



State, Temples and Shrines in Medieval Japan

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1. Introduction

From the standpoint of historical studies, pre-modern Japanese religions can be analysed from a variety of perspectives, namely, (1) their relationship with the state and politics, (2) people's beliefs, (3) the inner structure and organisation of temples and shrines, (4) changes in Buddhist scholasticism and Shinto thought, and (5) religious ceremonies and their connections with art and literature. In pre-modern societies, religion was strongly related to social activities. Thus, although historical phenomena and facts presented from each perspective have their intrinsic uniqueness, they must be studied in connection to each other. I believe that it is necessary to construct a history of religion that concentrates on the overall transformation and development of temples and shrines, a history of religion that is not the history of individual fields but is rather a crucial integral component of political history, socio-economic history, and cultural history.

The goal of this paper is to clarify the position of indigenous deities (*jingi*) and Shinto shrines, which has been comparatively neglected, and discuss distinctive features of the political institutionalisation of temples and shrines by the authorities. Therefore, I will focus on perspective (1) – the relationship between religion and the state and politics – while identifying how it relates to other perspectives. Studies dealing with (2) people's beliefs are included elsewhere in this series.¹ This paper is about the role of religion as a predominant ideology or, in other words, about the ways in which the authorities co-opted popular beliefs. As for perspective (3) – the structure and organisation of temples and shrines – the central powerful temples played the role of a ruling elite (*kenmon*) in the state system from the late Heian period. The structure of *kenmon* temples was similar to that of other ruling elites but possessed some unique aspects, and so it was strongly tied to perspective (1).

Perspective (4) – religious thought and the study of Buddhist doctrines – is completely opposite to the framework of political history. Ideology is strong enough to avoid being fully integrated by the authorities. However, ideology is a social phenomenon that cannot be unrelated to social trends. Even if they do not occur at the exact same time, both ideology and society undoubtedly influence one another over the long term. The problem is how to describe this relationship. Moreover, (5) arts and literature are forms of expression for religious ideas.

This paper aims to draw a new picture of religious history from the broadest possible perspective. In particular, I would like to periodise it from the viewpoint of the history of religion, and to identify the specifics of each period and the range of transformations. For this purpose, I will use the perspectives of political history and the history of thought as twin axes and will analyse their relationship. The time frame of this study is from the beginning of the Heian period to the Nanbokuchō period.

It is a well-known fact that our understanding of medieval Buddhism was dramatically changed by Kuroda Toshio's theory of an 'exoteric-esoteric system' (*kenmitsu taisei*) (Kuroda 1994). His work has inspired the rise of abundant historical research on medieval temples in recent

years. It is also important that the exoteric-esoteric system was constructed as an integral part of his theories of a ‘system of ruling elites’ (*kenmon taisei*) and an ‘estate-system society’ (*shōensei shakai*), and was offered as a concept of religious order underpinning medieval state and society. But it is also true that some points in Kuroda’s theory are ambiguous and can be interpreted and evaluated in different ways. In this paper, I would like to utilise current research findings to enrich the theory of an exoteric-esoteric system with more factual information to make it more comprehensive. The ultimate goal is to describe the genesis and transformation of the exoteric-esoteric system as a form of religious order in medieval Japan.

2. The formation of a religious order in medieval Japan

Issues in studying the period of transition between ancient and medieval Japan

When discussing the formation of the exoteric-esoteric system, Kuroda divides it into a three-stage process from the perspective of religious thought. The first stage involves the integration of various religious schools through esoteric Buddhism in the 9th century; the second stage covers the development of Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdō) as a result of the Tendai school’s self-assertion in the process of esotericisation (10th century); and the third stage includes the establishment of the idea of the interdependence of the ‘sovereign’s law’ and ‘Buddha’s law’ (*ōbō buppō sōi*) (11th century).

The first problem in Kuroda’s theory is its focus on esoteric teachings (*mikkyō*). Judging from the terms ‘two exoteric and esoteric teachings’ (*kenmitsu nikyō*) and ‘joint study of exoteric and esoteric teachings’ (*kenmitsu kengaku*) found in historical sources, during the medieval period both teachings must have been equal and coexistent phenomena. When talking about connections with the common people, exoteric teachings played a significant role. It is necessary to revise the understanding of ‘exoteric-exoteric’ by Kuroda, since he used the term with an emphasis on the exoteric teachings. Moreover, when referring to the development of the Pure Land school, I think it is necessary to review its role in the entire history of Japanese Buddhism.

Thus, if we place ‘exoteric teachings’ (*kengyō*) and ‘esoteric teachings’ (*mikkyō*) at the core of medieval Buddhism, then, from the perspective of ideology and scholastic groups, it might be possible that its fundamentals were formed in the early Heian period, that is, at the time when the eight exoteric-esoteric schools and the Tendai and Shingon schools were established. Because Kuroda argues that the development of the exoteric-esoteric system continued for over three hundred years from the 9th to 11th centuries, the qualitative distinction between Old Buddhism and Medieval Buddhism is unclear. I would like to address this problem first.

Re-examining the understanding of Heian Buddhism

According to the commonly accepted theory, which considers the founding of the Tendai and Shingon schools to have been highly significant, moving the capital from Nara to Heiankyō marked the turning point in the transition from Nara Buddhism, comprised of the six Nara schools (*Nanto rokushū*), to Heian Buddhism, with the Tendai and Shingon schools at its core. It is also said that Nara Buddhism valued the ‘joint study of multiple schools’ (*shoshū kengaku*) above everything else, while Heian Buddhism acquired a markedly sectarian identity; thus, Buddhism

transitioned from scholastic to sectarian. However, there is a significant problem with the existing characterisation of the six Nara schools as ‘Old Buddhism’ and the Tendai and Shingon schools as ‘New Buddhism’, with an emphasis on only the new aspects of Heian Buddhism. In the history of Buddhism, the time between the late Nara and the early Heian periods should be considered as a single era during which the eight exoteric-esoteric schools (*kenmitsu hasshū*) were formed and the basis of Japanese Buddhism was created.

Buddhism, which was adopted as one of the newest manifestations of East Asian culture, began to take root in Japanese society in the late Nara period. The study of Buddhist scriptures by scholar-monks (*gakusō*) advanced. Among the variety of teachings presented in the sutras, which reflected the essence of Buddhism? The search for an answer in doctrinal classification or ‘assessment and interpretation of various facets of the Buddha’s teaching’ (*kyōsō hanjaku*) began. Differences in the understanding of the Buddha’s teachings led to disputes, and scholar-monks who had the same views started to form ‘schools’. At the end of the Nara period, the Hossō and Sanron schools violently confronted each other, and, in this process, both determined their uniqueness. In a similar way, Saichō distinguished his own position. On the contrary, Kūkai emphasised the uniqueness of the esoteric teachings (*mikkyō*) by calling the existing Buddhist teachings exoteric-esoteric (*kenmitsu*). Thus, Buddhist schools, while relying on the framework of Chinese Buddhism, were established by pursuing their own distinctive thinking in the context of the domestic religious environment.

The coexistence of multiple Buddhist schools

Ever since the establishment of the head offices of the six schools at Tōdaiji and other temples around Tenpyō Shōhō 4 (752), the imperial court had consistently understood the Buddhism of the Southern Capital (*Nanto bukkyō*) in terms of six schools (*rokushū*) and sought their coexistence. In the early Heian period, the confrontation between the Hossō and Sanron schools exacerbated and led to the near demise of the Sanron school. In response to this situation, the imperial court allocated five ordinands per year (*nenbun dosha*) to each of the schools and ordered the six schools to supply an equal number of scholar-monks to participate in the Gosai-e (Misai-e) and Yuima-e state ceremonies. This practice did not change even after the court started to invite scholar-monks from the Tendai and Shingon schools. In Enryaku 25 (806), when the yearly number of ordinands for the Tendai and six Nanto schools was decided on, the equality of the various Buddhist schools was declared. This policy was supported by the idea that the Buddha had preached the Dharma according to the abilities of sentient beings, and so, for the prosperity of Buddhist Dharma and the benefit of all sentient beings, no single karmic deed should be neglected. On the basis of the idea of the Dharma having been taught in accordance with the limited abilities of human beings (*zuiki seppō*), the imperial court determined that the entire spectrum of Buddhist teachings had to be accepted in all their variety, and the framework of the ‘six schools of the Southern Capital’ and the ‘eight exoteric-esoteric schools’ symbolised just that. I think that the court adhered to this idea because of its political intention to show the East Asian world that Japanese society had widely accepted the advanced culture of Buddhism.

Around Tenchō 7 (830), Emperor Junna asked the eight schools to

submit written descriptions of their doctrines. Six schools – Hossō, Sanron, Kegon, Ritsu, Tendai, and Shingon – composed descriptions, collectively called the ‘six sacred texts of the Tenchō era’ (*Tenchō roppon shūsho*). It is probable that the eight schools included the Jōjitsu and Kusha schools, but due to their inability to supply a description of their doctrines they did not have the status of a scholastic group. Thus, there was a clear gap between the court’s understanding of the six and eight schools and the reality.

Japanese Buddhism as Mahayana Buddhism: A broad common ground

Because the coexistence of diverse Buddhist schools was accepted by the state as its ideology, Buddhism naturally accepted it, too. Although Buddhist schools arose because of differences in their understanding of Buddhist teachings, their coexistence was largely premised on the diversity of Buddhist teachings, rather than on the absolute denial of other doctrines. Even Kūkai, who emphasised the distinction between the nine stages of the exoteric teachings and the highest esoteric stage in his *Ten Abiding Minds* (*Jūjūshinron*), did not deny the existence of exoteric doctrines. From his profoundly esoteric perspective, all exoteric teachings were manifestations of esoteric Buddhism; that is, the esoteric teachings incorporated various exoteric schools. Scholar-monks were forming their own ideas by studying a wide range of religious doctrines. We cannot understand the essence of Japanese Buddhism without accepting the fact that each school was advocating its uniqueness on the basis of an extremely broad common ground of knowledge.

It should be noted that this common ground had features of Mahayana Buddhism, namely, the idea of salvation through the enlightenment of all people. The Ritsuryō system restricted the spread of Buddhist teachings among the common people. However, for the monks, praying for the well-being of ordinary people and praying for the peace of the imperial court or the ruler were, properly speaking, the same. For them, there was no contradiction between the cultivation of wisdom and virtuous deeds and the popularisation of Buddhism. During court-sponsored Buddhist rituals for the protection of the state (*gokoku hōe*), monks were praying for the well-being of all people. ‘We pray that all people – from the supreme ruler to the common person – may prosper and that there may be no lack of prosperity for all eternity’ (*Ruijū sandai kyaku* [Classified Regulations of Three Reigns], fasc. 2, *Daijō kanpu*, Jōgan 16 (874), intercalary fourth month, twenty-fifth day).

Eight exoteric-esoteric schools and Dharma assemblies (*hōe*)

During the development of Buddhist scholasticism, the court was organising sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies to train scholar-monks with a focus on a thorough understanding of the sutras. In Saikō 2 (855), a qualification framework was created for monks, who were to be assigned as lecturers or recitation masters in the provinces. To be appointed as a lecturer (*kōji*), a monk had to complete five qualification levels (*gokai*) – *shigyō*, *fukugyō*, *yuima-e ryūgi*, *gekō*, and *kukō*. Three completed qualifications (*sankai*) – *shigyō*, *fukugyō*, *ryūgi* – were required for appointment as a recitation master (*dokushi*). Additionally, from the second half of the 9th century, to receive one of the highest posts in the official monastic Sōgō system, a monk had to complete five qualifications and serve at the Three Assemblies (Gosai-e at the court, Yuima-e at Kōfukuji, and

Saishō-e at Yakushiji). Thus, the qualification framework for scholar-monks, with the *sankai* and *gokai* at its core, was established.

The court encouraged expositions (*kōsetsu*), debates (*rongi*), and debate-style examinations (*ryūgi*), where scholar-monks could demonstrate their knowledge. The court stimulated their desire to study Buddhist doctrines by linking monastic education with social status. At the same time, the court sought to strengthen the state-protecting functions of Buddhist rituals by making state-protecting sutras (*gokoku kyōten*) the main subject of expositions and debates. By the second half of the 9th century, Japan had a political order that religiously protected the whole state and organically connected all Dharma assemblies through the Three Assemblies, held in temples and the imperial palace. Meanwhile, court-sponsored Dharma assemblies became venues for the coexistence of Buddhist schools and places for scholar-monks to compete in erudition and the sharing of doctrinal knowledge.

Throughout the 9th century, the Shingon and Tendai schools were developing esoteric rituals for the protection of the state (*gokoku zuho*). The annual Shingon Rite of the Latter Seven Days (*Goshichinichi no mishiho*) established by Kūkai was conducted in conjunction with the Gosai-e. Therefore, exoteric Dharma assemblies and esoteric protective rituals were combined to maintain guardianship of the state. Even though esoteric protective rituals were co-performed by Shingon and Tendai monks, exoteric monks were not involved, and so these rituals retained the uniqueness of the esoteric teachings.

As mentioned above, it is necessary to consider the time between the late Nara and the early Heian as one period. At the start of the Heian period, the six schools – Ritsu (Kairitsu) (which was premised on studying other schools' doctrines), Hossō, Sanron, Kegon, Tendai, and Shingon – were established as intellectual groups. The schools stemmed from the same broad common ground. The system of eight exoteric-esoteric schools had some inconsistencies with reality. Nevertheless, for a long time this system came to be widely accepted as a concept symbolising the characteristics of Japanese Buddhism, namely, the coexistence of Buddhist teachings with none of them being exclusive.

Changes in exoteric Dharma assemblies and the development of esoteric protective rituals

In the early Heian period the framework of eight exoteric-esoteric schools was established. Dharma assemblies, which began at this time, continued to exist throughout the Heian and Kamakura periods. In the middle of the 10th century, the system for the protection and management of Buddhism and temples based on the 'Regulations for Monks and Nuns' (*Sōniryō*) collapsed (Taira 1992). While society and state were dramatically changing from the ancient to medieval periods, Buddhism also was undergoing a transformation.

First of all, exoteric Dharma assemblies became more entertaining and started to attract laypeople who 'listened [to the Dharma]' (*chōmon*). From the end of the 10th century, new Dharma assemblies at the beginning of the New Year (Shushōgatsu-e) and at the beginning of the second month (Shunigatsu-e) emerged. The Repentance assembly (*keka-e*), conducted throughout the day and night, turned into a Dharma assembly held in the early and late evening. Performances were offered at intermissions, and demons would appear at the closing ceremony (*kechigan*) (Satō

2002, Yamaji 1988).

Sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies also became more entertaining. In the middle of the 10th century the ceremonial debates (*rongi-e*) on Buddhist doctrine in sutras became popular. This popularity started with the series of ceremonial Eight Lectures on the Eight Scrolls of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Hokke hakkō*), which began to flourish as Buddhist memorial services (*tsuizen butsujī*). While being a way to connect ‘listening’ laymen with the Buddha’s teachings, the sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies were performances in their own right owing to the expressive and oratorical delivery by the lecturers. In addition, the ceremonial debates led by a different monk at each session looked more exciting and attractive to laymen. Initially, court music (*gagaku*) and Buddhist chants (*shōmyō*) were performed at Dharma assemblies for the ‘auspicious adornment’ (*shōgon*) of the ceremonial site and for feeling the joy of the Dharma (*hōraku*). Performances intended for laypeople rather than for the Buddha became a new element of the Dharma assemblies. Buddhist chants for ‘spreading the Buddha’s teaching’ (*kyōge*)² were added to the Eight Lectures on the *Lotus Sutra*, the Shushōgatsu-e, and the ceremony for reciting Buddhas’ names (Butsumyō-e), all rituals that thrived in the 10th and 11th centuries. The emergence of *kyōge* for the enlightenment of the ‘listening’ layperson meant that Buddhism directly addressed ordinary people and actively embarked on their salvation.

Originally, at the sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies and the Repentance assemblies monks demonstrated their erudition and confessed their sins to the ‘main honoured one’ (*honzon*). It was believed that by doing so they accumulated merit for all human beings. In the middle of the 10th century, monks and Dharma assemblies started paying more attention to the common people and accommodating their beliefs. In other words, rituals addressed to the Buddha were replaced by rituals addressed to the people (Satō 1995). Dharma assemblies were undergoing qualitative changes. This can be attributed to the efforts of temples and monks to find new directions after their release from the protection and control of the Ritsuryō system.

Initially, exoteric Dharma assemblies were intended to be ceremonies that allowed a ‘listening’ layman’s attendance. By cultivating these features, exoteric ceremonies drew closer to ordinary people. At the same time, esoteric protective rituals were conducted secretly in enclosed ritual spaces, and so they were hardly accessible to ordinary people. From the 10th century, the aristocracy adopted esoteric protective rituals. Meanwhile, in the latter half of the 10th century esoteric rituals for the protection of the emperor were held in the imperial residence (*dairi*) and the Shingon’in esoteric hall of the imperial palace. In the first half of the 11th century the position of guardian monk (*gojisō*) – a monk who constantly guarded the body of the emperor by means of rituals – was created (Hayami 1975, Tsuchiya 1987, Hori 1997). Esoteric Buddhism was strengthening its ties with the nobles and the emperor, while esoteric monks were embedding themselves deeply inside sovereign authority.

The transition from early to medieval Buddhism: Toward the salvation of the common people

The first performances were held at the annual Shushōgatsu-e assemblies in 987 (Kanna 3) at En’yūji temple. Thereafter, performances flourished at Hōjōji, Rokushōji, and other temples.

Exoteric Dharma assemblies accompanied by Buddhist chants (*kyōge*) and ceremonial debates, such as the *Hokke hakkō*, were mainly held at and around the imperial palace. The emperor and aristocrats were the first to be attracted by the increasingly entertaining exoteric Dharma assemblies. From the latter half of the 10th century Dharma assemblies were also aimed at the general public.

The Sadaijin (Minister of the Left) Fujiwara Saneyori (900–970) and ‘all under Heaven’ connected to the Buddha’s teaching through participation in a ceremony for offering the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Hannya-kyō kuyō*) written in golden letters and performed by Kūya at Kamogawara (riverbed of the Kamo River) in the eighth month of Ōwa 3 (963). The main purpose of the *śarīra* (Buddha’s relics) assembly (Shari-e) conducted by the Tendai abbot (*zasu*) Ryōgen (912–985) at Yoshida Shrine on Kaguraoka Hill was to connect women, who were forbidden to climb Hieizan, with the Buddha. Later, the Buddha’s relics were also transferred to the imperial residence so that the emperor could worship them. Monks ranging from *hijiri* to abbots embarked on the salvation of the common people. Everyone, from the rich to the poor, from the nobility to commoners, gathered at the Dharma assemblies. The assemblies embodied the idea of Mahayana Buddhism, namely, the salvation of all human beings regardless of their social status. Therefore, the growth of ‘aristocratic Buddhism’ (*kizoku bukkyō*) and the development of the idea of the salvation of common people had the same root. Increasing its Mahayana features from the middle of the 10th century, exoteric teachings turned more toward ordinary people.

However, esoteric teachings, which had strengthened their ties with sovereign authority, created new protective rituals in order to meet the demands of this world, and these earned them popularity but weakened their connections with the common people. During the transition from ancient to medieval society, Buddhism developed the aspect of salvation of common people, but it is important to note that this aspect was promoted by exoteric teachings. Within this context, we can also consider Pure Land Buddhism, which developed this aspect, too. The aspect of salvation of the common people emerged in the latter half of the 10th and early 11th centuries and fully blossomed in the 12th century. At the same time, esoteric temples also introduced exoteric elements such as debates, and by doing so they forged connections with ordinary people.

The formation of a new *jingi* system

Another cornerstone of medieval Japan’s religious order was indigenous deities, or *jingi*. I would like to explain the transition from the early to medieval *jingi* ritual system and then discuss its relationship with Buddhism. Further, after the late Heian period, *jingi* worship acquired its logical structure through the adoption of Buddhist concepts. Here, I would like to discuss this from the perspective of the history of the state system.

Among regularly scheduled rituals of the Ritsuryō system, the harvest-praying ceremony (*toshigo no matsuri* or *kinensai*) in the second month of every year was regarded as important. The sacerdotal officiants (*hafuribe*) of ‘official shrines’ (*kansha*) from all over the country came to the Jingikan (Council for the Affairs of Deities of Heaven and Earth) to receive specific offerings. This practice was called *hanpei*, or ‘distribution of offerings’. Because the number of official shrines increased, the court divided them into *kanpeisha* (shrines receiving offerings from

the central government) and *kokuheisha* (shrines receiving offerings from provincial governors) in Enryaku 17 (798) and delegated the administration of local shrines to provincial governors (*kokushi*) (Ogura 1994). However, in reality the distribution of offerings to shrines in the Kinai region, where the imperial court worshiped directly, was becoming increasingly difficult, and the search for a new ritual system began.

First of all, a system for ‘making offerings’ (*hōhei*), whereby specific offerings (*heihaku*) and imperial edicts (*senmyō*) were delivered to shrines by court envoys, was evolving. Initially, occasional offerings accompanying prayers for rain and annual harvest-praying festivals were made to ‘famed deities’ (*myōjin*) in the five provinces of the Kinai region and seven circuits (*goki shichidō*). However, these occasional offerings were gradually narrowed down to the most powerful shrines of the Kinai capital region, and by the middle of the 10th century there were only sixteen shrines: Ise, Iwashimizu, Shimogamo, Kamigamo, Matsuo, Hirano, Inari, Kasuga, Ōharano, Ōmiwa, Isonokami, Yamato, Hirose, Tatsuta, Sumiyoshi, Nibu, and Kibine. Secondly, rituals officiated by the emperor were evolving. The Ritsuryō rituals were held by the Jingikan, but such ceremonies as the Jinkonjiki (Sacred Food Ritual) and Niinamesai (Festival of New Food) were led exclusively by the sovereign himself. During the reign of Emperor Uda (887–897), daily offerings, offerings of sacred treasures dedicated to the enthronement (*ichidai ichido daijinpō shi*), and occasional rituals at the Kamo Shrines emerged. Thereafter the number of emperor-led rites increased (Okada 1994).

The rebellions of the Jōhei and Tengyō eras (935–40) played a significant role in the formation of the new *jingi* system. The imperial court prayed to shrines all over the country for subjugation of the rebellions, hoping for divine help in addition to armed force. After the rebellions were suppressed, the deities gained more authority and the court actively promoted *kami* rituals – ‘sacred matters’ (*kamigoto*) – to express its gratitude. The court awarded deities of all provinces with ‘divine ranks’ (*shin’i*) and tributary households (*fuko*) and initiated occasional rituals at Iwashimizu Shrine. The emperor visited the Kamo Shrines for the first time, starting the practice of imperial visits (*miyuki*) to shrines. At the same time, the system of regular offerings to the sixteen shrines and the practice of sending high nobles and officials as court envoys to the Ise Shrines were established. During the reign of Emperor En’yū (969–984), the ceremony of imperial visits to the Iwashimizu, Kamo, and Hirano shrines was established as a ritual accompanying the accession of a new emperor, with the occasional ritual at Iwashimizu Shrine being converted into a regular one. Furthermore, at the end of the 10th century (during the reign of Emperor Ichijō), a system of twenty-one shrines was formed by adding Yoshida, Hirota, Kitano, Umenomiya, and Gion to the sixteen shrines. Thus, the foundations of the medieval *jingi* system were laid.

I would like to point out three features of this system. Firstly, there was a significant reduction in the number of deities worshiped directly by the state. Among them, there were twenty-one central shrines connected to the court and fifty local shrines receiving offerings of sacred treasures related to the enthronement of a new emperor. Secondly, the hierarchical differentiation of shrines

and of deities continued. This differentiation was inevitable regardless of whether or not a shrine belonged to the system of twenty-one shrines. The hierarchy of this system itself demonstrated that a shrine's rank depended on the degree of its veneration by the court; being on the top of the hierarchy, Ise Shrines and Amaterasu Ōkami, who was worshiped there, were continuously reinforcing their position. Thirdly, the emperor enhanced his position as supreme priest of *kami* worship and deepened his connections with indigenous deities. His relationship strengthened especially with Ise, Iwashimizu, and Kamo shrines owing to *miyuki*, occasional rituals, and court envoys in the form of high nobles.

The transformation of deities (*kami*)

During the transition from the early to medieval *jingi* system, the ancient punitive deities were also changing in unpredictable and haphazard ways. Among them were Hachiman and Sugawara Michizane's spirit, who, according to the *Shōmonki*, authorised Taira Masakado to become the 'new emperor' (*shinnō*). Hachiman became the banner for a social movement that occurred as the sacred palanquins of the deity Shidara were transported to the capital immediately after the rebellions of the Jōhei and Tennyō eras. The increasing authority of deities (*kami*) posed a threat to the imperial court. Thus, the rituals conducted by the court after the rebellions also had the purpose of pacifying the 'violent souls' (*aramitama*) of punitive deities. In particular, the worship of Hachiman became more popular, with occasional rituals and imperial visits to Iwashimizu Shrine being established. Iwashimizu surpassed Kamo Shrines and became second in prestige after Ise Shrines.

After the rebellions of the Jōhei and Tennyō eras, many mystical events started happening in shrines, and the deities whose authority had increased began to assert themselves. The court's immediate response was to take mystical phenomena as bad omens, and recognising their significance, the court initiated divination sessions in the Konrō (*konrō no miura*), the east corridor of the imperial residence, in order to prevent misfortune. Regardless, the court's acceptance of divine will amplified the gods' authority. Consequently, the court and deities entered into a co-dependent relationship, which enabled conversations between them.

According to the first article of the first warrior law code, *Goseibai shikimoku* (1232), 'The *kami* increase their fame through human respect, while humans gain good fortune by virtue of the *kami*.' This statement is an excellent example of the concept of *kami* in medieval Japan. The relationship between deities and people presented in this passage was built in the second half of the 10th century. Due to the post-rebellion rise of *kami* rituals, the idea of punishing 'violent souls' started to fade. Deities began seeing the world from a human perspective, enabling conversation and mutual understanding.

A new legal system for court nobles in Chōhō 1: Religion is politics

On the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of Chōhō 1 (999), a new 11-article law for court nobles (*kuge*) was issued. The first article prohibited informal *kami* rituals, the second prohibited damage to shrines, and the third banned informal Buddhist rituals. The fourth article prescribed compulsory repairs to all officially designated temples (*jōgakuji*). It is quite significant that the

articles related to temples and Buddhist rituals followed the articles about shrines and *kami* rituals. Previous laws for court nobles had mainly focused on armor and unreasonable luxury. In this law of Chōhō 1, these matters were moved to the fifth article and below, and they were preceded by political concepts. In other words, the new law declared that conducting *kami* and Buddhist rituals was an important element of politics.

In the 10th century, the dissolution of the ancient state with a centralised governing structure was progressing, and the search for a new political system continued. Under a fragile governing structure, the only way to maintain consolidation of the state and to hold the people's minds was to rely more on religion and use it as the predominant ideology. This is what the law of Chōhō 1 declared. However, the approach of placing matters pertaining to *kami* and Buddhist rituals in the first articles was adopted by the Kenkyū, Kenryaku, Kangi, and Kenchō laws and became typical of the legal system governing nobles (Mitobe 1961). It was also adopted by the law for warriors, *Goseibai shikimoku*. The law of Chōhō 1 was the first legal system to convey the core of medieval political thought, namely, that religion and politics were practically the same. As time went by, this concept expanded and adapted to reality.

Meanwhile, from the middle of the 10th century, a new financial system started to emerge to replace the Ritsuryō financial system and reflect this political concept. To secure priority funds in cases of delayed tributes from provinces, in the Tenryaku era (947–957) and in Tenroku 1 (970) the imperial court established two distribution systems. The first, known as the *shōzō ritsubun* system, stipulated that two-tenths of all collected taxes had to be preserved mainly as funding for offerings during annual prayers for a good harvest (*kinenkoku hōhei*). According to the second system, known as the *eisenji ryōmotsu* system, the funds collected as a special levy as per an imperial edict were allocated to the Gosai-e, seasonal readings of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*ki no midokyō*), the ceremony for chanting the state-protecting *Sutra of the Benevolent Kings* (*Ninnōkyō*), charity in the capital, and rice donations (*semai*) to temples (Ōtsu 1993). The court prioritised funding *kami* and Buddhist rituals above everything else.

Funding offerings for the sixteen shrines (twenty-one shrines) was the result of the formation of a new religious-political order, while funding of Buddhist ceremonies such as the Gosai-e ceremony, seasonal readings of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, and chanting of the *Ninnōkyō* had been in place since the early Heian period. The law of Chōhō 1 obliged provincial governors to finance repairs of officially designated Buddhist temples that had been preserved since the late Nara period. However, it demonstrated the immaturity of the new Buddhist system created by the imperial court. The rebellions of the Jōhei and Tenryō eras were a turning point in the establishment of a new medieval *jingi* system. At the same time, Buddhism began to turn more toward the common people, but the new system of Buddhist control was yet to be established and start functioning. While considering the formation of the Japanese medieval religious system, it is important to note that indigenous deities *jingi* preceded Buddhism.

3. The foundation of the Hōjōji and Rokushōji temple complexes

Trends in temple complexes and the court

Following the loosening of the protection and control of the Ritsuryō system, temples became

more independent, the gaps in status between them widened, and powerful monastic complexes started to turn into *kenmon* of the ruling elite. In the Southern Capital (Nara), Kōfukuji secured a leading position ahead of Tōdaiji temple. Kōfukuji was able to expand its power because of the importance of the Yuima-e (annual lecture on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*). Appointment as a lecturer at the Yuima-e was a prerequisite for higher Sōgō posts. Also, the five levels of debate-style examinations were usually held during the Yuima-e. To be appointed a lecturer or a candidate at this Dharma assembly was an important milestone in an exoteric monk's career. Lecturers and candidates were selected from temples of all Buddhist schools. But after state control weakened in the second half of the 10th century, preference was given to Kōfukuji monks. From the middle of the 11th century, the posts of lecturer were exclusively filled by Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji monks. In other words, among all exoteric monks in Nara, only monks from two temples could be promoted to the highest Sōgō posts, and advancement by scholar-monks at Yakushiji, Hōryūji, and Daianji temples became impossible. From the middle of the 11th century, a Kōfukuji monk served as *bettō* (chief monk) at these temples. In fact, they became subsidiary temples (*matsuji*) of the Kōfukuji monastic complex.

Enryakuji and Onjōji temples of the Tendai school started to turn into *kenmon* temples, and from the second half of the 10th century the conflict between them escalated. The loss of opportunities for monks to compete with each other in their knowledge beyond their own school led to conflicts between temples. These conflicts ran counter to the concept of the peaceful coexistence of Buddhist schools idealised by the imperial court. The court faced a problem in dealing with the monastic complexes, which had increasing autonomy and started seeking more up-to-date policies to regulate the temples.

In Chōhō 4 (1002), the Saishō-kō (lectures on the *Sutra of Golden Light*), a Dharma assembly where for five days ten groups discussed the ten scrolls of the sutra, was held for the first time in the imperial palace (Seiryōden). Each group was selected in a way that would allow monks from Nara (Kōfukuji, Tōdaiji) to have discussions with monks of the Tendai school (Enryakuji and Onjōji). The same principle was used at the Thirty Lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokke sanjū-kō*), initiated by Fujiwara Michinaga (966–1027), Minister of the Left, in the same year at his residence. Debate-style examinations (*ryūgi*) were also held at this assembly. Debates attended by many listeners from the nobility and the monkhood gave scholar-monks a great opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. In their home temples, scholar-monks studied hard and prepared for discussions with monks from other schools and temples. Monastic debates held at and around the imperial residence promoted the further exchange of knowledge between schools and temples, and they were aimed at reviving the study of Buddhist doctrines.

Moreover, from the second half of the 10th century there was a tendency to increase the number of ritual platforms used during esoteric protective rituals ordered by the court. During the five-altar ritual (*godan-hō*), each platform was supervised by a monk from Enryakuji and Onjōji, and from the second half of the 11th century monks from the Shingon school also joined. Arguably, the growing number of ritual platforms was intended to amplify the religious effect by means of competition between monks from different schools and temples regarding the potency of their rites.

The Hōjōji temple complex: An amalgam of exoteric and esoteric teachings

Under these circumstances, the foundation of Hōjōji by Fujiwara Michinaga clearly illustrated the new policy toward temples. The ‘main honoured one’ of the Golden Hall (Kondō), located at the centre of the temple complex (*garan*) and intended to ‘guard the Buddhist Dharma and defend the state’, was the Buddha Dainichi. Behind the Kondō, there was the Lecture Hall (Kōdō). These two halls were surrounded by the Amidadō, Yakushidō, and Godaidō halls, where exoteric and esoteric ritual services were held for the benefit of Michinaga and the Fujiwara regental house (Sekkanke), both in this world and in the afterlife. This type of *garan* layout clearly represented the features of Hōjōji. While ritual services for the protection of the state were the main purpose, rituals for the protection of Michinaga and the Sekkanke (house of *sesshō* and *kanpaku*) were also conducted at the temple. It reflected the power of Michinaga and his lineage, which played important roles in maintaining sovereign authority. In addition, the Buddha Dainichi worshiped in the Kondō at the centre of the temple complex was also called Birushana. Consequently, Dainichi of Hōjōji had attributes of both Dainichi-nyorai (Skt. Mahāvairocana) of esoteric Buddhism and Birushana (Skt. Vairocana) of the Kegon school. The worship of Dainichi, based on the doctrines of the two teachings, integrated the various temples of the Hōjōji complex, which became a place where the exoteric and esoteric teachings were amalgamated (Tomishima 1998).

Moreover, the monastic organisational structure and distribution of roles at Dharma assemblies are quite fascinating. Monks from branches of the Tendai school – Sanmon or Mountain Gate (Enryakuji) and Jimon or Temple Gate (Onjōji) – secured the higher positions of *kengyō* and *bettō* (chief administrators), while Jimon monks were assigned to lower *shigyō* (administrator) positions at Hōjōji. Nevertheless, the roles of *sangō* and *kusō*, who were responsible for ritual services, were granted not only to Tendai monks but also to monks of Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji. The Hōjōji temple complex sought to unify the *kenmon* temples, including temples in Nara, as well as to create a harmonious relationship between the Jimon and Sanmon branches, which were becoming ever more antagonistic toward each other. Therefore, a new form of temple complex that included monks from different schools had emerged.

At Hōjōji temple, Tendai monks practiced a variety of esoteric protective rituals. Among the annual Dharma assemblies, the Shushōgatsu-e in the Golden Hall and the Eight Lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* (Mihakkō or *Hokke hakkō*), held in the Amida Hall on the anniversary of Michinaga’s death, were especially important. The arrangement of the Mihakkō replicated one of the Three Assemblies: at debates, monks from Nara debated with Tendai monks, and the audience included Tōji monks. Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji monks conducted debate-style examinations for Nara (Nanto), and Enryakuji and Onjōji monks examinations for the Tendai school. Participating as a lecturer or candidate at the Mihakkō was part of the career pathway for scholar-monks. Moreover, a past lecturer (*ikō*) of the Three Assemblies was assigned as a lecturer at the Mihakkō, and a monk who had passed the Yuima-e examinations (*tokugō*) served at the Nanto examinations. For this reason, the Mihakkō at Hōjōji eclipsed the Three Assemblies. Memorial services for Michinaga were bringing together scholar-monks from all schools. This was indicative of the greater importance of the Mihakkō compared to the Three Assemblies, and consequently of the authority of

Michinaga and the Sekkanke.

The Enshūji and Rokushōji temple complexes

The features of Hōjōji were adopted and embellished at Enshūji temple, founded by Emperor Go-Sanjō, and at the Rokushōji temple complex, starting with Emperor Shirakawa's palace-temple complex Hosshōji. At both Enshūji and Rokushōji, an image of Dainichi worshiped in both exoteric and esoteric schools was enshrined in the Kondō at the centre of the temple complexes. The *sangō* and *kusō*, responsible for ritual services, were supplemented at Hosshōji by Tendai and Nanto monks. All these representatives of different schools, including monks of the Shingon school, represented an amalgam of exoteric and esoteric teachings inside the Enshūji and Rokushōji temple complexes. Moreover, the head position of *kengyō* of Hosshōji (Rokushōji) was granted to a monk from the Omuro branch of Ninnaji temple. At the Rokushōji complex, the 'Dharma prince' (*hosshinnō*), a son of a current or retired emperor, was in charge of the monks of exoteric and esoteric *kenmon* temples.

It has been noted that the Dharma assemblies laid the foundation for the *Hokkyō sanne*, or Three Assemblies of the Northern Capital (Hokke-e and Saishō-e at Enshūji and Daijō-e at Hosshōji), which were related to the promotion of exoteric and esoteric monks of the Tendai school, and for the 'bond-establishment consecrations' (*kechien kanjō*) at Sonshōji and Saishōji temples (Taira 1992). Because the power of Kōfukuji had grown, from the first half of the 11th century Tendai monks could no longer be selected as candidates (*rissha*) or examinees at the Yuima-e or as lecturers at the Three Assemblies. Nevertheless, after the establishment of the new Three Assemblies of the Northern Capital, the Sōgō career pathway for exoteric monks of the Tendai school was created and debate-style examinations held during the Hokke-e at Enshūji were organised. Moreover, esoteric monks were awarded Sōgō positions for conducting esoteric protective rituals, while Tendai esoteric monks could be promoted to Sōgō positions by serving as ritual masters (*ajari*; Skt. *ācārya*) during consecrations at Sonshōji and Saishōji temples. Esoteric monks of the Shingon school were promoted to Sōgō positions by serving as *ajari* at Tōji temple's consecrations. Thus, the Sōgō career pathway framework for exoteric and esoteric monks of the Tendai, Shingon, and Nara schools was established. The system of five qualification levels and Three Assemblies established in the early Heian period was revived and esoteric monks started to use it, too.

Tendai monks served as lecturers at the *Hokkyō sanne* while Nara monks participated as questioners (*monja*) and the designated audience. Exoteric Dharma assemblies held at Enshūji and Rokushōji temples were served by Nara (Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji) and Tendai monks, while esoteric protective rituals were the responsibility of Tendai (Enryakuji and Onjōji) and Shingon (Tōji and Ninnaji) monks. Thus, exoteric and esoteric monks from *kenmon* temples competed in their knowledge and the potency of their religious rites, facilitating growing exchange between different schools and temples. Among the Dharma assemblies, the so-called Three Lectures (Sankō) – Mihakkō as a memorial service for ex-emperor Shirakawa-in at Hosshōji temple and Lectures on the *Sutra of Golden Light* held at the imperial palace (Seiryōden) (Saishō-kō) and the Sentō palace of the abdicated emperor (Sentō Saishō-kō) – were particularly important. These

Three Lectures had higher status than the Three Assemblies. From the beginning of the 11th century, the Dharma assemblies, with the Three Assemblies at their core since the first half of the Heian period, were supplemented by new Dharma assemblies. The Three Lectures and Three Assemblies held in the palace and in all Goganji temples, founded by the wishes of the emperor, were considered to be fundamental. All Dharma assemblies were closely connected and supported the entire state, forming a new religious system.

***Kenmon* temples and the state**

The central role in Dharma assemblies and esoteric protective rituals conducted at the imperial palace was played by monks who held Sōgō posts. Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji, Enryakuji and Onjōji, Tōji and Ninnaji, which could reproduce Sōgō positions, strengthened their status as *kenmon* temples. From the end of the 10th century to the beginning of the 11th century the position of Sōgō began to be passed down from teacher to disciple, and lineages based on the master-disciple relationship started to form inside the temple complexes (Hori 1995). This laid the foundation for ‘cloister lineages’ (*inge*). After Shinzen (943–990), a son of Fujiwara Morosuke, became a monk at Enryakuji, and Kakushin (1065–1121), a son of Fujiwara Morozane, at Kōfukuji, the Sekkanke created a tradition of ordaining the children of nobles and the youngest family members. The nobles received a variety of privileges such as rank advancement and became a leading group within the temples, and temple society resembled the ranking system of the nobility. Thus, the *kenmon* temples strengthened their tendency to be autonomous and deepened their connections with the aristocracy.

The purpose of establishing the Hōjōji and Rokushōji temple complexes had been to unify exoteric and esoteric *kenmon* temples. However, in reality this was just as difficult as it was for members of the nobility to exercise control over low-ranking monks (*daishu*) at *kenmon* temples. Every day scholar-monks studied the doctrines of their ‘temple’ (*jike*) or ‘cloister’ (*inge*) lineage while preparing for Dharma assemblies and esoteric protective rituals performed in the capital. The development of Buddhist ceremonies by Michinaga and ‘cloistered emperors’ eventually stimulated the study of the doctrines of temples and cloister lineages. The state strongly tied *kenmon* temples to itself not by force, but by reviving the study of Buddhist doctrine, which was the essence of the religion.

The monks of a temple lineage had student-monks (*gakushū*, consisting of *gakuryō* and *gakushō*), who were charged with the study of doctrine, and lower-ranking attendant monks (*dōshū*, consisting of *zenshū* and *gyōnin*), who served them. Moreover, there were monks who were not part of the ranking system (*tonseisō*, consisting of *hijiri* and *rissō*), who followed the precepts independently and performed rituals for the salvation of the common people. Temple society had many levels, but all of them put the ideas of Mahayana Buddhism into practice in their own way, thereby facilitating the further spread of Buddhism in society.

The development of a new amalgam of *kami* and buddhas

While *kenmon* temples were on the rise, a new policy toward Buddhism was developing. At the same time, a new amalgam of *kami* and buddhas, qualitatively different from that in ancient times,

was evolving. Shrine-temples (*jingūji*), which had existed since the end of the Nara period and the early Heian period, were built by local authorities and common people. *Jingūji* were located away from the shrine buildings (*shaden*) and had a different organisation from that of shrines (*jinja*). Hachiman Shrines, strongly associated with Buddhism, were an exception. Especially from the middle of the 9th century, Iwashimizu Shrine had the positions of *bettō* and *sangō*, and the shrine was named *Iwashimizu hachimangū gokokuji*, or Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine State-Protecting Temple. From the first half of the 11th century, the same processes started at other shrines. At the powerful central shrines, such as Kamo, sutra-chanting services and Dharma assemblies were held in the shrine, and sutra repositories (*kyōzō*) were built in the shrine grounds. At the end of the 11th century, ritual sites for seasonal readings of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* were established, and regularly scheduled Dharma assemblies were started at shrines. A system of shrine management, consisting of shrine officiants and Buddhist monks (*shasō*, ‘shrine-monks’), was created. Moreover, from the beginning of the 12th century, Buddhist pagodas were built in shrine grounds. Thus, the medieval shrine landscape became a visual representation of the amalgam of *kami* and buddhas. The combination of *kami* and buddhas was promoted by sovereign authority, consisting of the emperor, retired emperors, and *sekkon* regents, and started developing from the highest of the twenty-one shrines.

Exoteric Dharma assemblies, including lectures on sutras, were performed in front of the deities. It was believed that lectures on sutras and debates about them would make the deities feel the joy of the Dharma. On the other hand, esoteric monks who had penetrated deeply into sovereign authority also pursued the new amalgamation of *kami* and buddhas. From the first half of the 11th century, the guardian monks (*gojisō*) who were on night duty in the Seiryōden palace invoked (*kanjō*) one of twenty-one *kami* every night, conducted initiation rituals (*jingi kanjō*, or ‘*abhiṣeka* concerning secret teaching about the *kami*’), and prayed for the protection of the emperor’s person. Owing to the esoteric rite *kaji* (Skt. *adhiṣṭhāna*) for protecting the palace (*ōjō*), including the emperor’s residence and its surroundings, the invoked deities of the twenty-one shrines received the status of ‘palace guardians’ (*ōjō chinju*). To enhance the efficacy of the emperor’s patronage, the guardian monks created a mystery called *jingi kanjō*, which incorporated the twenty-one shrines.

In the 12th century, the ‘Great Bright Deities for Guarding the Palace’ were also invoked at Dharma assemblies and esoteric protective rituals, such as the *Peacock Spell-King Sutra* ritual (Kujakukyō-hō) and annual Shushōgatsu-e ritual at Hosshōji. Moreover, the ‘divine bodies’ from Iwashimizu, Kamo and the other twenty-one shrines and Hinokumakuni-kakasu, Atsuta, Itsukushima, and Kehi shrines were transferred to a ‘combined’ shrine (*sōja*) called Rengeōin (also known as Sanjūsangendō temple) in Kyoto, founded in the second month of Jōan 5 (1175). The invocation of the Hinokumakuni-kakasu and other deities responsible for guarding the emperor’s palace and the four quarters of the country symbolised the assembly of central and local deities from all over Japan. Rengeōin *sōja* was modelled on the *sōja* shrine of Hōjōji temple, rebuilt in Eikyū 5 (1117). The existence of a *sōja* at Hosshōji temple has also been verified. In the early 12th century, all the deities of the country protected the temple complex at Goganji temples. Invoking *kami* at Dharma assemblies and their protection of temples can be traced back

to ancient times. However, the gathering of all deities in one ‘combined’ shrine (*sōja*) was a new phenomenon.

4. The formation of a religious system in the provinces

The creation of *Jinmyōchō* records in the provinces

In the late 10th century, a new *jingi* system was established, and later, from the first half of the 11th century, a new Buddhist system represented by the establishment of the Hōjōji and Rokushōji temple complexes started to emerge. At the same time, Buddhism was increasingly blending with *jingi*, creating a medieval religious order in which both were closely interconnected. In the 12th century, *sōja* shrines were created at Hōjōji and Goganji temples, where deities from all over the country came to protect the Dharma assemblies. The establishment of Hōjōji and Rokushōji temples was more significant than the unification of *kenmon* temples. The previous sections focused on the religious situation in the region around the capital, and now I would like to concentrate on the provinces and local society.

During the Nara period, monks from government temples (*kanji*) in the capital travelled back and forth between the capital and the provinces to hold Dharma assemblies for common people in various provincial temples (Suzuki 1994). From the second half of the 10th century, Buddhism started to acquire more Mahayana features and deepened its connections with the common people. Furthermore, Buddhism continued to amalgamate with *kami* and absorbed the common people’s beliefs more vigorously. When considering the transition from the early to medieval *jingi* system in the provinces, it is important to note that after the rebellions of the Jōhei and Tenryō eras, new *Jinmyōchō*, or records of officially registered shrines, were created all over the country. To secure divine support for the subjugation of the rebellions, the court promised to award the first rank to ‘famed deities’ in the *goki shichidō* region. After the rebellions, the court ordered the governors to create *Jinmyōchō* to use as lists of recipients of divine ranks. It took ten years to complete the records for all the provinces, and five thousand deities from all over the country were conferred with a rank in the fifth month of Tenryaku 6 (952). The number of *kami* was far greater than the three thousand deities included in the *Engishiki jinmyōchō* records. This demonstrates that in the middle of the 10th century provincial governments created many deities who were closely related to the area where they were worshipped. In the *Jinmyōchō* records, the deities were arranged by district (*kōri*) in the order of their divine ranks. Just as in the system of twenty-one shrines, the world of ranked local deities was clearly hierarchical. Later, the *Jinmyōchō* records were used as reference documents for ritual services performed by provincial governments.

The activities of provincial governors (*zuryō*) and the formation of a religious system in the provinces

From the end of the 10th century, control over the provinces by career governors (*zuryō*), who fulfilled locally the duties of the capital-based provincial governors (*kokushi*), had strengthened. While the practice of visiting shrines by *kokushi* was being established, *zuryō* were taking control of worship in the provinces. Following appointment as a *zuryō*, he would deliver to provincial officials a decree from the *kokushi*, which began with the statement that ‘Regular *kami* rituals

must be performed' (*Chōya gunsai*, vol. 22). Thus, *kami* rituals were an important part of provincial policy. Furthermore, in Chōhō 4 (1002), repairs to provincial shrines, officially designated temples (*jōgakuji*), and provincial temples for monks and nuns (*kokubunji* and *kokubunniji*) was added to the list of a *zuryō*'s achievements as an item to be assessed by a special commission (*zuryō kōka sadame*) of the Daijōkan, or Council of State. Therefore, the *zuryō* brought to life the principles of the law for the nobility passed in Chōhō 1 (999).

Zuryō, who travelled regularly to the capital, brought back with them to the provinces the latest cultural trends of Kyoto. At the same time, they adhered to local customs and provincial traditions. As a result of this interaction between local and central traditions, a new culture was born. *Zuryō* corrected the *Jinmyōchō* records, and the status of provincial deities changed in accordance with their relationship with *zuryō* and the provincial government headquarters. For example, in Owari province (Aichi prefecture), Atsuta Shrine, which had been a powerful shrine since ancient times, had a complicated relationship with the provincial government from the middle of the 11th century. Meanwhile, Masumida Shrine, located in the vicinity of the provincial government, strengthened its power and became the 'first shrine' (*ichinomiya*) of Owari province. From the first half of the 11th century, under the influence of the amalgamation of *kami* and buddhas in powerful shrines of the capital region, the most important shrines in a province held Buddhist ceremonies. Since the end of the 11th century, provincial governments had provided shrines with tax-exempt fields (*menden*) to fund Dharma assemblies. Each provincial shrine, in accordance with its position in the hierarchy, started to perform the Dharma assemblies that were the most popular in the capital region, namely, the Saishō-kō, Hokke hakkō, Ninnō-kō, and ritualized 'speed-reading' (*tendoku*) of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. In other words, the provinces adopted the system of Dharma assemblies from the capital region. The donation of tax-exempt fields secured the ranking of shrines. Initiated by *zuryō* after the rebellions of the Jōhei and Tennyō eras, the religious system of the provinces had been formed by the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th centuries.

It was not the provincial offices and *kokubunji* temples but the shrines that became the main venues for Buddhist rituals. At shrines, the sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies were held in front of the deities so that they could feel the joy of the Dharma. The purpose of these assemblies was to pray for peace in the province, including a good harvest and the elimination of plagues. Everyone from the common people to provincial government officials attended the Dharma assemblies performed in the shrines. Men and women praying to the deities were also attracted to the sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies. Thus, the powerful provincial shrines holding these rituals established spiritual ties with the common people, strengthened their status as guardians of the province, and, from the second half of the 11th century, earned the name of 'first shrine' (*Ichinomiya*). The 'first shrine' as the centre of Buddhist and *kami* rituals in a province was deeply respected not only by the *zuryō* but also by ordinary people. The hierarchical structure of provincial shrines, with the *ichinomiya* at the pinnacle, formed a religious system that ritually protected the whole province. Another important point was that the Dharma assemblies, where the recitation of state-protecting sutras was performed, were aimed at protecting not only the provinces but also the whole country. Because the system of provincial sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies was organically connected

with Buddhist rituals in the capital, it became responsible for the protection of the entire state of medieval Japan. From the 11th century, direct connections between the court and local shrines were limited to such instances as the offering of sacred treasures to shrines dedicated to the enthronement of a new emperor. *Zuryō*, who made regular trips between the capital and the provinces, created a religious system that closely connected the centre and the periphery.

The development of the *shōen* estate system and the Shushōgatsu-e and Shuni-e assemblies

Governors (*zuryō*) were creating a provincial religious system based on sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies held at major provincial shrines, thereby promoting the amalgamation of *kami* and buddhas. Although this religious order lacked consistency, the repentance assemblies (such as the Shushōgatsu-e [or Shushō-e] and Shuni-e assemblies), which became more entertaining and appealing, penetrated even more deeply into the world of the common people. Lectures and debates about sutras were held in front of deities to make them feel the joy of the Dharma, while confessions at repentance assemblies were made to statues of a buddha or bodhisattva. It is to be surmised that the Shushō-e and Shuni-e assemblies, still held all around Japan, are highly entertaining because of the early and late evening performances which, with the exception of the Southern Capital, had been shaped at the end of the 10th century and quickly spread throughout Japan over a certain period (Satō 2002).

From the end of the 11th century, retired emperors and empresses built Goganji temples, starting with the Rokushōji temple complex, and granted them private estates (*shōen*) in order to secure reliable maintenance funds. The construction of Gangoji temples one after another in the capital became the driving force for the formation of the *shōen* system. Temples as *shōen* proprietors sent monks to hold Dharma assemblies at local branch temples so that the rituals would help to protect the peaceful daily lives of the common people, and to collect land taxes and levies in the form of public duties in exchange. The development of the *shōen* system and the establishment of a relationship between main temples and their branches were the reason that the Shushōgatsu-e and Shuni-e assemblies of the Hōjōji-Rokushōji type spread so quickly. Repentance assemblies continued to captivate people on account of their alluring features acquired at the end of the 10th century. Of course, the Shushōgatsu-e and Shuni-e were not the only ceremonies held at local temples, and a variety of occasional and regular Dharma assemblies were offered, too. Therefore, Dharma assemblies strengthened communication with the *shōen*'s commoners.

Dharma assemblies began with a ceremony called 'dividing among the deities' (*jinbun*) and, sometimes, with the reading of *Jinmyōchō* records, during which the deities were invoked for distributing the merits earned through participation in the ceremony and for protecting the Dharma assembly from evil spirits. Deities of the twenty-one shrines were invoked at the Shushōgatsu-e ceremony held at Hosshōji as 'palace guardians.' *Jinmyōchō* records read out at the local Shushōgatsu-e and Shuni-e assemblies consisted mostly of provincial *Jinmyōchō* records created after the rebellions of the Jōhei and Ten'yō eras and, additionally, of lists of deities of the twenty-one central shrines and guardian provincial deities. Prayers for the protection of the state and the benefit for all people regardless of their social status were held. For the common people,

it meant that deities from all over the country protected their peace. The world of deities whose names were annually proclaimed at the ceremonies for ‘dividing among the deities’ and at readings of *Jinmyōchō* records during the Shushōgatsu-e and Shuni-e assemblies provided a rare opportunity for ordinary people to embrace all the deities of Japan on a conceptual level. This had a great influence on people’s understanding of deities and state territory. The world of deities, who were described in written pledges (*kishōmon*) addressed to *kami* and buddhas, was structurally similar to the *Jinmyōchō* records presented at the Shushōgatsu-e assembly. The deities incorporated into Buddhism deepened their connections with the common people through Dharma assemblies held in *shōen* and villages and realised the Mahayana idea of salvation of all human beings, from the ruler to commoners.

The medieval system of state protection

The following kind of world unfolded around the Hōjōji and Rokushōji temple complexes. The system of Dharma assemblies headed by the Three Lectures held at the imperial palace and Goganji temples was associated with the following three subsystems. The first was concerned with Dharma assemblies held at each *kenmon* temple and activities related to doctrinal studies in ‘cloister lineages.’ The second concerned sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies conducted at major provincial shrines headed by protective shrines. The third included the Shushōgatsu-e and Shuni-e assemblies held in large and small temples, including local ones. These subsystems were closely connected and functioned organically, forming a system that protected the whole medieval state. The medieval state-protecting system created a Buddhist teaching, in particular an exoteric teaching, that developed Mahayana features and turned more toward ordinary people from the latter half of the 10th century. The system became more robust because of the progressive amalgamation of *jingi* and Buddhism.

The provincial ruling order that had been created by *zuryō* since the end of the 10th century was fully established by the late 11th and early 12th centuries. Mainly because of this, from the late 11th century the *shōen* system had been developing in closer cooperation with the political centre. The above-mentioned religious order was closely related to the formation of the basic structures of medieval society, such as the system of provincial rule and the *shōen* system, and was incorporated as an important pillar of medieval social structure. The newly-born medieval sovereign authority founded Goganji temples, such as the Hōjōji and Rokushōji temple complexes, and set out new concepts of religious policy. Moreover, *zuryō* and monks, who made regular trips between the capital and the provinces, applied them in the provinces and local communities. Even Emperor Ichijō and Michinaga did not expect that the ideals of the new legal system of Chōhō 1, which had declared that religion was politics, would be so faithfully followed and would create such a lavish world. In this way, the sovereign authority of medieval Japan was able to win the hearts of the common people without the direct use of force. Despite its ruling nature, the religious-political order had a fascinating allure for the people that was not limited to political rule.

‘New Buddhism’ and the establishment of the *kenmitsu* system (exoteric-esoteric Buddhism)

In reality, the religious system was maintained by the widespread activities of monks. The late Heian period, as well as the late Nara and early Heian periods, was a time when the study of Buddhist doctrine thrived. Dharma assemblies held in the imperial palace and Goganji temples were part of the advancement of Buddhist scholasticism. Moreover, many of the monks appointed as lecturers at Dharma assemblies held at provincial protective shrines were invited from *kenmitsu* temples by *zuryō*. During the assemblies, monks from *kenmon* temples exchanged information with provincial monks. The system of Dharma assemblies, which linked the centre with the provinces and temples, played an important role in exchanges between monks and the development of Buddhist scholasticism.

The characteristics of the debates held at Dharma assemblies in the late Heian period reflected the contemporary state of the study of Buddhist doctrine. In the late Nara and early Heian periods, when each school was being established, there were fierce debates about *kyōsō hanjaku*, or the classification of the Buddha's teachings, with the aim of identifying contradictions and inconsistencies in Buddhist scholasticism. However, in the first half of the 12th century, in the Mihakkō debates at Hosshōji, it was required to logically and coherently integrate and explain all the seemingly contradictory arguments (Yamazaki 1999). In the late Heian period, the amalgamation of the doctrinal studies of various schools continued owing to prolific exchange between scholar-monks. Jōdō thought, the simplification of doctrinal studies, and an emphasis on 'contemplative' knowledge (*kansō*) and practices were common characteristics of different schools. Sutra-lecture Dharma assemblies were also held at Shingon temples, and the merging of Nanto scholasticism and esoteric teachings deepened. At the same time, the Mahayana features of Japanese Buddhism became more prominent. The Hossō school, which had advocated the doctrine of 'five types of innate nature' (*goshō kakubetsu*), according to which the capacity to become a buddha was determined by a person's inherent nature, changed and adopted the Mahayana idea of 'one vehicle' (Skt. *ekayāna*; Jap. *ichijō*). Also, Tendai 'original enlightenment' (*hongaku*) thought, which taught that plants and other non-sentient beings could 'become a buddha in this very body' (*sokushin jōbutsu*), was born.

The eight exoteric-esoteric schools established in the early Heian period further advanced amalgamation, transcending their differences and conflicts, acquired more Mahayana features, and turned into '*kenmitsu bukkyō*', or exoteric-esoteric Buddhism, which united all eight schools. The debate about whether or not *hongaku* thought was a Buddhist idea indicated that exoteric-esoteric Buddhism was notably different from Indian and Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, since the 12th century, no particular school but increasingly homogenising exoteric-esoteric Buddhism itself had penetrated deeply into society. It was *kenmitsu* Buddhism that laid a solid popular foundation in Japanese society. It can be said that, having combined the exoteric and esoteric teachings, the image of Dainichi worshiped in the Golden Hall of the Hōjōji temple complex was a precursor of yet-to-be-established *kenmitsu* Buddhism.

In this context, we should mention Hōnen, Shinran, and other founders of 'new Buddhism'. Many features of their theories could already be seen in *kenmitsu* Buddhism. Their uniqueness lay in adopting one element of *kenmitsu* Buddhism and concentrating on it entirely, while denying the broad common ground of exoteric and esoteric teachings. Therefore, they were criticised more

severely than exoteric-esoteric Buddhism.

Kenmitsu Buddhism, which strengthened Mahayana features and combined exoteric and esoteric teachings, promoted a new amalgamation of Buddhism and the worship of indigenous deities. It incorporated the beliefs of all common people while playing the role of a predominant ideology that supported medieval sovereign authority, consisting of the emperor, retired emperor, and *sekkan* regents. In this paper, I would like to refer to this religious-political system as the ‘*kenmitsu* system’. Based on the framework of the eight exoteric and esoteric schools established in the early Heian period, the *kenmitsu* system took shape after the foundation of the Hōjōji temple complex in the first half of the 11th century and was fully established in the middle of the 12th century, when, starting with Rokushōji, many Goganji temples were built and the *shōen* system was institutionalised. The period when the *kenmitsu* system functioned, with Hōjōji and Rokushōji temple complexes, the driving force behind the system’s formation, as its representatives and at its pinnacle, can be called the ‘era of Hōjōji and Rokushōji.’

5. The decline of the Hōjōji and Rokushōji era

The dissolution of the Rokushōji temple system

The ceremony celebrating the completion of Saishōkōin temple, held in Jōan 3 (1173), signalled the end of the continuing construction of Goganji temples. At the same time, the establishment of temple *shōen* estates declined. The Kamakura warrior government (*bakufu*) was formed following the Jishō and Jūei conflicts (1180–1181 and 1183–1185), which brought to the surface many contradictions that went back to the formation of the system of provincial government and the *shōen* system. Medieval society, which had been evolving for over one and a half centuries, reached a period of stability. The Goganji temples founded in the late Heian period were maintained and restored, and the religious system with Hōjōji and Rokushōji at its pinnacle functioned at least until the end of the Kamakura period.³

Changes in this system were furthered by the policies of Emperor Go-Daigo. In Shōchū 2 (1325), he donated Saishōkōin temple to the Tōji temple complex, followed by the donation of Hōshōgon’in temple in Gentoku 1 (1329), and gave Saishōji temple to the Shōren’in cloister lineage in Genkō 1 (1331). The donation of these temples was accompanied by the granting of estates, and these Goganji temples became branch temples of Tōji and Enryakuji, thereby losing the functions that they had had since the late Heian period. Saishōji temple burned down in Shōwa 3 (1314), and although there can be no doubt that the temple had already fallen into decline, Go-Daigo decided not to rebuild it. It is significant that this decision triggered the subsequent decline of Rokushōji temples, which had previously been maintained by generations of ‘rulers of the land’ (*chiten no kimi*), i.e., retired emperors who still wielded power.

In the middle of the 14th century, Sonshōji temple also disappeared, and in Ryakuō 5 (1342) the Hosshōji temple complex burned to ashes. Immediately after the fire at Hosshōji, Echin (1281–1356) was appointed ‘great fundraiser’ (*daikanjin*) and set about rebuilding the temple. However, Hosshōji was not restored in its original form and turned into a temple of the Tendai-Ritsu school, which was passed down in the Echin lineage. Rokushōji’s position of *kengyō*, previously occupied by the Ninnaji-Omuro lineage, disappeared after the appointment of Hōnin

(1325–1352), a son of Go-Daigo, in Kannō 2 (1351). Thus, in the middle of the 14th century, Rokushōji temples were obliterated both nominally and physically. At the same time, the Hōjōji temple complex lost its actual status as a temple.

The dissolution of the system of Dharma assemblies

With the dissolution of the Rokushōji temples, various Dharma assemblies and esoteric protective rituals performed there also lost their functions. This situation extended to all Dharma assemblies held in the imperial palace. The Gosai-e was seldom performed after the 1340s, and it was the same for the Latter Seven Days Rite, Yuima-e, Saishō-kō, and seasonal readings of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. In the middle of the 14th century, Dharma assemblies conducted in the imperial palace for the protection of the state gradually diminished. When the Muromachi *bakufu* stabilised in the second half of the 14th century, the Latter Seven Days Rite and the Yuima-e ceremony were revived, but the Gosai-e and Saishō-kō, where monks of all schools used to gather, were seldom held. After having survived to the end, the Latter Seven Days Rite was conducted for the last time in Kanshō 1 (1460), and all of the Dharma assemblies that had been held in the imperial palace and Goganji temples since the late Heian period ceased to exist.

The Muromachi *bakufu*, which controlled sovereign authority, performed the Eight Lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* as a Buddhist memorial service for the *shōgun* and held esoteric protective rituals at Kitayama-dono Palace, organising warriors to serve as guardian monks (*gojisō*) and bringing together monks of exoteric and esoteric *kenmon* temples to pray for the protection of the state (Ōta 2002, 2004). Buddhist ceremonies conducted at Muromachi-dono Palace followed the *kujō* procedure of inviting monks for ritual performances, such as Dharma assemblies, in the imperial palace. This should be understood as having bolstered the disintegrating system of Dharma assemblies, which finally declined in the middle of the 15th century.

Changes in the religious world: Requests for prayers at temples and shrines

As mentioned, along with Hōjōji and Rokushōji, the system of Dharma assemblies headed by the Three Lectures established in the late Heian period had disappeared. Imperial visits and offerings to twenty-two shrines (Hiyoshi was added to the twenty-one shrines at the end of the 11th century), which were initiated during the formation of the medieval *jingi* system, came to an end in the late Kamakura through to mid-Muromachi period. The declining medieval religious system suffered the same fate as the court and *bakufu*, whose powers were weakening. This tendency emerged at the end of the Kamakura period, when Emperor Go-Daigo changed his policy. He abandoned the strategy aimed at controlling exoteric and esoteric *kenmon* temples through Goganji temples and Dharma assemblies. Partly owing to the significant financial burden imposed by the restoration of temples, the environment of religion and temples changed dramatically. It is an important fact that the period when the entire religious world could be controlled by controlling the *kenmon* temples of the Nara, Tendai, and Shingon schools was coming to an end. Because Buddhism was turning more toward the common people, the functions of temples diversified, and each temple found its own activities and foundations that were not fully bound by state. Moreover, the activities of the Kamakura *bakufu*, which had played an important role in state politics since the

middle of the Kamakura period, cannot be ignored. The religious policy of the warrior government, which had been within the *kenmitsu* framework since the establishment of the *bakufu*, saw new developments from the time of Hōjō Tokimune, the eighth regent of the Kamakura government. These developments were the introduction of pure Zen and the protection of the Ritsu School (Taira 1994). The open *jippō jūji* system of fixed-term monastic appointments adopted by Zen temples rejected the principle of master-disciple transmission at *kenmitsu* temples. Therefore, Ritsu monks also undertook a wide range of activities beyond the community of *kenmitsu* temples, thus disrupting the existing order.

Above all, the Mongol invasions (1274 and 1281) shook the order of the religious world, headed by the exoteric and esoteric *kenmitsu* temples. The court and the *bakufu* ordered temples and shrines throughout the country to pray for the defeat of the foreign invaders so as to avert an unprecedented threat to the state. Almost the same orders for prayer services (*kitō*) were issued to *kenmon* temples and to small and medium temples. All temples and shrines competed in the effectiveness of their prayers, and this ultimately had an effect. They became directly connected to the court and the *bakufu*. The number of *kiganjo* (temples and shrines where prayers for the prosperity of the court and *bakufu* were held) increased, and the relationship between main temples headed by *kenmon* temples and their branch temples weakened.

Requests for prayer services addressed to individual temples and shrines became a regular practice during the Nanbokuchō War. The Muromachi *bakufu* issued many *gohan migyōsho*, or directives personally signed by the *shōgun*, which gave orders for prayers to be performed for peace and tranquility throughout the country. There were many ways to conduct the actual prayers, depending on the character of the temple or shrine, but these can be collectively referred to by the word ‘prayer’ (*kitō*). All exoteric and esoteric temples, all Zen and Pure Land temples, and all shrines were able to conduct prayers. This could be described as a relationship between Buddhism and the state that was suited to the new era.

The end of the *kenmitsu* system

Along with maintaining exoteric and esoteric rituals, the Muromachi *bakufu* supported the Zen schools to create a system of state protection based on Zen and exoteric and esoteric teachings (Harada 1998). There were also countless temples and shrines that were ordered to hold prayer services. Regardless of the way in which the services were conducted, the *bakufu* did not have much control over them, and temples and shrines were not very dependent on the *bakufu*. Not being restricted by the state, temples and shrines engaged in various activities, and the area that could not be covered by the category of ‘state and Buddhism’ expanded. Compared to the early and late Heian period, the sphere of the state’s influence became relatively narrower, and this signified the spread of Buddhism into society and the lives of the common people and the expansion of the world of Buddhism itself.

Kuroda Toshio defined the post-Nanbokuchō period as a long path to the reorganisation and decline of the *kenmitsu* system, and the facts discussed here could be subsumed under his theory. However, if we constructively evaluate the shift in the political approach of Emperor Go-Daigo, our viewpoint can change significantly. The key characteristic of the *kenmon* system was a

hierarchical structure headed by *kenmon* temples, which were instrumental in maintaining state control over temple society as a whole. Consequently, during the Nanbokuchō period, when Rokushōji temples had dissolved and relations between the main temples and their branch temples had weakened, the system of *kenmon*, or of ruling elites, collapsed, at least in regard to *kenmon* temples. Moreover, the disappearance of the Dharma assemblies conducted at the Rokushōji temples and in the imperial palace meant that the link between sovereign authority and the common people was severed. *Kenmitsu* Buddhism essentially lost its function as the dominant ideology supporting medieval sovereignty, and the *kenmitsu* system crumbled. Furthermore, the demolition of Goganji temples led to the reorganisation of their economic base in the form of private estates (*shōen*), resulting in the transformation of the *shōen* system itself. The complete destruction by fire of Hosshōji temple is described in the *Taiheiki* ('Record of Great Peace') as follows: 'From now on, there will undoubtedly be no peace in the entire world under Heaven. There will be neither Law of the Sovereign nor Law of the Buddha, and the houses of both warriors and nobles will fall into ruin. When this and other omens of decline appear one after another, there will be no people left who do not lament it' (*Taiheiki*, vol. 21). Such an understanding of history aptly depicts the end of an era.

In conclusion: Reflecting on the category 'medieval'

During the Nanbokuchō period the *kenmitsu* system collapsed. Perhaps we need to think about the historical significance of the demolition of Rokushōji temples, rather than about the use of 'kenmitsu system' and 'kenmon system' as conceptually defined categories. The end of the Hōjōji and Rokushōji era signified the end of two periods. The late Heian system of Dharma assemblies headed by the Three Lectures was formed by adding new elements to an already existing early Heian system headed by the Three Assemblies. The medieval religious order was reconstructed while preserving earlier elements, but in accordance with the needs of the medieval state and sovereign authority. Even though the state and religious systems that had appeared in the early Heian period and were brought to completion in the late Heian period collapsed simultaneously in the Nanbokuchō period, the Nanbokuchō period could be said to have been an even more critical turning point than the late Heian period.

On the other hand, Buddhism, which had strengthened its Mahayana features and turned more toward the common people, penetrated society during the Kamakura period and solidified the fundamentals of Japanese Buddhism, which became deeply embedded in the world of the common people. It is important to remember that all the schools of 'Kamakura New Buddhism' expanded their teachings by relying on the popular social basis created by *kenmitsu* Buddhism. The Nichiren and Zen schools initially rejected *jingi* worship but were compelled to compromise when disseminating their teachings (Fujii 2002, Harada 1998). This is indicative of the social expansion of *kenmitsu* Buddhism. Ideological changes seen in the middle of the 10th century largely determined the subsequent development of Japanese Buddhism.

This paper has discussed three significant periods—late Nara and early Heian, late Heian, and Nanbokuchō—along with their characteristics from the perspective of the state and Buddhism. I would like to continue reexamining from a broader perspective the conventional time frames of

‘ancient’ and ‘medieval’ in Japanese history while identifying the historical significance of the turning points of each period.

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Notes

¹ Translator’s note (TN): This paper was initially published in *Lectures on Japanese History, vol. 3: Formation of Medieval Japan (Nihonshi kōza 3 – chūsei no keisei)*, Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2004.

² TN: Buddhist chants in Sanskrit and Chinese explained in Japanese by the officiating monk (*dōshi*).

³ TN: The “Six Victorious Temples” (Rokushōji) built by various members of the imperial family as Goganji temples started with the founding of Hosshōji by Emperor Shirakawa in 1075. They were named thus because each temple had the character ‘victorious’ in its name.