, the autonomy of the temple was diminished, but Hideyoshi’s power was naturalized by the temple’s tradition and landscape.

However, Hideyoshi ruptured the place of sacred in Kōyasan in two ways. First, he domesticated the deities and the ichimi of the “entire mountain.” In the medieval era, the deities of the mountain had been the source of power, autonomy and landholding of the men who organized their regional polity at the mountain. Through the practice of ichimi, they had fused with the power of the landscape to take control of land and govern the region.

Hideyoshi disrupted this practice of power not by denying the deities or ichimi, but by overpowering the monks with sheer might. With the submission of the monks, the deities were humbled; the two were intricately connected. The position of the deities projected the power
relation between the ruler and the temple. By extracting divine oaths from monks, Hideyoshi subjugated the “entire mountain,” which included the monks and the deities.

Second, by displacing the hand-print legend as the source of the temple’s landholding, Hideyoshi contained the potential of the sacred to give rise to an autonomous political space. Hideyoshi never denied the legend and used the imperial authority to eclipse it. But in the final analysis, Hideyoshi’s grants alone became the source of the temple’s landholding. With that, the direct connection that the temple had maintained with land was lost, never to be regained.

Instead, Hideyoshi mediated the temple and its land and this allowed Hideyoshi to make the temple fully dependent on him.

What, then, happened to the spirit of collective administration that had underpinned ichimi power? Ōgo’s hegemony appears to have undermined the long tradition of collective administration and Ōgo initiated a radical reform to instill academism and ritual rigor among Kōyasan monks. In practice, however, Ōgo worked with the sōbun, which had represented the “entire mountain.” And in spite of Ōgo’s domination, he did not act as the public power of the temple alone but in unison with the sōbun. Based on surviving records, it appears that Ōgo imposed his will upon the sōbun, but the two needed one another to administer the temple. In fact, the sōbun must have remained important to the temple and the region, because Hideyoshi did not intervene in the internal matter of the temple. He left the self-contained nature of the Kōyasan space intact and ruled it through Ōgo. But Ōgo could not rule the mountain and the plains alone, so he worked with the sōbun to that end. Therefore, in spite of his emphasis on academism, the target of his academic reform were the scholar monk ritualists.

Did Ōgo’s leadership trigger the breakdown of internal order at Kōyasan? No. Rather, it was Hideyoshi’s land grants. It not only dramatically reduced landholding of the temple, but also quietly destroyed the centuries-old practice of power that had held the temple society together. Up to this time, land had been managed collectively by the “entire temple,” because the temple’s property derived from deities. But when Hideyoshi became the sole source of land and with Ōgo monopolizing the link between the temple and Hideyoshi, tensions over property allocation could no longer be contained. Ōgo tried to mediate that tension, but was overwhelmed by the demands. The sōbun could not resolve the tension because the land came from an outside source: Hideyoshi. The Toyotomi regime insisted on a policy of non-interference in local matters, thus refusing to intervene in internal conflicts over property allocation. There was no authority to cool
off the boiling anger over property; Hideyoshi had destroyed the organic scheme of power that had maintained order in the previous era.

We shall next delve into how the charged complex of power relations at Kōyasan came to be settled under the rule of the Tokugawa shogun.
Five: Ieyasu and the “Higher Will”

This chapter looks at how the divisive and volatile atmosphere of Kōyasan at the turn of the seventeenth century became relatively settled. The focus will be on the second rupture in Kōyasan’s transformation during the formative stage of the unified political order. It has to do with the practice of power that had sustained order at Kōyasan. At the onset of the seventeenth century, the medieval scheme of order broke down and was replaced with a new one.

The new source of order was called the “higher will” (jōi 上意) or the decision of the Tokugawa shogun. The shift from ichimi to the “higher will” ended the long tradition of the ichimi-based collective administration at Kōyasan. However, the shift was not a result of a deliberate effort by the ruler to break down Kōyasan’s ichimi. Rather, it was caused by the interplay of the tensions within Kōyasan and the ruling power of the fledgling Tokugawa state.

Tamamuro Fumio has examined the various regulative measures that were taken by the Tokugawa state to control religious organizations. Tokugawa Ieyasu had handed down various temple laws (jiin hatto 寺院法度) to various temples from 1601 to 1615, Tamamuro has argued that the purpose of the laws was to control the temples politically and economically and integrate them into the ruling system of the Tokugawa state.446 Needless to say, the legislative power of the Tokugawa state over temples was not insignificant. However, Tamamuro’s analysis is posited on a structural tension between religion and the state with the assumption that the latter tried to relentlessly control the former. With such a premise, the state is presumed to be an extra-social bastion of power that dominated religious organizations in a unilateral manner. Religious organizations, on the other hand, are treated as monolithic entities that simply exist rather than dynamic social phenomena which have sustained themselves by adapting to changing social conditions.

How did history unfold at temples? As we have seen, temples were complex social organizations with rich dynamics, tensions and relations. Rather than framing temples as mere objects to be controlled, by taking them as space—an evolving complex of power relations—we can tease out more meaning from the stories and experiences recorded in temple documents as well as fiats. Let us bear in mind Tsuji Zennosuke’s observation that temple laws during Ieyasu’s

446 Tamamuro 1971, 13. His argument in his 1987 book is also similar.
time often resulted from his arbitration of disputes that were taken to him.\textsuperscript{447} That is to say, rather than Ieyasu deliberately trying to impose his rules and laws for temple members to follow, the laws often were a product of the conflicts they had asked him to sort out for them.

A case in point is the exiling of the Nichiren monk, Nichiō. In 1595, he refused, on principle, to participate in the “thousand-monk ritual” at Hideyoshi’s Great Buddha temple. He sent a letter to the Kyoto deputy, Maeda Gen’i, to tell Hideyoshi why he was not participating. What happened immediately to him as a result of that is uncertain. But four years later in 1599, other Nichiren monks who found Nichiō’s stance to be intolerable took their case to the rulers.\textsuperscript{448} Ieyasu, in turn, adjudicated the dispute between them. After hearing the two sides debate their problem in front of him, Ieyasu labeled Nichiō the “devil of the Lotus law” and had him exiled to Tsushima. What do we make of this? Ieyasu, it should be noted, employed the Zen monk, Seishō Jōdai 西笑承兌 (1548-1607), to resolve conflicts among members of temples and shrines. Indeed, conflicts were ubiquitous in the world of religionists at the time. Therefore, Jōdais’s role was passed on to Itakura Katsushige 板倉勝重 (1545-1624) and another Zen monk, Kanshitsu 閑室元佶 (1548-1612), then to Konchi-in Süden 金地院崇伝 (1569-1633, also Ishin Süden 以心崇伝), before the magistrates of temples and shrines was established in Edo in 1635.\textsuperscript{449}

A typical source of conflict was property. For instance, Barbara Ambros describes the conflict at Ōyama at the start of the 1600s. It seems to have been over the abbacy of the temple Hachidaibō. Jitsuō, who took over the abbacy, appears to have done so by convincing Ieyasu that the existing abbot was corrupt and polluted.\textsuperscript{450} Sarah Thal tells us the sacred mountain of Mt. Zōzu in Sanuki, known as Konpira, witnessed a disruptive early modern transition.\textsuperscript{451} According to Thal, contention among priests at Konpira resulted in the execution of a group of priests by the

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\textsuperscript{447} Tsuji 1970b (kinsei 2), 177.
\textsuperscript{448} Tamamuro 1987, 35-37.
\textsuperscript{449} Itō 2003, 241-44; Somada 2003, 22.
\textsuperscript{450} Barbara Ambros discusses Ieyasu’s order in 1605 that installed the monk, Jitsuō, as the bettō, or the head administrator of Hachidaibō. Curiously, however, Ambros translates as “heterodox monks” what in the original—as it appears in an early-nineteenth century gazetteer—is “polluted monks” (esō 糜僧). According to Nihon kokugo daijiten, esō referred to monks who perform worldly functions and do not engage in studies, in contrast with the “pure monks” who were devoted to studies. This sounds like a language of Buddhist academism that was influential at the time, and “heterodox” is a misleading translation. The “polluted monk” who had inherited the bettō of Hachidaibō is said to have been from a local warrior family. Jitsuō replaced him, and he, too, was a son of a warrior house in the province of Sagami, where Ōyama is located. What likely happened, then, is that there was a competition over the seat of the bettō, and Jitsuō capitalized on the vogue of the Buddhist academism and ritualism, which Ieyasu embraced, to take over that position. See Ambros 2008, 58-59.
\textsuperscript{451} Thal 2005, 39-69.
\end{flushright}
Tokugawa magistrate in 1670.\textsuperscript{452} The unfortunate priests had challenged another priest whose family had secured the Konkō-in, the main shrine on the mountain, through connections with the successive daimyo who were appointed to rule the nearby domain by Hideyoshi and then by the Tokugawa shogunate. Thal argues that competing priests wielded their different gods and rituals in their bids for domination, but it is questionable if that was what happened at Konpira in the seventeenth century, especially when we consider that the aforementioned priests were executed for insubordination. Insubordinate of what? Given that the winning side had a red seal document issued by the Tokugawa shogun, it seems that the shogunal authority vested in that document had been violated by the challengers. The red seal was a land grant. We can say, then, that the conflict must have been over the shrine and its property, not gods and rituals.

In fact, they could not have been competing over gods. The priests who were executed had operated a shrine dedicated to Thirty Deities and that shrine and deities continued to exist, and annual festival continued to be held there, likely administered by the line of priests who prevailed in the conflict.\textsuperscript{453}

In both cases, the Tokugawa state arbitrated competing claims about the property and prerogative that were vested in the sacred landscape. Neither Thal nor Ambros analyze the significance of these conflicts and resolutions. The scant primary sources at their respective sites was likely a factor, but they are also not actively looking for the shifting dynamics of power across the transition. All in all, this is a topic that has received little attention.\textsuperscript{454} The reasons for this neglect likely range from the assumptions about state power, a lack of critical engagement with sources and a lack of conceptual or methodological models to analyze the social forces that reconstituted religious institutions over time. Add to that the academic bifurcation between medieval and early modern studies; there has been little need to analyze the social changes that occurred at religious institutions during the period under consideration.

\textsuperscript{452} Thal 2005, 68.

\textsuperscript{453} Thal’s argument that priests take their gods to rulers for approval is related to her central focus on the latter half of the nineteenth century when the Meiji restoration brought the Tokugawa rule to its end, and gave rise to the new Meiji state. This was an extraordinary time in the history of religions in Japan. With the ideological agenda to restore the imagined “pure” religious tradition of Japan, the categorical identity of deities, along the fault line of “imported” Buddhism and “native” Shintō, gained unprecedented importance. Thal offers a rich account of Konpira during the Meiji era (1868-1912), but her tendency to make sweeping generalizations about the politics of sacred sites based on her observations of the anomalous period is problematic. Moreover, because she does not offer an analysis of documents related to the conflicts at Konpira in the seventeenth century, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly happened.

\textsuperscript{454} Studies that looked at the transition of temples and shrines include Kodama 1937; Kawauchi 2000, 2004; Yoshii 1984; Somada 2003; Ito 2003. However, these studies tend to focus on the formative era of the early modern era and there is a paucity of attempts to situate the changes that took place in the seventeenth century in light of a broader shift from the medieval to the early modern. On that, Kodama’s study in the 1930s on the Kamigamo shrine in Kyoto is instructive. Kodama 1937.
Given the material nature of these conflicts, we might be inclined to dismiss them as frivolous cases of greedy monks, as it were. We might be tempted to consign this to the list of topics not worthy of analysis and discussion. But such an assumption would only distance us from what these conflicts have to tell us of the complex experiences at temples and shrines at this critical historical juncture. It also informs us of the nature of the power of the Tokugawa state.

We saw how Kōyasan in the medieval era was a focal point of political contest in the region. Other temples and shrines, we can assume, played a similar role to varying degrees. The outbreak of conflicts at temples and shrines across the country during the transition hints at an epochal change in how people organized society at sacred sites. Needless to say, the ruling power was instrumental in that change, but its role cannot be understood without examining the ground-level social relations among religious groups and their problems.

The benefit of looking at Kōyasan during the opening decades of the seventeenth century is that it has the historical documents to allow us to follow the thread. The documents show us how a society that fell into chaos rebuilt itself just as it shed its medieval mode of existence.

What were these conflicts about and why did they erupt as the temple entered the Tokugawa ruling system? How did monks assert and negotiate interests? How did the temple and its denizens relate to the new Tokugawa state? How did this alter monks’ understanding of the temple space and their place within it? Why and how did the principle of collective administration break down and what were its implications?

In the following, we shall see how Kōyasan’s medieval mechanism of creating order fell apart irreparably. As a result, monks became dependent on state power to overcome the tensions of their contested space. The self-contained nature of the temple space that was retained under Hideyoshi was broken. Social relations within the temple came to be codified by state power. Rather than resisting the state, monks embraced it. It was the only power that secured their property, space and territory, just as the local structure of authority was dissolving.

The “higher will” was tapped by different groups for different agendas. The judicature was the key link between monks and the state. But all this took place within the basic constraints that Hideyoshi had imposed upon the temple. It was a ritual institution without independent authority, and it held land only under the grant system of the state. The monks never resisted or negotiated these conditions. They were a given, and an implicit precondition of the politics of the new age.
5.1 Kōyasan in 1600

Hideyoshi’s death must have stirred much anxiety at Kōyasan. As much as Hideyoshi had terrorized the monks, he had allowed the temple to stand. With his death, Ōgo’s position weakened. The internal structure imploded with disputes that Ōgo could not or would not mediate. In the third month of 1600, Mashita Nagamori, one of the Five Magistrates of the post-Hideyoshi Toyotomi regime, issued a 21,000 koku land grant to Kōyasan sōchū, or “everyone” at Kōyasan. This grant emulated Hideyoshi’s. But Nagamori’s position was rather weak among the powerholders who jointly inherited Hideyoshi’s rule and tensions amongst them broke out in the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Tokugawa Ieyasu’s eastern camp won, paving the way toward Tokugawa hegemony.

No doubt the monks of Kōyasan watched the political and military developments with great anxiety. Whatever monks though of Ieyasu, they were not simply passive spectators. Ōgo, for one, was on the battlefront and actively involved in bringing wars among warlords to an end. He went into seized castles to convince losing lords of the eastern camp to submit and come out. Ōgo’s status as a robe-donning monk must have allowed him to enter war zones on a relatively neutral basis. But he was condemned by Ieyasu for his role in “arbitrating castle takeover” (shiro atsukai 城噯) and aiding the western camp. But Ōgo was tough. His poignant letter to Ieyasu on the sixth day of the tenth month, 1600, is housed at the Ōgo-ji, the temple that he built in Hashimoto at the base of Kōyasan. He wrote that “the vow to save people is greater than the merit generated by building hundreds and thousands of temples and stupas,” and that “in veneration of the total peace of the tenka” (tenka no sōbuji o osore nagara 天下の惣無事をおそれながら), he had discarded his own life to arbitrate the castles. He wrote that since the construction of the Great Buddha and the repairs of various temples and shrines were now largely complete, his humble wish had been fulfilled. Then, as an ascetic donning grass-made robes with no attachment to the floating world, he closed the letter by boldly “declaring retirement” (tada hitosuji ni oitoma mōshi sute sōrō ただ一筋に御いとま申捨候). With that, he retreated from the political world and secluded himself in a temple in his home province of Ōmi.

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455 Kōzanji documents 79 [KMK4].
456 The letter bearing Ōgo’s signature is cited in full in Tsuji 1970a (kinsei 1), 313-17. Note that the letter does not indicate the year, but it is reasonable to assume that it is from 1600.
Kōyasan was left with a major power vacuum. But very soon, another monk made an audacious move to bring the temple into Ieyasu’s orbit of power. It should be recalled that the Toyotomi still ruled from Osaka, and Kōyasan could have remained under it. The monk was Seiyo (勢誉, 1549-1612), who was almost certainly the same monk who wrote the letter to the Takeda concerning its subtemple at Kōyasan. Seiyo was also the same monk who commanded musket-bearing fighters from Kōyasan’s estates to defend the region from Nobunaga alongside the rōnin warrior, Kōno. As an ascetic, he was a key member of the sōbun and had worked closely with Ōgo and Nagamori. It is said that he performed the esoteric fire ritual in the mountain of Ōmine, connected to Kōyasan by an old mountainous pilgrimage path (now recognized as one of UNESCO’s world heritage sites). He then made a special visit to Ieyasu at his field base in Sekigahara to present him with sacred scriptures and talismans to support his martial might.

5.2 Entering the Tokugawa Orbit

Seiyo is enigmatic. With the clerics’ records dominating Kōyasan’s historical narrative, he was labeled a usurper and thief. Clerics accused him of stealing Hideyoshi’s land grant from them. This is what he brought to Ieyasu to present himself as the rightful heir to Ōgo. Whether this account is valid remains uncertain, but Hideyoshi’s grants addressed “everyone” (sōchū) at Kōyasan and the clerics’ claim that the grants belonged to them is questionable. What is certain, however, is that the ascetics’ influence reached its zenith under Seiyo.

There is a memorandum that Seiyo wrote to the clerics. Dated the sixth day of the eleventh month, the year is missing, but it is almost certainly from 1600. In it, Seiyo addresses the clerics as “your venerable side” (onkata 御方), juxtaposed against “our side” (konata 此方). Clearly, the division between the two groups was mutually understood. The first item of the memorandum is worth noting.

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457 Somada Yoshio shows that the Toyotomi regime under Hideyori held sway over some temples in Nara, alongside Ieyasu, after the battle of Sekigahara. For instance, it resolved disputes among scholar monks and ascetics of Hōryūji in 1602. Somada 2003, 24-26. The Toyotomi regime likely held authority over temples and shrines in Kyoto as well.


459 Kōya shunjitei, 289
Item: In Osaka, the Inner Minister (Naifu-sama=Ieyasu) has directly and venerably stated that all of the various shiki of the mountain and the plains shall be entrusted to me. Such a decree was reverently promulgated. This was truly beyond my humble intent, thus I considered it carefully. But since it was his order, as troubling as it is, I have accepted it. What are the “inner thoughts” (naishō 内証) on this of your venerable side? At any rate, I seek your acceptance.460

Ieyasu tried to control Kōyasan just as Hideyoshi had done. He appointed a single person to rule it. It is of interest to note that both Ieyasu and the monks understood the temple and its land as an aggregate of shiki. Ieyasu’s alleged decree underpinned that aggregate and Seiyo was fully in charge of it, locally. It looks as though Seiyo had Kōyasan in its entirety in his grip, but he was still careful and wished to know the “inner thoughts” of the clerics. He sought consent, or “same heart” (dōshin 同心) in the term of the day. He requested that the memorandum be “displayed” (hiro 披露), to be discussed by the assembly of the clerics. On the other hand, how could the clerics have responded? Did they have any choice but to accept his proposition? Saying no would meant rejecting Ieyasu, who had just crushed the coalition of warlords who rebelled against him. Seiyo was soliciting clerics’ unanimous support of his power, otherwise, he could not rule the temple legitimately. He was trying to coerce an ichimi-like unity and establish his hegemony over the mountain and the plains with the clerics and the ascetics under him.

As it turns out, Ieyasu’s power was malleable and Seiyo likely could not have known how the clerics would respond. They likely accepted his power at first, but soon, they staged a massive revolt. In the spring of the following year, they submitted a devastating condemnation of Seiyo to the magistrates under Ieyasu.461

Item: Venerable Taikō (Hideyoshi) had ordered Mokujiki (Ōgo) to handle the various matters (sata 沙汰) of Kōyasan. The holy man (shōnin 上人= Ōgo) is an ascetic outside the clerics’ and ascetics’ orders, thus [his handling of the various matters] did not scar the clerics. So that was acceptable. But even then matters within the clerics were, in accordance to precedents, handled by the clerics. Monjuin (Seiyo) is an ascetic and thus

460 Yūzoku hōkanshū 59-1170 [KM6].
461 Yūzoku hōkanshū 118-1881 [KM8].
should not be intervening in matters of the clerics. If he adjudicates clerics’ business, the law since Kōbō Daishi would be violated...We have heard that it has been reported that since eighty years ago, the mountain ascetics (yamabushi-kata) have been handling the various administrative matters of the mountain (yamano shosata). Just which son of heaven or shogun bestowed upon them the various functions (shiki) of the mountain? None. But they killed off the envoy of venerable Nobunga and killed many samurai in the areas around the monastery and took their land. And on the mountain they rebelled against the clerics. They decimated the small-assembly and a group called the middle custodians (naka-gata azukari) to take their shiki. Is it not through these forceful means that they have come to hold the various shiki of the mountain? If they are allowed to adjudicate the [matters of the] mountain, it would soon become law that the mountain ascetics control the matters of warriors...

Item: Regarding the abbacy of Seiganji, since its founder was Mokujiki (Ōgo), he was also the abbot. After Mokujiki, there is a red seal document stating that a person of learnings shall be chosen as successor...The rule of the Venerable Taikō, which stated that until the end of time the merit-making ritual for the venerable spirit of Seigan shall be performed without negligence by the clerics, was bestowed upon us by [Taikō’s] envoys of Shōgo-in (Dōchō), Oide the lord of Harima and Nakamura shikibu no shō. Hence the clerics reverently accepted this duty. If the abbacy of Seiganji is granted to Monjuin, such would be in violation of the honorable will of the Venerable Taikō. And because there is law of the mountain that prohibits the clerics from residing in an ascetics’ temple, [we will be forced to] remove our ritualists from the temple. That would be a complete disregard of the public authority (kōgi 公儀).

The harsh condemnation of Seiyo is framed around the category of status. The ascetics (gyōnin 行人) and mountain ascetics (yamabushi 山伏) are used interchangeably. From the perspective of the clerics, the ascetics were usurpers and Seiyo’s hold of power was unacceptable. As far as the clerics were concerned, the ascetics could not legitimately rule the temple because they were not authorized by an emperor or shogun to do so. Indeed, as we saw, the ascetics’ rise in influence was a result of their administrative prowess. They had realized their power with their own means and their administrative prowess was crucial for the sustenance of
the temple in the late medieval era. But now, the era of “self-realization” was past as the state sustained the temple and clerics could not tolerate an ascetic standing above them as the head of Kōyasan. Note that it was fine for Ōgo to dominate the temple, because he was a visiting monk. Ōgo was in a marginal position and not part of Kongōbuji’s formal structures. But Seiyo was different. He was part of the ascetics and evidently, there were ingrained sentiments about the qualitative difference between the monks of the two status categories. The clerics and ascetics could not mix and monks expected Ieyasu to understand that.

Underneath the ideological layer of status is where the tangible basis of the dispute lay. Seiganji came with a hefty 3,000 koku of land and Seiyo had taken that. Apart from Seiganji, the petition also demanded that a “land grant of bequest” (tsugime goshuin 継目御朱印) be issued to the clerics in the amount of 7,500 koku. The clerics had held that land under Hideyoshi’s grants, but with the political change and Seiyo’s empowerment, they wanted Ieyasu’s formal grant to secure their land. Their anxiety about their landholding can be considered in light of their claim, as seen in the petition, that Seiyo had usurped corvée from their land in its entirety. And not just that, he also evidently had cut 6,665 bamboo from seventeen sections of the mountain that clerics claimed and was selling them off. Hence, with access to lumber and labour denied, the clerics were desperate to reassert their territory and property. At the same time, they asked Ieyasu to bestow upon them laws (kenpō 憲法) concerning the codes of conduct (sahō 作法) for the clerics and ascetics to follow.

As such, Seiyo’s attempt to solicit consent was shattered. The clerics could not defy Seiyo except by going to the very authority that empowered him. The policy of controlling the temple through a single person had reached its limit. Contradictions from within the temple society, amplified by Ieyasu’s empowerment of the wrong monk, as it were, threw the temple into a state of chaos. The problem for the clerics was that the pin that was holding property allocation had come loose. Their assumption was that the ruler should intervene and protect them from threats on the home front.

Before discussing the results of the petition, we should mention its date.

The petition says that it was written in the sixth month of Keichō 6 (1601). But that cannot be accurate. Unfortunately, the original petition is lost. The version that I cited is its copy

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462 Based on Mashita Nagamori’s grant dated the ninth day of the third month, Keichō 5 (1600). Kōzanji documents 79 [KMK4].
featured in Kōyasan’s *Treasure Manuscripts Series*. We can conclude that it was stored in the Portrait Hall. But that is not where the petition had been held. There is a note at the end of the petition that gives us an indication of the archival history of the copy of the petition. It states as follows:

The petition was kept in the archive of the subtemple Shōchi-in, but because it was missing from the vault of the annual custodian, it was donated by Dōyu [of Shōchi-in] to the annual custodian in Tenpō 9 (1838). The date of sixth month is questionable, because the decree was venerably received on the twenty first day of the fifth month of that year. Therefore [the petitions] must have been written before that. It is likely that there was an error in recording the date.463

The decree here refers to Ieyasu’s response to the petition. We will examine that shortly. But let us note that the petition was not included in the manuscripts held by the annual custodian. In other words, the clerics’ collective did not have it until a copy was donated in 1838. That was likely related to the compilation of the gazetteer, *Kii shoku fudoki*, which required mining historical records at Kōyasan and its subtemples.464 But why did the clerics not keep the petition? Was it not important? It also warrants a question of the authenticity of the petition. Can we take its content at face value? More remarkable is the fact that Ieyasu’s decree is missing in *Treasure Manuscripts Series*.465 But as we see in the above note, the decree and the petition were a set.

Indeed, the archival history of documents opens up issues that would otherwise be glossed over. But my conclusion is that the content of the petition is authentic and, as the above note suggests, the scribe who copied it wrote in a wrong date. The reason for my assessment is the correlation between the petition and Ieyasu’s decree. Ieyasu judiciously responded to each demand that was made by the clerics, and it is difficult to imagine that he would have done so without the petition.466 Why, then, did the clerics not keep Ieyasu’s decree? The answer to this question should give us an indication of the reason for the missing petition.

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463 Yūzokuhōkanshū 118-1881 [KM8].
464 What the note indicates is that sometime after the donation of the copy of the petition to the annual custodian, it was deposited in the Portrait Hall. The note may have been written when it was placed in that hall.
465 Ieyasu’s decree that I referenced is included in the documents of Daigoji’s subtemple Sambō-in.
466 Again, the original of Ieyasu’s decree is missing. However, when we consider the subsequent reference to it amid the litigation between the clerics and ascetics, the decree must have been authentic. Indeed, the same decree was reinstated by the third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, in 1649. Tsuji 1970 (kinsei 3), 29-30.
A 1618 inventory of the sacred treasures of the Portrait Hall shows that red seals issued by Hideyoshi and Ieyasu were stored in boxes in a long chest that was placed in the eastern section of the Portrait Hall’s inner cloister. Doubtless, these were among the most important documents for the monks, and they were venerably stored in the sanctum of Kōbō Daishi. We can assume that Ieyasu’s decree in question would have been contained in the boxes.

However, there is a record to suggest that some documents of Kōyasan were confiscated by the Tokugawa authorities in the Genroku era (1688-1704). For example, Ieyasu’s 1584 letter to sōbun in which he asked the monks to provide 500 muskets was apparently taken away by officials from the government in 1695. Of course, the monks still kept a copy of the letter—secretly perhaps—but it suggests that Tokugawa officials surveyed Kōyasan’s archives and confiscated documents that were inconvenient for them. On the one hand, this corresponds with what Herman Ooms calls the “genesis amnesia” of the Tokugawa in which the violent rise to power of the regime’s founding father was effaced. At the same time, because Ieyasu’s decree codified precedents without clarifying what the precedents were, it left room for competing groups of Kōyasan to evoke it to justify their contending claims in their tenacious disputes that troubled the Tokugawa magistrates. In that light, it would not be surprising if the Tokugawa officials “intruded” into the sanctum of the Portrait Hall to confiscate his decree.

Unfortunately, there is no definite date on the petition. But according to Kōya shunjū, the clerics held a discussion for days in the second month of 1601, and reached the decision to dispatch two monks as “representatives of the clerics of the entire mountain” (manzan gakuryo sōdai) to file a suit against Seiyo. It is indeed plausible that the petition was submitted in that month.

5.3 The Ieyasu Decree of 1601

Given the harsh tone of the petition, how did Ieyasu respond? Kōya shunjū tells us that on the twenty-first day of the fifth month in 1601, Ieyasu summoned Seiyo and representatives of the clerics for a debate in front of him in Kyoto. And when the clerics’ representatives explained to him the “old laws” of the temple, Ieyasu said: “I was not fully aware of the old laws of

467 Zokuhōkanshū 11-250 [KM2].
468 Such a note is recorded in Kōyasan monjo edited by Kongōbuji. Kōzanji documents 11-91 [KMK4].
469 Ooms 1985, 100.
470 Kōya shunjū, 289.
Kōyasan. That is why I gave the order to Monju-in (Seiyo) last winter. But now, I understand them well. To enable the human and Buddhist laws to thrive in perpetuity, the previous order shall be rescinded and the temple laws for both sides shall be decreed.”

Then he issued the following decree:

Item: The various public matters of clerics and ascetics shall be separate in accordance to the laws from antiquity.

Item: The corvée, bamboo and other timber from the clerics’ land shall be controlled [by the clerics]. When repairing temples on the mountain and the plains, corvée from 21,000 koku [of Kōyasan’s land] shall be used…

Item: Since Seiganji is a temple of the public authority, lumber for repair and firewood shall be, in accordance to precedents, taken from anywhere in the mountain of the entire temple.

Item: Of the 2,000 koku of Seiganji, 1,000 koku is for the various expenses of its abbot the head priest and 1,000 koku shall be distributed among the eight master scholars of the clerics….

Item: When various temples are damaged, the clerics shall report to the ascetics and [have the latter] repair them. Regarding the calculation of expenses, [the ascetics] shall report to the clerics. The repair grant in the amount of 1,000 koku shall be used to repair the temples without discrimination.

Each of the above items shall be observed strictly, the Buddhist law shall thrive in eternity and prayer ritual for the peace in the tenka shall be performed earnestly without negligence.

Keichō 6, fifth month, twenty-first day

Venerable Ōgosho’s signature

The clerics of Kongōbuji

Ieyasu acted as the master of property allocation who listened to the claims of the competing groups and codified the division between them just as he was asked to do. The

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471 Kōya shunjū, 290.
472 Note this is a copy of the decree, hence Ieyasu’s signature is indicated by the text “ōgosho sama gojiki-han,” meaning signature by Ieyasu’s own hand. Sanbō-in documents vol. 73, 106.
petition was an indirect challenge to Ieyasu’s previous measure, but he took that in. The clerics got exactly what they had asked for. For Ieyasu, what was important was the perpetuation of the Buddhist law and the ritual support of the tenka. Rather than oppressing the monks, Ieyasu arbitrated their conflict. And what was the result of that? Ieyasu became the pin that held the property allocation within the temple. His will to rule and the monks’ need for a higher power converged and state power infiltrated Kōyasan’s space.

5. 4 Hideyoshi’s Mother, Monks and Ieyasu

But Ieyasu was shrewd. In the third item of the decree, Ieyasu confirmed that the Seiganji was the temple of the kōgi 公儀, normally translated as “public authority.” This is precisely how the clerics had framed it by stating that the temple was dedicated to Hideyoshi’s mother, the venerable Shungan whose spirit was ritualized at the temple. In the petition, the clerics claimed that Hideyoshi had ordered them and not the ascetics, to perform merit-making rituals for his deceased mother in perpetuity. The clerics also pointed out that since the law of the mountain prohibited the clerics from residing in an ascetics’ temple, if Seiganji went to the ascetics, they would be forced to withdraw their ritualists from the temple, which would disgrace the public authority. Here, the spirit of Shungan, Hideyoshi’s will and the temple law were interconnected and for the monks, performing the ritual to purify her soul was a duty for the kōgi alone.

Ieyasu responded by acting as the guardian of the public authority, which for him was likely symbolized not only by Hideyoshi’s will but the spirit of Hideyoshi’s mother. According to Yamamoto Hirofumi, kōgi at this time referred to the Toyotomi regime established by Hideyoshi.473 It had become an abstract and elevated principle that was the source of supreme authority and legitimacy for powerholders who took over the regime after Hideyoshi’s death. The battle of Sekigahara was fought over it. Ieyasu’s legitimacy immediately after Sekigahara was rooted in his upholding of the kōgi. In that light, it is not surprising to see Ieyasu acting as the guardian of the kōgi. Ieyasu used Hideyoshi’s mother to bolster his position as the national ruler. On the other hand, for monks, the spirit of Hideyoshi’s mother was part of the sacred landscape of the mountain and their ritual duty to purify her soul came with a sizable property of

2,000 koku. The clerics had managed to secure their territory and restrain Seiyo’s influence by tapping the mighty judicial authority of Ieyasu.

Since Ieyasu accommodated most of the demands of the clerics, what happened to Seiyo and the ascetics? There is nothing in the records to suggest that he was punished or reprimanded. Konchi-in Süden’s journal suggests that he continued to liaise between Kōyasan and Ieyasu’s government, and he likely continued to enjoy Ieyasu’s support.474 The latter built the temple Monju-in for him in Sunpu and stationed him there. According to the writing of the Confucian scholar Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657-1725), who was influential in the shogunal government in the early eighteenth century, Seiyo was one of the few people who could sit on a cushion in Ieyasu’s audience.475

On the same day that he promulgated the decree, Ieyasu issued two land grants to Kōyasan: 9,500 koku for the clerics and 11,500 koku for the ascetics.476 Ieyasu, as the highest ruler of the realm, recognized the clerics and ascetics as legitimate status groups at Kōyasan and gave them the economic means to sustain themselves as such. While Seiyo and the ascetics lost Seiganji, they kept the other great temple built by Hideyoshi and Ōgo, Kōzanji, which stood beside Seiganji and was allotted 1,000 koku.477

In spite of the heated contention between the two groups, it is important to stress that the clerics were not seeking to remove Seiyo and the ascetics from the monastery. They were not in a position to question their right to hold their own space at Kōyasan. What they had asked of Ieyasu was simply to put a check on Seiyo’s surging influence that undermined their own space and property. In fact, they had conceded more land to the ascetics and it was self-evident that they were going to share the temple just as they had for as long as they could remember. Moreover, in spite of the clerics’ claim to superior status, they were not seeking to bring the ascetics under their power. The relation between the two was not hierarchical. Rather than subordinating one another, what was important was to define territorial boundaries. They all understood that Kōyasan was a home to heterogeneous groups that needed their own spaces and territories.

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474 Honkō kokushi niki, no. 6, 175, 224.
475 Gojiryaku.
476 Kōzanji documents 212 [KMK4].
477 Ibid.
5.5 The Significance of the Ieyasu Decree

The decree cited above is known as the first of Ieyasu’s temple laws. What was its significance? Tamamuro has argued that it represents Ieyasu’s policy of divide and rule, that is, Ieyasu wanted to break down the two powerful groups at Kōyasan to weaken the temple.

I do not think that Ieyasu considered Kōyasan monks to be a threat to his rule at this point, though what did concern him was the masterless warriors taking refuge there after major battles like Sekigahara and the campaign of Osaka. Tsuji, on the other hand, was critical of Tamamuro’s line of interpretation regarding Ieyasu’s intent. In Tsuji’s view, Ieyasu’s decree showed his incompetence, especially in contrast to Hideyoshi, who controlled Kōyasan firmly through Ōgo. Ieyasu not only failed to do the same with Seiyo, but also gave in to the clerics’ demands and rescinded his own initial ruling.

Tsuji’s critique is related to what was to follow. The decree established the allocation of land and Seiganji among the two groups, but that still left many issues of contention in regards to ritual prerogatives, such as the right to perform certain initiations and rituals, wear certain robes, and so on. Conflicts of this nature ravaged the temple from the 1638 to 1692.

However, I do not take the decree as evidence of Ieyasu’s incompetence. On the contrary, it shows the depth of his power at the nascent stage of his national rule. Ieyasu was acting as the master of the tenka space who presided over the complex of power relations in the country as a whole. By resolving the conflict, he integrated Kōyasan’s groups firmly into his system of rule and became indispensable to them. His power penetrated into the monks’ everyday life, but he achieved that with little effort.

The Ieyasu decree was momentous for Kōyasan. First of all, it represented an implosion of the principle of collective administration that had been Kōyasan’s armature of power in the previous period. As we saw, in the late medieval era, the united front of the “entire mountain,” made possible by the logic of ichimi, had acted as the public power that stood above and beyond the different groups of Kōyasan to control the regional space.

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480 Seiyo’s above-mentioned memorandum says that he and the clerics had pledged a divine vow not to shelter rōnin warriors and their assets at the temple. The memorandum was written on the sixteenth day of the eleventh month in 1600, less than two months after the battle of Sekigahara. Seiyo says that two monks were exiled for violating that law. Yūzokuhōkanshū 59-1170 [KM6].
481 Tsuji 1970b (kinsei 2), 182-86.
The sōbun in the sixteenth century had replaced the Kongōbuji clerics as the facilitator of the ichimi of the entire mountain. With the Hideyoshi rupture and Ōgo’s hegemony, the sōbun was weakened, but it and the principle of collective administration were still active and it worked in concert with Ōgo to govern the region. Kōyasan’s collective administration was an example of negotiated consent. Only when all stakeholders were united as one mind—whether wholeheartedly or not—was there legitimate power to rule the temple.

Had Seiyo’s scheme worked, there would have been such a power, which would have served to contain internal conflicts and impose order. However, the clerics not only rejected him but went over his head to the state directly. This meant a simultaneous end of Kōyasan’s own “public authority from below” and its replacement by Ieyasu.

This was a major event. Kōyasan’s autonomy had ended. Kongōbuji’s “temple-house,” which was the shell of the “entire mountain,” had collapsed from within.

Instead of the “entire temple,” Kōyasan was left with the formalized status groups that were divided by state power. With separate grants, the division proved to be insurmountable and it appears that an organic unity was never achieved again. There was no need for that.

Second, the era of the self-contained nature of the Kōyasan space was over. Up to this time, the groups of Kōyasan had their status and prerogatives institutionalized at the temple. Even as Kōyasan had been tightly integrated under Hideyoshi’s rule, internal affairs had been managed locally and its status groups had reproduced themselves on a self-sufficient basis. Now, the clerics and ascetics did not exist apart from state power. Their legal locus shifted from the temple to the state and the temple no longer served as a locus of organization. From this point forward, every time the two groups had conflicting claims regarding their prerogatives, they required the mediation of the Tokugawa judicature rather than trying to resolve it locally.

The decree marked a shift in the source of order at the temple from ichimi to the “higher will” of the Tokugawa ruler. For all practical purposes, this was a game-changing moment in the political contest at the temple. In the era of “self-realization” that was the medieval, those with the ability to get things done, especially with respect to administration tasks, held power and property.

But in the new era, the ability to persuade the ruler in the context of a tribunal became the basis for power. The key criteria for power and property in the new system included:

- the formalized institution of status;
a personal relationship with the ruler and those who could influence him or the
decision-makers in Edo;
documentary evidence of precedents; and
learning and scholarly prowess.

For Kōyasan monks, state power was needed to protect their property. With the chaotic
transition into the new era, it was inevitable that conflicts at the temple were waged through the
medium of the “higher will.”

5.6 The “Higher Will” and Kōyasan Monks in the Early 1600s

In the remainder of this chapter, we will look at the application of the “higher will” in the
eyear seventeenth century. The focus will be on three groups: scholars among the clerics, the
small-assembly monks and itinerants. The scholars represented a surging new force at the
temple. The movement to empower them began with Ōgo, but Hideyoshi and Ieyasu supported
academism to boost their influence. The small-assembly monks, on the other hand, were the old
guard who saw the tide of history turn against them. They had sustained the temple in the
previous era with their influence and administrative ability, but now, their roles were
superfluous. Worse yet, they were being framed by their fellow monks as subversive elements
from the previous era—specialists in worldly affairs who neglected studies and rituals.482

We have not paid sufficient attention to the itinerants, but they enriched Kōyasan’s space
and culture immeasurably in the medieval era. The itinerants that we will look at are not the Ji
sect inspired Kōya hijiri who have been made famous by Gorai Shigeru’s study and who were
reorganized into the hijiri status group under the Tokugawa.483 Rather, we will look at the
experience of the so-called “visiting monks” (kyakusō 客僧) who settled in Kōyasan’s Inner
Sanctuary. The relations of these groups to the “higher will” give us concrete examples of the
complexity of the temple’s transformations under the Tokugawa rule.

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482 The Takamuro-in documents include a memorandum that the small-assembly monks submitted to a magistrate under Ieyasu in 1602. In it, the small-assembly monks defended themselves from the accusation by a group of scholar monks that they had been affiliating with warriors and neglected studies. This is the memorandum in which the small-assembly monks claimed ancestry in Kōbō Daishi’s paternal family, as discussed in chapter three. Takamuro-in documents 171: 12553-12561.
483 Gorai 1975. For a detailed account of the emergence of the early modern hijiri group, see Murakami 2005.
5. 7 The Law of 1609

On the eleventh day of the first month in 1610, forty-seven elite scholars among the clerics wrote and co-signed an oath, to be submitted to a Magistrate of the Tokugawa shogunate. Of the monks, eighteen were members of the clerics’ administrative board (hyōjōsho 評定所). This was an administrative organ of the clerics that had been set up by Ōgo earlier, in his 1589 law. The document was written to confirm their full acceptance of a recent law promulgated by Tokugawa Ieyasu.

To cause the Shingon Buddhist law to flourish, a venerable law (hatto 法度) has been promulgated. All of the various members [of the clerics] united in one venerably receive the law. In awe of the punishment by the higher will (jōi no keibatsu 上意之刑罰) and...by entrusting ourselves in the numinous care and oversight (myōryo myōken 冥慮冥観) of the great patriarch, the avatars of the two places (that is, Niu and Kōya myōjin), deities of the two mandala realm and the Buddhism protecting good gods of the entire mountain, the law shall be observed in perpetuity and it shall never be violated. For proof in later times, hereby written is our co-signed document (rensho 連署).

Aside from the lack of a formal divine vow, it is virtually an ichimi-covenant, except that the entity that was to deliver punishment was not the deities but the “higher will.” This change mirrors what Katsumata Shizuo had observed of the 1532 ikki covenant that was signed by thirty-two vassals of the warlord Mōri in the Aki province. According to Katsumata, the covenant marked a departure from the typical ikki covenants of late medieval regional landholding warriors, who often forged ikki unity among themselves to maintain peace and establish regional hegemony. Whereas typical covenants invoked divine punishment to prevent defection and violation of the rules made by the ikki, the 1532 ikki called for Mōri Motonari’s 毛利元就 (1497-1571) punishment. Motonari was the head of the Mōri house. Mōri had been a minor provincial warrior, but during Motonari’s time, it consolidated its power as a regional

484 Yūzoku hōkanshū 107-1769 [KM8].
485 Zokuhōkanshū 40-368 [KM3].
486 Katsumata 2015, 79-80.
warlord hegemon with a massive territory under its command in the Chūgoku region in western Japan. Behind the rise of the Mōri was its appropriation of the provincial warrior *ikki*. Indeed, Motonari replaced the deities as the focal point of the *ikki* formation, and his power was absolutized.

If a human ruler could displace the deities as the source of unity and order for a group of provincial warriors, could it also happen to a group of monks on a sacred mountain? It would appear so. That would not be surprising, given how Ieyasu flexed his power to buttress order at Kōyasan. We should recall, too, that Ōgo aligned the power of Kōbō Daishi and the *myōjin* with that of Hideyoshi. For the scholar monks who signed the oath, the numinous powers of the mountain were understood to be in sync with the “higher will” of mighty Ieyasu.

Given that these scholar monks forged a tight unity around the shogunal law, what law could they have been referring to? Most likely it was the one seen below, issued by Ieyasu to the clerics of Kongōbuji on on the twenty-first day of the eleventh month, 1609.

In regards to the abbacy of old and prestigious subtemples at the mountain, inheritance should be based on studies in accordance with ancient laws. The abbot of the twenty famed subtemples shall be selected from master scholars (*sekigaku* 碩学). The two lineage heads (*monshu* 門主) shall be selected from master scholars based on their competence. If any abbot neglects studies yet devours land, with the decision of the clerical assembly (*shūhyō* 衆評), that abbot shall be replaced. That is all.

Keichō 14, eleventh month, twenty-first day Ieyasu (black seal)
Kōyasan Kongōbuji clerics

Or the reference could have been to a separate law issued on the same day by Ieyasu’s son, the second shogun, Hidetada, which stated that to invigorate the Shingon Buddhist law, abbots of subtemples who neglect studies and violate the precepts shall be deposed and replaced with scholars committed to the precepts. The spirit of these laws echoes Ōgo’s reform efforts, but now Tokugawa rulers themselves were demanding that inheritance be based on scholarly expertise.

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487 *Shūkyō seido chōsa shiryō*, vol.16, 8-9.
488 *Shūkyō seido chōsa shiryō*, vol.16, 8.
Why this renewed emphasis on scholarship and studies? Clearly, it was related to the ideological milieu of the time characterized by Buddhist academism. The shogunal will to revitalize the Buddhist law was more than a pretense.

Behind these laws was a monk named Raikei 輪慶 who prevailed in a dispute over a subtemple abbacy via none other than the “higher will.” Raikei was incarcerated at Kōyasan by another monk. Raikei had challenged the latter’s right to inherit the abbacy of a prestigious scholarly subtemple, Henjōkō-in at Kōyasan. Enraged, Raikei took the case to Ieyasu, who in turn had the two monks debate their positions in his audience in 1608. Raikei won and Ieyasu condemned the other monk for incarcerating an innocent erudite monk.

The result was a remarkable infiltration of state power into the temple’s inner structure. Raikei’s “shiki of abbacy” (jūji shiki 住持職) and his “control” (shintai 進退) of the various “worldly and religious items, patrons, land, deities and branch halls and hermitages” that were held by the subtemple were formally guaranteed by a document issued in 1608 by Honda Masazumi.489 Masazumi was one of the top officials under Ieyasu at the time. Following that, as Tsuji described, Raikei had a brief but a glorious stint as a shaper of the early modern kogi-Shingon sectarian organization. He masterminded the various legal pronouncements that were issued by Ieyasu and Hidetada, including the laws mentioned above.490

5.8 The “Higher Will” and the Small-Assembly Monks

Clearly, Ieyasu’s 1609 law empowered the scholars in their local territorial politics. And let us recall that Ieyasu vested the clerical assembly with the power to depose land-devouring unlearned abbots. This gave the scholars the institutional basis to expand their influence and manipulate property allocation. On the same day as the co-signed oath (1610/1/11), the clerics’ assembly held a session to discuss the landholding of the eight small-assembly subtemples. In fact, there had been a growing sentiment since Ōgo’s time that the small-assembly monks held more land than they deserved. And then in 1602 there was an attempt by a group of scholar monks to reduce the small-assembly monks’ landholding on the basis that the latter were specialists of “worldly” functions with close association with warriors.491 At that time, the small-

489 Kongōsanmai-in documents 357 [KMK2].
490 Tsuji 1970b (kinsei 2), 186-204.
491 Takamuro-in documents 171: 12553-12561
assembly monks were framed as quasi-warrior monks who were unfit for the era of Buddhist academism, yet devoured land that they held through their subtemples. Such a petition was submitted to the magistrate under Ieyasu. But at that time, the magistrate dropped the case.

Why? Because as far as the Tokugawa officials were concerned, the petition lacked the signature of the recognized authority within the clerics’ collective—the lineage heads. But also, another group of scholar monks had intercepted the petition and sent a separate petition to discredit their argument. That is to say, scholar monks were not uniform, and some supported the small-assembly monks. As a side note, in 1602, five of the leading small-assembly subtemples each held between sixty and seventy koku of land.

But in 1610, the scholars had the unity and a decisive legal leverage over the small-assembly. The assembly negotiated a decision to reduce the small-assembly’s landholding to thirty to forty koku per subtemple, and put them on a ten-year “study confinement” (*hikikomori gakumon* 引籠学問). The documentation of that decision, which stressed that the “martial valour” of the small-assembly monks was the “basis for the destruction of the Buddhist law,” opens with:

> There have been issues in the previous years in regards to the small-assembly’s land. But now, we have received the black seal stating that the landholding of the clerics shall be based strictly on learning. This (*hatto* 法度) cannot be evaded…

Indeed, the “higher will” had uneven effects on different groups. The irony here is that the administrative prowess of the small-assembly, including its martial power, had been essential for the sustenance of the temple in a previous time. Scholars had been powerless, relatively speaking. But now, the tables had turned. With the temple sustained by the state, the small-assembly monks’ traditional roles were not only outmoded but deemed to be subversive. Scholars rode the wave of academism to expand their power and undermine the status and property of the small-assembly monks. The golden years of the small-assembly monks were over.

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493 *Sainan-in documents* 3-336 [KMK3].
Yet, let us note that what the scholars demanded was merely a reduction of the small-assembly’s property, not their removal. For them, co-existence was a given. When the scholars could not resolve thorny territorial allocation questions through discussion, the “higher will” needed to be appealed to.

In this regard, the principle of sharing was of utmost importance and monks still resolved conflicts through discussion within the status groups. In fact, what happened to Raikei is a testament to the primacy of sharing and co-existence. Raikei’s apparent whimsical exercise of power did not sit well with other scholar monks. He also enraged the princely abbot of Daigoji, Gien, by instructing him to expel abbots of the subtemples of his monastery in accordance with the shogunal law. Raikei held that document, as it had been given to him; he refused to release it to Gien, igniting fury in the latter.

At Kōyasan, an elite scholar monk, Seihen, was also agitated by Raikei’s heavy-handed deposing of monks from subtemples. Simply put, Raikei was sitting on top of the entire kogi-Shingon sect through the concept of “higher will.” To counter that, Gien and Seihin worked together in filing a suit against him. Seihen demonstrated his scholarly prowess by holding dharma lectures in Kyoto before making his legal response. Gien, on the other hand, networked with Ieyasu’s top advisors on matters pertaining to the temples and shrines of Kanshitsu Genkitsu, Itakura Katsushige, and Konchi-in Süden. A hearing with Ieyasu was set and as a result, Raikei was exiled to Izu in 1610.

Seen here is the pliability of the “higher will” and also its centrality in the politics among monks. Also vital in monks’ pursuit of power was scholarly prowess. But we would be mistaken if we assumed that Ieyasu and the Tokugawa state simply favoured scholars and oppressed other elements among the temple society. To weigh that question, let us look at how the small-assembly subtemple Renjō-in dealt with its own problems by tapping the “higher will.”

5.9 The “Higher Will” in Kōyasan’s Inner Sanctuary

Renjō-in kept a copy of a memorandum that was written by Konchi-in Süden in 1614. The memorandum concerns a ritual hall in the Inner Sanctuary called the Goma Hall (Goma-dō). As its name suggests, the hall was dedicated to the Shingon fire ritual of the Goma. The

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494 Tsuji 1970b (kinsei 2), 196-98.  
495 Takamuro-in documents 242: 12270.
memorandum pertained to itinerant visiting monks who used the Goma Hall to organize their community. Allow me to describe the place.

The Inner Sanctuary was a sanctum *par excellence*. Kōbō Daishi is said to be ever-present in his Mausoleum. The entire area of the Inner Sanctuary was considered a Pure Land on earth. It was believed that Kōbō Daishi himself had considered the area to be the Pure Land of the Diamond realm; he demonstrated his reverence for the place by worshipping in it daily. The outer area of the Inner Sanctuary was considered to be the Pure Land of the bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokitesvara). The inner area surrounding the Mausoleum was considered to be Maitreya’s Pure Land. This was an area where imperial pilgrims removed their shoes so as not to defile the sanctum, but the outer area was also a massive grave site with tens of thousands of stone *stupas*. It was believed that having a *stupa* there guaranteed not only passage to the Pure Land in the afterlife but also to be in the audience of the Future Buddha Maitreya when he made his advent to the world.

According to Ōta Naoyuki, itinerant ascetics based their activities at the Goma Hall, at least by the 1540s. They called themselves Ten Grains, or *jikkoku* 十穀, because their ascetical practice involved the abstinence from the ten grains. In the late sixteenth century, itinerants at the Goma Hall were quite influential. Kaishin, the sixth abbot of the hall, was Ōgo’s contemporary and together, they repaired the Mausoleum under the sponsorship of Naka, Hideyoshi’s mother in 1585. He also participated in a high-profile *renga* poetry party in 1584 to pitch poems alongside the Kyoto deputy, Maeda Gen’i, and the poet, Satomura Jōha, (1524-1602) who was close to Hideyoshi.

5. 10 *Muen* Monks at Goma Hall

The nature of the Goma Hall as a locus of sociability of itinerants is expressed evocatively in the *engi* of the hall, dated Hōei 2 (1705), which was published online on the website of Kōyasan’s museum, the Reihōkan. It presents a rare voice of the itinerants who

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496 KSF, vol. 5, scroll 4, 39 (ascetics).
497 Ōta 2008, 310-14; Zokuhōkanshū 61-511 [KM3].
499 Wakayama-ken hakubutsukan 2008, 219
made a living in the liminal space of Kōyasan’s Inner Sanctuary. In contrast to Kaishin’s time, the men at the Goma Hall were less influential.

After the patriarch entered the eternal meditation, Shinzen and other disciples built the Goma Hall beside the moat around the Mausoleum. And just on the other side of the bridge, a hall for monks’ residence was built. That hall was called Fudō-in. The purpose of the hall was to guard the Mausoleum and to offer prayer ritual to protect the tenka. The Fudō was the main deity. Everyday, monks went from Fudō-in to the Goma Hall to perform esoteric rites. But in later times, to avoid the commute, the Goma Hall was moved (to the outside of the bridge, next to the monks’ hall). Both the Goma Hall and the Mausoleum were controlled by Fudō-in...From several hundred years ago, scholars among the visiting monks forged an ichimi league with the scholars of Kongōsanmai-in...But...now, they are called the Inner Sanctuary league (Oku no in kesshū 奥院結衆)...The Inner Sanctuary league are muen 無縁, landless visiting monks. They have perpetuated the dharma lamp solely with the power of the dharma itself. But since the Goma Hall is a great edifice, it is difficult for the muen monks to maintain it. The hall has barely been maintained with the divine power of Fudō, but now, the building is damaged and the Fudō is exposed to the rain and dew...

The term muen 無縁, invoked by the Inner Sanctuary league means “no relations,” and it connoted spaces or persons outside of the normative social structures and ruling power. Muen was an important categorical identity for the monks who organized themselves at the Goma Hall at the onset of the eighteenth century. They were proud to be muen and they positioned themselves against the more restricted monks of the established organizations in the main precinct. But muen meant no land; economic hardship was a fact of life for the Goma Hall associates. The engi must have been used to raise funds to repair the hall. Renjō-in’s records tell us that they were not entirely unbound. By the time the engi was written, the subtemple controlled the hall and its itinerants were contracted to provide it with various seasonal dues and an annual rent of one-and-a-half koku of rice. They also had to maintain the hall and could be

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501 Amino 2009.
deposed from it by the subtemple. In short, the Goma Hall was Renjō-in’s property, but that was only possible due to Ieyasu’s “higher will.”

Figure 5. The Goma Hall in the Inner Sanctuary. Photographed by author, June 2014.

A century before the engi was brushed, the muen monks of the Goma Hall had come from the Iyo province in Shikoku. The seventh abbot of the hall was called Ten Grain Chōzon. He was from Iyo and is said to have been an abbot of a certain temple in the Dōgo area of Iyo.

Dōgo is well-known for the hot springs, but like Kōyasan, it is permeated with legends of Kōbō Daishi. Shikoku is the home of the pilgrimage dedicated to Kōbō Daishi. Dōgo is the site of the fifty-first temple of the Shikoku pilgrimage, the Ishiteji. That was the site, according to the temple’s engi, where a greedy man, named Emon Saburō, was reborn as the son of the warlord

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502 These terms are seen in the contract of a monk who became the abbot of the hall in 1711. Takamuro-in documents 243:12343-12349.
503 Zokuhōkanshū 61-511 [KM3].
ruler of the Kōno. Saburo had his sins absolved by Kōbō Daishi, who realized his dying wish to be born into a lordly house.\textsuperscript{504}

\section*{5.11 Konchi-in Süden, Renjō-in and the Goma Hall}

Süden’s memorandum, which is also found in his journal, addressed not Renjō-in but the Muryōju-in subtemple.\textsuperscript{505} That was the lineage head (\textit{monshu} 門主) under which Renjō-in was organized in the Tokugawa era. The memorandum reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
The situation at the place (Kōyasan) has been reported to me. In regards to Renjō-in’s claim at the Inner Sanctuary, precedents should be reinforced. If there are further delays, bring the matter to me. The higher will shall be sought then. Respectfully,

Konchi-in

Fifth month, fourteenth day (seal)

Kōyasan

Muryōju-in
\end{quote}

What did this mean and why did Renjō-in keep it? Süden, of course, would never write such a message without being asked. In Süden’s journal, we see that Raishū, the abbot of Renjō-in, contacted Süden via letter or messenger, at least five times from the second month of 1614 to the sixth month of the following year.\textsuperscript{506} On one of those occasions, Raishū sent him two \textit{ryō} of gold and all of this was to ask for his support of his claim over the Goma Hall.\textsuperscript{507} Raishū’s letter, dated the twelfth day of the second month, Keichō 19 (1614), is recorded in Süden’s journal. It reveals Raishū’s intent. As seen in the journal, Süden relayed the message back to the Goma Hall abbot to summon the latter to Sunpu for questioning.

The Goma Hall in the Inner Sanctuary has been controlled (\textit{shintai}) by Renjō-in since ancient times. The successive abbots of the hall have been selected by the opinion of the humble monk (the abbot of Renjō-in). In addition, two \textit{koku} of rice has been remitted as

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[504]{Yoritomi and Shiraki 2001, 39.}
\footnotetext[505]{Honkō kokushi nikki, no.12, 172.}
\footnotetext[506]{Honkō kokushi nikki, no. 11, 597, 618, 630; no. 15, 830, 914.}
\footnotetext[507]{Honkō kokushi nikki, no. 11, 630. The entry is from the nineteenth day of the fourth month, 1614.}
\end{footnotes}
rent annually and various seasonal proprietary duties [have been provided by the abbot of the Goma Hall]. But in recent years, that precedent has been lost and the dues have been in disarray. Hence, Muryōju-in sent an official to the Goma Hall repeatedly to inquire into the problem. The Goma Hall is saying that it had lent twenty koku of rice to a person known as Kubo-bō and thus the dues should be collected from him. Since I am completely unaware of that arrangement with Kubo-bō, it would be venerably appreciated if you could order the Goma Hall [to pay]. That is all.

South Renjō-in
Raishū (seal)

Second month, twelfth day
Venerable Konchi-in to be displayed by his attendants

Back memo (urahan 裏判)

Such is the memorandum relayed to you. Fortunately, Hōshō-in and Muryōju-in are staying here for the time being. Come to the capital immediately to explain the situation.

Tiger Third month, third day
Konchi-in (seal)
Kōyasan
Goma Hall at Inner Sanctuary

Raishū was trying to collect. The urgency was even more pronounced in light of the fact that his subtemple had lost nearly half of its land four years earlier. Süden recognized Raishū’s claim to be legitimate and vested Renjō-in with the legal basis to subject the hall under Renjō-in’s authority. Note that Süden’s decision was bolstered by the “higher will” that he had privileged access to.

It is uncertain if Renjō-in had actually controlled the hall as Raishū claimed, but what is certain is that in spite of the pressure by Raishū and the lineage head, the abbot of the Goma Hall was refusing to accept Renjō-in’s demands. The alleged credit to a certain Kubo-bō is interesting. Raishū must have known who the Kubo-bō was, for that was an ascetic subtemple

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508 Honkō kokushi Nikki, no. 11, 125.
that had been acting as Renjō-in’s “overseer” (kōken 後見). Like Raishū’s own satomoto house, Kubo-bō abbotry must have been from an influential house in the region.

With the Goma Hall refusing Renjō-in’s demands, Raishū sent another memorandum to Süden and Itakura Katsushige on the tenth day of the sixth month, 1615. At the time, they were in Kyoto with Ieyasu, who had just crushed Osaka castle to exterminate the Toyotomi. Ieyasu was now a true hegemon. Raishū must have gone to Kyoto to deliver the memorandum himself, because on the very same day, Süden and Katsushige sent another memorandum to the Goma Hall. In it, they urged the abbot to come to Kyoto immediately to explain the reason for his negligence.

Concerning the rent of the Goma Hall, which has been remitted to Renjō-in from ancient times, the remiss in recent years is utterly unacceptable. Last year when Muryōju-in was in Sunpu, I instructed to maintain precedents and a memorandum to the lineage head was issued to that end. But it appears that you are still not complying. If this is true, it is a troubling offence. If there are reasons, come to Kyoto immediately to explain. Fortunately, the two lineage heads as well as a group of clerics are here in Kyoto. Discuss it with them, then the matter shall be taken to the higher will. Negligence will be unpardonable…

As we see here, the Goma Hall abbot was ordered to explain his negligence to the authorities of clerics in Kyoto and then have the case settled by Ieyasu. This was an ultimatum to the ascetic itinerant who was merely fighting to protect his space from being encroached upon.

What could the ascetic have done against such an overbearing threat? He likely left the mountain to carry on his life as a mobile religionist rather than turning himself in. But documents tell us what happened to the monks at the Goma Hall after this. In 1616, Raishū extracted from an Iyo monk, Shōjō, a contract of his formal terms as the next abbot of the Goma Hall. The contract reads as follows:

510 Honkō kokushi Nikki, no. 17, 458-59.
Item: The previous Ten Grains violated the higher will and descended the mountain. Now, I have taken residence at the Goma Hall. The previous Ten Grains also neglected rent for years and the balance owing was massive. However, that has been pardoned. In gratitude, I have paid you one kanme of silver.

Item: Since ancient times, the Goma Hall has been affiliated with Renjō-in. From now on, [that relationship shall] never be taken lightly.

Item: The various proprietary matters [between the Goma Hall and Renjō-in] shall remain the same as they have been in the past.

Item: Concerning the succession of the abbacy, a suitable person shall be nominated from within the Iyo group to be approved by your venerable subtemple.

Item: The rent of two koku per annum has been pardoned for our generation only. Our successors shall pay the rent of two koku as per precedent without negligence.

If any of the above is violated, your venerable temple has the full discretion to handle matters as it wishes.

Genna 2 (1616), Fire Horse Sixth month, twenty-eighth day, Iyo Province, Kūshiki-bō

Shōjō (signature)

Renjō-in\textsuperscript{511}

Shōjō’s signing of this document marked the formal integration of the hall under Renjō-in. The Goma Hall was now Renjō-in’s and this was only achieved through the leverage of the “higher will,” as Shōjō was fully aware. Raishū now had the power to codify social relations at the hall, a prerogative that he had expressed in the term, shintai 进退.

But Raishū was not trying to do too much. The accumulated rent was pardoned, though the hefty amount of one kanme of silver that was paid by Shōjō and his associates would have been roughly equivalent to ten years’ worth of rent. Shōjō’s group or league was formed by men from Iyo and they retained their space in the Inner Sanctuary.

The Goma Hall likely continued to be a place of dynamic religious, ascetical and fundraising activities carried out by men from the Iyo province, but ultimately their space was subjected to Renjō-in’s authority, which was underpinned by the “higher will.” In this manner,

\textsuperscript{511} Takamuro-in documents 241: 12042.
state power had infiltrated into even the most liminal space of Kōyasan’s Inner Sanctuary to codify social relations as well as create and sustain order.

5.12 The Contentious Inner Sanctuary

Yet the space remained contested. A key factor that threatened Renjō-in’s control of the hall was fiat, or adjudication by the Tokugawa officials of disputes among Kōyasan’s competing groups. In 1687, the ascetics and clerics were summoned to the shogunal high court (hyōjōsho 評定所). There, senior councillors (rōjū 老中) and magistrates of temples and shrines delivered a ruling on the dispute at hand.512

The two groups had had numerous issues of contention, among them the laws issued by the senior councillors in 1663 that had curtailed the ascetics’ space considerably.513 The ascetics had exercised control over the Inner Sanctuary, but that was lost with the passage of that law. But now, the senior councillor, Toda Tadamasa, delivered a ruling to rescind the 1663 laws and reinstate the laws issued by the third shogun, Iemitsu, in 1649, which did not constrain the ascetics’ influence at the Inner Sanctuary.514

That must have been the basis for the advances that the ascetics were making upon the Goma Hall in 1688. That year, Renjō-in extracted a written statement from the current abbot of the hall, Kaichi, who wrote that “From now onwards, we shall never heed to any order from the ascetics.”515 The next threat materialized inadvertently in 1691. This is when the senior councillors handed down a shogunal will in the form of a twenty-one-item law that turned out to be the final ruling by the shogunate on the contentious issues between the ascetics and clerics. The latter was favoured decisively in the new law that began with the following:

The various halls and shrines in the Danjō Garan and the Inner Sanctuary and in the other areas of the monastery, shall be, in their entirety, controlled by the head priest.516

512 Tsuji 1970c (kinsei 3), 43.
514 The Iemitsu law of 1649 is cited in Tsuji 1970c (kinsei 3), 22-30.
515 Takamuro-in documents 242: 12269. Kaichi also confirmed the obligation to pay the rent, and Renjō-in’s power over the succession of the abbacy.
516 The law is cited in Tsuji 1970c (kinsei 3), 52-55.
The head priest was the abbot of Seiganji, Naka’s temple. Though Ieyasu had reinstated the clerics’ 1277 law that restricted the tenure of the head priest to three years,\textsuperscript{517} that did not stop the head priest from taking advantage of his supreme empowerment by the shogun. He summoned Kaichi and told him that the hall was now under his control and that “in accordance with the venerable law, the Goma Hall shall no longer heed any order from Renjō-in.”\textsuperscript{518}

How did Renjō-in respond to that? It had to protect its property. Its abbot responded by taking his grievance to the magistrates of temples and shrines in Edo with a petition that said the following:

The Goma Hall was built on a grave space held by my cloister and monks are stationed there to guard it. For that reason, they pay the rent of two \textit{koku} per year to my cloister…It is a hall held privately \textit{(jibun shoji 自分所持)} by my cloister. If the Goma Hall is to be taken away, then the various halls and Goma Halls of other cloisters should also be given to the head priest. Such would be truly difficult to accept.

Item: During the Keichō era (1596-1615), the monk of the Goma Hall committed an offence and the case was taken to the public authority \textit{(kōgi 公儀)}. The order was given then to impose precedents and I have kept the memorandum from Konchi-in to that end.\textsuperscript{519}

Here, we see why the Sūden memorandum was so important for Renjō-in. Without it its control of the hall would have been lost. As we see, the Goma Hall was a hotly contested site, but a decisive factor that influenced the territorial politics over it was the Tokugawa ruling. Fortunately for Renjō-in, it succeeded in receiving from the shogunal authorities a ruling in its favour and Kaichi submitted a memorandum to Renjō-in in 1695 to confirm the hall’s return to the subtemple.\textsuperscript{520}

\textsuperscript{517} In his law to Kōyasan clerics issued in the seventh month of 1615. \textit{Shūkyōseido chōsa shiryō}, vol. 16, 33.
\textsuperscript{518} \textit{Takamuro-in documents} 242: 12292-97.
\textsuperscript{519} The petition is not dated, but was written between 1691 and 1695. The latter year is when the hall was returned to Renjō-in. \textit{Takamuro-in documents} 242: 12292-97.
\textsuperscript{520} Also, on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth month of Genroku 8 (1695), the cleric’s annual custodian sent a memorandum to Renjō-in to confirm that latter’s entitlement to collect one-and-a-half \textit{koku} of rice from the Goma Hall as rent. Upon the return of the hall to Renjō-in, the rent was reduced by five \textit{to}, or a half \textit{koku}. \textit{Takamuro-in documents} 324: 21831-32
5.13 Renjō-in’s Early Modern Makeover

Renjō-in’s struggle to hold the Goma Hall was part of its transformation from the medieval mode. That was when it, along with the other small-assembly monks, asserted a dominant influence at the mountain and the plains. Then, as Kōyasan was reshaped by the unified state, it styled itself as the “official under the head priest” and tried to secure its prerogatives in that capacity. Though its glory-days were long gone, it used state power to re-consolidate its property.

The Goma Hall was but one of the properties that it managed to hold in the Tokugawa era. It was recognized as the custodian of the Miyashiro Mountain, which referred to a lushly forested mound where the Shrine was located.521 It attained or retained its control of that mountain through litigation with the ascetics over the use of water from the mountain. And it held the prerogative to erect signboards at the Danjō Garan.522

This was a result of litigation with the ascetics in the Manji era (1658-1661) when the ascetics discredited the Renjō-in’s right to erect signboards in that same area. On that occasion, the Renjō-in abbot took copies of the old signboards that it had erected in the area, including the Bensen signboard that we saw in the previous chapter, to the magistrates of temples and shrines in Edo. The abbot sought to demonstrate its prerogative to erect signboards.523 The ruling of the shogunal senior councillors in 1663, confirmed that it held the keys to the inner cloister (naijin 内陣) of the Shrine, the sanctum of the landlord deities.524 This was likely a new prerogative of the subtemple. The Tokugawa high officials stipulated that the keys were to be ritually sealed (fūin 封印) by the priest of the Amano shrine, then placed in care of Renjō-in, the “custodian of the Danjō Garan” (danjō azukari 檀上預). The keys were needed for the performance of the roof-changing ceremony held every twenty-one years to purify and rejuvenate the sanctum of the landlord deities. The inner cloister was locked and needed to be opened to escort the deities out of their abode to a temporary shelter during the repair work. The stipulation was a result of Renjō-in’s dispute over the Shrine, which was adjudicated by the Tokugawa officials.

In this manner, Renjō-in’s property rights in the Tokugawa era were supported by state power, but it had to fight to protect its property. Litigation is where ground-level tension at the

522 Takamuro-in documents 235: 18840.
523 Ibid.
temple was resolved through state power, which worked its way into the temple space through local social tensions.

5.14 Kōyasan’s Tokugawa Transformation

What is remarkable about Kōyasan in the seventeenth century is the imbrication of its inner social relations by state power. From the right to hold keys to the right to erect signboards or occupy certain temples, exploit peasant labour, or wear a certain kind of robe and perform certain rituals, prerogatives had to be approved and codified by state power. Furthermore, the very existence of the groups that formed the temple society of Kōyasan was assured by the Tokugawa state. Just as the mountain was upheld by the state, so, too, were its monks.

This was not because the Tokugawa authorities were bent on micromanaging every aspect of the temple, but through the accumulation of decisions based on litigations between the fractious parties. Monks needed the state to resolve their problems and realize certainty. I cannot cite a single Tokugawa policy that was intended to oppress the temple as a whole. Rulers responded to the plea from monks to intervene in their local politics. Hence, the “higher will” was the monks’ will being fired back into the temple space to impose property allocations.

The most pressing problem at Kōyasan in the seventeenth century was co-existence. Monks faced the task of “retying” social relations amongst themselves to keep chaos at bay, just when their own system of order collapsed. For them, the “higher will” was necessary because that was now the only power that assured property and space, and provisioned the temple with the land it needed to survive.

To presume a structural tension between the temple and the state is misleading. Monks understood their temple to be an aggregate of spaces held by diverse groups and so did the rulers. The seventeenth century reorganization of Kōyasan was driven by the contradictions and resolutions of the contested space of the temple and imbricated by state power through the judicature.

The politics at Kōyasan in the seventeenth century cannot be understood if we look only at the events of that century. It was part of the broad shift in the temple’s organizational mode that accompanied the state formation. For one thing, it was caused by the forced transmogrification of the temple’s mode of existence from an autonomous regional ruler to a ritual institution dependent on the state.
Monks had been ordered to focus on ritual and studies; they had to find a way of allocating property and prerogatives among themselves from a reduced pool. But to add to the confusion and dissension, Hideyoshi had left the temple crippled by eviscerating its inner mechanism of power. That mechanism was honed through Kōyasan’s medieval experience. It was based upon the unitive principle of ichimi, which was achieved through the process of discussion, consent and the forging of unity. It was a means to construct power locally and ritually, in order to control space and impose order by containing inner dissents.

Seiyo’s failed attempt to receive consent to his increased power further diminished the temple’s ability to construct a local public authority that demanded obedience. Simultaneously, Ieyasu mediated the monks’ strife and dispensed its power as the public authority that imposed order. Because the conflict was waged along existing status lines, he formalized the allocation of property and prerogatives based on status. As a result, the legal locus of the two main status groups of Kōyasan shifted from the temple to the Tokugawa state. With that, the unitive impulse that had sustained the temple in the medieval epoch was replaced by a divisive one.

Ieyasu’s adjudication in 1601 opened up Kōyasan’s highly volatile space. Up to that time, Kōyasan’s space was self-contained though it had been ruled by the hegemonic monks appointed by hegemonic rulers. Ōgo served that role and Seiyo did, too, until the clerics’ revolt. But once that framework was broken and groups’ self-interest linked them more directly to the state, it opened the avenue for monks to use the state in their pursuit of power, wealth and order. The state held all the cards and monks had no recourse but to seek a seat at the table to defend their privileges.

As monks waged their territorial conflicts through the medium of state power, latent contradictions within Kōyasan came to light. A case in point was the empowerment of scholars vis-à-vis the declining fate of the old guard small-assembly monks. The irony is that the small-assembly had sustained the temple in the medieval era. But now, their existence was questionable as they blurred the cardinal boundary between monks and warriors. With the temple now being protected by the state, their old roles were no longer needed. They saw their prerogatives undercut through the medium of the “higher will.” Scholar monks could not reduce the small-assembly’s property except by tapping state power. At the same time, the “higher will” was malleable. We saw how a small-assembly subtemple used it to consolidate its property. The
group that saw their space slashed the most, (apart from the ascetics, who we did not discuss), were the itinerants.

Under the less rigorous spatial organization of the previous era, the itinerants held notable power and influence. But the ascetical itinerants dwelling in the sanctum of Kōyasan’s Inner Sanctuary became bound to the power of a subtemple in the main precinct. But that, too, was not because the state tried to control mobile religionists, but because that subtemple tried to secure its property. And it was none other than the “higher will” that enabled it to strip the itinerants of their autonomy.

All in all, the Tokugawa rulers supported the elites of the stratified temple society. This echoes what Itō Shinshō has pointed out regarding the Toyotomi regime’s handling of disputes among religionists. This conclusion also mirrors what Yoshii Toshiyuki has said of the Tokugawa adjudication of conflicts at mid-sized temples in western Japan, such as Taima-dera in Nara and Kinpusen in Yoshino. But the clerics of Kōyasan would never agree with such an argument, for their prestige was forever scarred by Ieyasu’s empowerment of Seiyo, the “humble” ascetic. How the Tokugawa judges adjudicated disputes is a topic that requires further examination.

It appears ironic that monks were using state power to further their own ends. The result was an ever finer infiltration of state power into their life at the temple on the mountain. State power, it would seem, was an alien force that disrupted the organic functioning of social organization at the temple. The Tokugawa state, in what could be termed “unintended consequences” undermined local autonomy at Kōyasan.

But for Kōyasan monks, state power may not have seemed so foreign. With its judicature and the status system, it buoyed their social existence. The clerics’ oath of 1610 suggests that monks saw the deities of the mountain and Ieyasu’s “higher will” as mutually embracing one another. It tells us they felt that by entrusting themselves to the “numinous care and oversight” of the deities, they would naturally observe the laws issued by the “higher will.” Could that have been the case?

We might think that monks did not see things that way and that the regime forced them to subject themselves to its power. But we should consider their main problem at hand, which was the allocation of land from the grant that Ieyasu had given them. That grant was issued in

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response to a plea by the clerics who could not hold their property on their own. The monks who signed the oath were scholars who, for the first time, were empowered to lead the temple by a ruler who had vowed to invigorate the Shingon Buddhist law. The scholar-monks swore the oath to prevent defection of their own members from their common goal and to deter the small-assembly monks from making a counter-suit against them. The temple had been sustained by state power since Hideyoshi’s time. The days of resisting the state were long gone. Monks did not want autonomy, but property, security and order. State power under Ieyasu took hold of them from underneath their footings.
Conclusion

This study has examined the shift in the organizational mode and practices of power at Kōyasan from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Historical documents of the temple have much to tell us about how the people formed the complex of power relations at the temple. The documents reveal how monks strove to manage their society by creating and imposing order in a world fraught with tensions and internal conflicts. Those artefacts—which once were the sacred treasure of their beholders—provide a rare window to the efforts of the protagonists of Kōyasan to assert and protect property and privileges. Notable change across the unification is the medium of power relations and property holding. Before the unification, the deities and the numinous power of the temple and the mountain were the sources of power, property, and order for Kōyasan monks. Post-unification, that power shifted to the state.

The shift calls to mind Kurushima Noriko’s observation. On surface, the *ikki* pattern of organization seems diametrically opposed to the top-down organizational model adopted by the Sengoku daimyo. In the latter, hierarchy is crystallized. All the members, from high to low, are placed in vertical relationships with the leader at the pinnacle. By contrast, the *ikki* is more lateral, based as it is on unity and consensus. At least in principle, in the *ikki*, all are equal in the decision-making process, and all are bound to the decisions made by the *ikki*.

Seen this way, the expansion and consolidation of warrior power in the late medieval period that culminated in the unification represents a triumph of the vertical principle over the lateral one. *Ikki* leagues were contained and all were subject to the insuperable authority of the *tenka* person at the head of the unified political order. Kurushima suggests, however, that the *ikki* mode of organization and those of the Sengoku daimyo were not all that different. Both had absolute entities at the nucleus of their organization: for the *ikki*, it was the deities around which the members forged a tight unity; and for the warlord polities it was the warlord chieftain.

Certainly, the absolute power with which Hideyoshi subjected the temple is a testament to the primacy of the vertical principle in the forcible creation of unified order. The usage of the “higher will” by monks in their territorial politics of the seventeenth century also suggests that the vertical principle of the new age destroyed the temple’s organic pattern of organization. Their

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former problem-solving custom was based upon the unitive impulse of ichimi and a more lateral, collective administration.

Yet when one looks at the mechanism of the ichimi as it worked in the context of late medieval Kōyasan, we see that it was a practice of creating just a different brand of absolute authority that demanded obedience from all. Such a power was necessary to overcome differences and contradictions, contain private interests and codify social relations in order to control space. And most of all, the purpose of ichimi was to secure and maintain property and order. Politics at Kōyasan in the late medieval and the formative stage of the early modern in the seventeenth century was similar in that there was a consistent need for an authority that controlled and assured property allocation. Material interests coalesced around authority.

What, then, was the rupture of the early modern state formation for Kōyasan? A hint to the answer is found in one of the ironies of Japanese history. Kōyasan plummeted into a state of disorder just when the country as a whole is said to have reached a state of peace and stability.

Kōyasan in the late medieval era of the fourteenth to the late sixteenth century was the hub of a self-contained regional space in which socioeconomic relations in the regional society of the estates it controlled were codified by the temple. What made this possible, on the one hand, was the recognition by rulers of the temple’s engi-based landholding. In practice, however, Kōyasan had to achieve the control of space through its own effort. To that end, it ritually colonized the region under the myth of divine conferment of land, which held that land that it controlled was bestowed upon the founder by landlord deities. In the fourteenth century, the temple made a concerted effort to take control of all relations over land in the “four corners” of the divine land and more. Nevertheless, the deities were still in evidence and manifested themselves on land at shrines dedicated to them.

The actual landholders at medieval Kōyasan were not monks, but the landscape of the temple and the mountain. Or as peasants put it, it was the geographical entity called “the mountain.” The temple collective organized their political community on the mountain around the sacred core and called itself the “entire mountain.” Its raison d’être was twofold: 1) to ensure the mountain’s privileged status as a tax-colllecting overlord; and 2) to maintain order in the region by codifying property allocation and resolving conflicts among contending groups.

It achieved all that not through a unilateral domination of the plains, but by integrating the political forces from the plains. It is true that the temple was an overlord that sustained itself
by exploiting peasants. However, the latter needed the former to protect themselves from the harsher treatment and exploitations by other powerholders. Local landholders, also needed the temple to secure their property and retain income from land as peasants became more autonomous. Monks could not maintain their temple without harnessing the influence of regional powerholders into their system. The tensions and contradictions of the regional society converged at the mountain and it and the plains embraced one another to create a self-contained space administered by the “entire mountain.”

But the “entire mountain” was a performative construct. It only emerged through the ritual mediation of the sacred power of geography. Its armature of power was the process of discussion, consent and unity. Late medieval Kōyasan was indeed an *ikki* force that sustained itself through ritual interaction with the legendary landscape of Kōyasan’s *engi*.

The unified state could not abide any outliers; no separate authority could interfere with their drive to integrate all land and spaces in the country under its authority. The temple’s self-regulation in controlling land and the regional space was incompatible with its ruling principle. In 1585 Hideyoshi lowered the boom; the temple had no choice but to capitulate to demands to bow out as the autonomous regional ruler. Immediately, Hideyoshi used the logic of status to corral the monks into the sphere of “rituals and studies.” The temple was transformed from an autonomous regional polity to a ritual institution that protected Hideyoshi’s polity and filled the realm with divine blessings.

Yet, that itself was not the cause of the seventeenth century turmoil. The monks were active participants in the historical change. They readily performed prayer rituals for the *tenka*, accepted disarmament, and acquiesced to Ōgo’s domination.

It was the land surveys that imploded Kōyasan’s existing system of order. This change was a death blow to its self-sufficiency. The temple had built its organizational structure around the sacred which was, among other things, the source of land. Land had to be controlled collectively because proprietorship lay beyond the reach of human power. By replacing the temple’s landholding with his grants, Hideyoshi excoriated the core of the temple space. Collective administration lost its purpose, and the inevitable march toward the collapse of the temple society was set in motion.

It was under Ieyasu that Kōyasan’s armature of power and order was destroyed. Ieyasu’s empowerment of Seiyo disrupted the delicate inner balance of power at the temple and precluded
consent and unity. Ieyasu’s subsequent adjudication of the dispute between the clerics and ascetics created a deep divide in the temple and ended any possibility of the unity required to maintain internal order. Simultaneously, his judicial authority replaced the temple’s own scheme of power to undergird local order by resolving conflicts.

In the span of sixteen years, from 1585 to 1601, the unified state brought the *ikki*-based organizational mode of Kōyasan to an end. It is doubtful that this was the original intent of the rulers. It was an unintended consequences of political decisions.

Hideyoshi demanded that Kōyasan remain a self-contained entity under Ōgo; Ieyasu tried to do the same. What they both wanted was to have Kōyasan monks perform prayer rituals to protect the polity. After Hideyoshi’s grants, the state did not take active measures to regulate the temple. Rather, it resolved the conflicts from within the temple. That was an effective method to control the temple and Ieyasu’s hold of the temple was unshakable at his early stage of his rule. All in all, the state replaced the sacred as the source of wealth, power and order for monks.

Ironically, just as the state displaced the sacred as the source of order for monks, the state itself drew on the sacred to augment its power. The sustenance of the numinous *tenka* was vital to Hideyoshi’s project of hegemony. To contain the pressure created by his rise to power, he needed to assert a ritual mastery over land and tap the numinous power of sacred sites and deities. That did not restrict his power but boosted it, for it allowed him to transform his regime into a subliminal polity that was fused with the realm of deities. Hideyoshi’s *tenka* was a holistic one and so was Ieyasu’s. They co-opted the sacred sites and the ritualists and harnessed the ineffable power of deities to buttress order.

With the radical change it brought to the temples, the unified state is typically seen as an extra-social bastion of power that suppressed and regulated the latter. When Hideyoshi brought them into his ruling system, there was initial coercion by the state, followed by acquiescence by the temple. The state and temples were mutually constitutive. The unified state controlled the country by “retying,” to borrow from medieval monks, power relations in the country under their paramount authority. To that end, it did not uproot or remake the numinous geography of the land that they ruled. Rather, they retained and revived it. The subliminal power of nature and geography needed to be pacified and harnessed, for that had been the basis of the political power of social groups like Kōyasan.
The state’s grip on the political space of the country could not be achieved and sustained without a ritual mastery over land, so it demanded temples to attend dutifully to rituals. Rather than containing and regulating the subliminal geography of the country, the state subsumed itself into the environment to monopolize the political use of the sacred and eliminate its potential to create order apart from its own. The early modern state was a traditional regime that consolidated its power upon the scaffolding of the sacred geography that was the legacy of medieval politics.

This echoes a recent critique by Jack Goldstone of the tendency in early modern studies to emphasize change and the common features that are seen in early modern societies across cultural areas.\(^{527}\) Goldstone points out that more attention should be paid to the power of classical texts and traditional elements in shaping divergent early modern experiences. Here, Goldstone is thinking of texts in the ordinary sense of canonical writings like that of Confucianism and Islam, but in the case of early modern Japan it suggests that text can be extended to mean geography and landscape.\(^{528}\) This was not merely a cultural matter. Rather, it was blatantly political. For Hideyoshi and Ieyasu, the purpose of appropriating sacred sites was to control the complex of power relations that constituted the political space of the realm that they ruled.

But perhaps the reason why Hideyoshi and Ieyasu were so effective in naturalizing their power over temples was because they blurred the boundary between humans and deities.

Hideyoshi’s 1594 law relating to the temples in Kyoto demanded that monks treat his regime like buddhas and patriarchs. Scholar monks at Kōyasan treated the “higher will” of Ieyasu much like they had treated the deities. But of course, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu were earth-bound quasi-deities.

Since it was the Tokugawa who took the tenka at last, it should not be surprising to see Ieyasu coalesced into the sacred landscape of Kōyasan. According to the nineteenth century gazetteer of the Kii province, Seiganji, the temple that Hideyoshi had built for his mother and which became the head temple of the clerics after Ieyasu’s 1601 decree, had as its main deity (honzon 本尊) none other than the sacred portrait of the “Divine Ruler Who Illuminates the East” (tōshōshinkun 東照神君), or Ieyasu.\(^{529}\)

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527 Goldstone 2012.
528 As Ian Reader discusses. Reader 2005, 39-74.
529 KSF, vol. 4, scroll 11 (clerics), 218.
At Seiganji, monks performed a “thanksgiving ritual for the boons bestowed by the state” (kokuon hōsai 国恩報賽) on a daily basis. Ieyasu’s portrait might seem unsuitable, but for the clerics in the Tokugawa realm, his concessions made their existence possible. The portrait was sandwiched on the altar by the images of Kōbō Daishi and the Shingon deity of love and passion, the Aizen myōō (愛染明王 Rāga-rājā), to form the sacred triad of Seiganji. When we see that spirit tablets of successive Tokugawa shoguns were placed beside the triad, we can conclude that Ieyasu and the shogunal house were subsumed into the ineffable power of the sacred that remained at the heart of Kōyasan throughout the medieval and the early modern era and beyond.

**Remaining Issues**

In spite of the far-reaching change that occurred at Kōyasan in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the era under the Tokugawa rule witnessed the temple’s unprecedented growth and prosperity. Calling itself the “afterlife-ritual site of the tenka” (tenka no bodaisho 天下之菩提所), Kōyasan was among the most renowned sacred sites in the country that attracted pilgrims and worshippers from far and wide.

My future research will explore the afterlife rituals offered by Kōyasan monks. Special attention will be paid to the ritual practice known as dosha kaji 土砂加持. This refers to sand that was consecrated by monks on the mountain through Shingon rituals. I will examine the role of the sacred sand in connecting Kōyasan with patrons in different parts of early modern Japan.

Kōyasan prohibited live women from entering the precinct until well into the Meiji era (1868-1912). But as testified by the Niu landlord goddess, Bifukumon-in, and Naka, women and female elements played key roles in supporting the temple both religiously and economically. We have noted that the female spirit was present in the temples and shrines.

In recent years, there have been a number of important studies on the prohibition of women, known as nyonin kinsei. However, these studies have tended to focus on literary sources from the medieval era, and on the symbolic and ideological dimensions of the phenomenon.

What remains to be explored is how nyonin kinsei worked in practice. By employing temple documents, early modern literary texts, and pilgrimage diaries, my research will examine

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the place of women in Kōyasan’s religious culture and ritual economy. I will also delve into the role of religious institutions in producing the culture of *nyonin kinsei* in the foothills of Kōyasan.
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