

Hunting and the Origin Account of Mt. Nikkō:
A Translation of the *Nikkō-zan engi* and Analysis of its Salvific Discourse

By

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the *Nikkō-zan engi* in crafting soteriological paradigms to justify hunting during a period which saw increasing antagonism towards the acts of hunting and meat eating. In the religious milieu of medieval Japan, wherein Buddhism and Shintoism were deeply intertwined in the paradigm of *shinbutsu shūgō* (syncretism of *kami* [gods] and buddhas), a discourse evolved which reviled hunting and meat eating due to its associations with *kegare* (religious pollution) and its disregard of the first Buddhist precept against the taking of life. However, some exo- and eso-teric Buddhist lineages negotiated this discourse by teaching mitigation practices to justify continued hunting by their practitioners. This work focuses on examining the specific tools provided by institutions of religious power to mitigate the negative karmic consequences of killing animals. It first overviews the historical realities of hunting and meat eating in Japan to then justify the study of *jisha engi* (origin accounts of temples and shrines) before turning to an analysis of the role of *engi* in affirming soteriological paradigms through a case study of the *Nikkō-zan engi*, the origin account of the religious complex on Mt. Nikkō (by the later medieval period also known as Utsunomiya) in Tochigi Prefecture. This *engi* was chosen as the object of study specifically because of its association with the Nikkō guild of hunters, who remain understudied within Anglophone scholarship compared with the hunting guild aligned with Suwa Taisha (Suwa Grand Shrine) in Nagano and their famous *Suwa no mon* (Suwa incantation). It concludes that the methods of salvation laid out in the *engi* are at conflict with its own narrative portions, exposing debate which was ongoing within medieval religious institutions as they grappled with legitimating the very act of hunting. This affirms the utility in reading *engi* as soteriologically important texts within medieval Japanese religious thought. The study culminates in the first annotated translation of the *Nikkō-zan engi* into English.

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Japanese Periods

Classical (550–710)	Asuka 飛鳥 (550–710)	
	Nara 奈良 (710–794)	
	Heian 平安 (794–1185)	
Medieval (1185–1600)	Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185–1333)	
	Muromachi 室町 (1336–1568)	Warring States 戦国 (1467–1600)
	Azuchi–Momoyama 安土桃山 (1568–1600)	
Early Modern (1600–1868)	Edo [Tokugawa] 江戸 [徳川] (1600–1868)	
Modern (1868–present)	Meiji 明治 (1868–1912)	
	Taishō 大正 (1912–1926)	
	Shōwa 昭和 (1926–1989)	
	Heisei 平成 (1989–2019)	
	Reiwa 令和 (2019–present)	

A Note on Naming Conventions

Japanese personal names are given in traditional order with family name followed by given name (e.g., Amino Yoshihiko is rendered with family name “Amino” first), except in cases of classical Japanese names in which scholarly convention is to use personal names.

Names in the notes and bibliography follow naming order conventions of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, regardless of nationality (e.g., Amino Yoshihiko is rendered Yoshihiko Amino in notes and Amino Yoshihiko in the bibliography).

Introduction

Jisha engi 寺社縁起 (origin accounts of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines) are not obvious sources for a history of hunting in Japan. Hunting—here, the killing of non-marine wild game animals—is not an activity which the public might typically imagine as falling into the purview of Japanese Buddhist temple and Shinto shrine complexes. Historically, though, Japanese religious institutions were important sources of legitimation, and provided religious technologies by which to justify hunting, even in a social environment antagonistic to the practice.¹ By examining the history of hunting in Japan through a soteriological lens, we can better understand the place of hunters within Japanese history and the ways in which their activity was legitimated in the religious context. In order to analyze the varied ways in which hunters, and the religious establishment which supported them, legitimated hunting in medieval Japan, this study presents a translation and an analysis of the *Nikkō-zan engi* 日光山縁起 (Origin Account of Mt. Nikkō)—the origin story of the historically important religious complex centered on Mt. Nikkō in modern Tochigi Prefecture 栃木県 in eastern Japan—and compares it with existing research on religious affiliated hunting groups’ salvific justifications for hunting.²

¹ The term “religious technology” is used by Lisa Grumbach to describe the *Suwa no mon* 諏訪門 (Suwa Incantation) discussed within this paper. While she never explicitly defines the phrase, technology is used therein under the general definition of a “practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area.” Therefore, for the purposes of this paper religious technology will be defined as an application of religious knowledge in forms such as rites and instruments to achieve a specific practical goal. For the definition(s) of technology, see “Technology: Definition & Meaning,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/technology>.

² An explanation of Mt. Nikkō’s diverse meanings is necessary here. Located in the modern day Nikkō Kokuritsu Kōen 日光国立公園 (Nikkō National Park) in Tochigi Prefecture 栃木県, Mt. Nikkō, with its multiple overlapping meanings, is often used ambiguously to reference part or all of the region and its religious institutions. In the broadest sense it refers to a volcanic group centered on three primary mountains consisting of Mt. Nantai 男体山 (alternatively called Mt. Futara 二荒山), Mt. Nyotai 女体山 (alternatively called Mt. Nyobō 女貌山, or Mt. Nyohō 女峰山), and Mt. Tarō 太郎山. It can further be used as an alternative name to refer to Mt. Nantai alone. Additionally, Mt. Nikkō is used as a name for the entire religious complex located around Mt. Nantai, and even more narrowly used to indicate either the temple Rinnōji 輪王寺, the shrine Nikkō Futarasan Jinja 二荒山神社 in the city of Nikkō 日光市 (sometimes alternatively read with an extra syllable as Nikkō Futa’arasan Jinja, and often referenced without the affixed Nikkō), the shrine Utsunomiya Futarayama Jinja 宇都宮二荒山神社 in the nearby

Even today, certain areas of Japanese academia, and society at large, dispute the very possibility that hunting historically existed in Japan and continued from premodernity into the modern era. This controversy is heavily steeped in the theory that Japanese people did not eat meat before the modern period.³ These arguments are predicated on the belief that due to the religion's precept against taking life, meat eating was excised from the Japanese diet with the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century and its subsequent adoption by the court.⁴ However, evidence suggests meat eating was common amongst the laity and many Buddhist lineages had trouble preventing their Buddhist clergy from eating meat.⁵ To understand how the historical realities of hunting and meat eating in Japan came to be so downplayed within

city of Utsunomiya 宇都宮市 (also sometimes read with an extra syllable as Utsunomiya Futa'arayama Jinja, and often referenced as simply Utsunomiya or as Futarayama Jinja). These latter two then further complicate matters in written discourse as they are distinguished in spoken language by the pronunciation of the final kanji 山 (mountain) which can either be pronounced *yama*, *san*, or *zan*. When no pronunciation guide is presented for the shrine rendered in kanji as 二荒山神社, it can be read as either Futarasan Jinja or Futarayama Jinja, with ambiguity over which shrine it is indicating. While this problem of ambiguity can be solved in English for the shrines listed above, the larger ambiguity of the term Mt. Nikkō outlined above presents a larger problem. Within this work, effort has been made to clarify the area or institution indicated by Mt. Nikkō wherever the term appears with a clear meaning; however, ambiguity is maintained in translation of and reference to any passages wherein the original meaning might refer to any or all of the above. Importantly, the shrine Nikkō Tōshōgū 日光東照宮, which is perhaps the most famous shrine in contemporary Nikkō City as its enshrined deity is the first Tokugawa Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康, was not established until the early Edo period and it is therefore beyond the scope of this study. For a history on the creation of Nikkō Tōshōgū, see Yamasawa Manabu, *Nikkō Tōshōgū no seiritsu: kinsei Nikkōsan no 'shōgon' to saishi soshiki* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2009).

³ Nakazawa Katsuaki, *Nikushoku no shakaishi* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2018), 1–6; Hans Martin Krämer, “‘Not Befitting Our Divine Country’: Eating Meat in Japanese Discourses of Self and Other from the Seventeenth Century to the Present,” *Food and Foodways* 16, no. 1 (2008): 53.

⁴ Nakazawa, *Nikushoku no shakaishi*, 7–9, 37–38. Lisa Grumbach, "Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan: Hunting and Meat in Religious Practice at Suwa Jinja" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005), 5–9, 53.

⁵ Barbara Ambros, “Partaking of Life: Buddhism, Meat-Eating, and Sacrificial Discourses of Gratitude in Contemporary Japan,” *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland: MDPI AG) 10, no. 4 (2019): 291. A note on the use of the term lineage: This work follows the stylistic choices found in William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert’s *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* which translates both the terms *shūha* 宗派 and *ryū* 流 or *ryūha* 流派 as “lineage,” rather than “school” or “sect,” due to the implications of exclusivity associated with these terms in English. While there were certainly popular lineages at Mt. Nikkō, it was considered a particular stronghold of Tendai Buddhism for centuries, many lineages coexisted within the religious ecosystem located therein. For further explanation of the Deal and Ruppert’s thought process behind this translation choice, see William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert, *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 10.

Japanese society, we must first examine how the study of meat eating and hunters has developed over time.

The study of hunters in Japan in an academic capacity can be traced back to the founder of *minzokugaku* 民俗学 (the field of Japanese Folklore Studies), Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 (1875–1962). His first monograph, *Nochi no karikotoba no ki* 後狩詞記 (*Record of [Boar] Hunting*, 1909), explicitly takes up the question of hunting and linguistics in the village of Shi'iba 椎葉村 (since 1949 a part of Higashi'usuki 東臼杵郡, and still called Shi'iba Village) in the mountainous northwest of Miyazaki Prefecture 宮崎県.⁶ There are arguments this work technically predates the establishment of *minzokugaku* as a distinct field, such as those by Aruga Kizaemon 有賀喜左衛門 (1897–1979), a prominent student of Yanagita, who traces the field's inception to the publishing of the journal *Minzoku* 民俗 from 1925–1928.⁷ Nevertheless, it is still a useful work for understanding Yanagita's interests. He appears fascinated with the idea of the mountain hunter throughout this period, and the image of the hunter appears numerous times in his collections of folktales from the Tōno region 遠野地方 (since 1954, the city of Tōno 遠野市) in Iwate Prefecture in northern Japan.⁸

Yanagita remained interested in the subject of the hunter and their folklore for decades. Twenty-seven years after his first work, he again published literature on hunters and upland culture; this time, he published a short book detailing the relationship between the mountain

⁶ Kunio Yanagita, *Nochi no karikotoba no ki* (1909; repr., Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha, 1951).

⁷ Toshinao Yoneyama “Yanagita and his Works” in *International Perspectives on Yanagita Kunio and Japanese Folklore Studies*, eds. J. Victor Koschmann, Keibō Ōiwa, and Shinji Yamashita (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1985), 40–49.

⁸ See Kunio Yanagita, *The Legends of Tōno*, trans. Ronald A. Morse (Tokyo: Japan Foundation, 1975), 14–15, 30–31; Kunio Yanagita and Kizen Sasaki, *Folk Legends from Tono: Japan's Spirits, Deities, and Phantastic Creatures*, trans. and ed. Ronald A. Morse (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 93–116. At the time of Yanagita's writing, the Tōno region was used as a broader reference to the town of Tōno 遠野町 and its surrounding villages including Matsuzaki 松崎村, Aya'ari 綾織村, Tsuchibumi 土淵村, Tsukimōshi 附馬牛村, and Kamigō 上郷村. The aforementioned merged in 1954 to form Tōno City 遠野市.

goddess, the Yama-no-kami worshipped by northern Japanese hunters, and the *okoze* オコゼ (hagfish), which is offered to the Yama-no-kami in return for her favor and protection.⁹ However, Yanagita ultimately saw the *yamabito*, or mountain dwellers, as distinct and implicitly inferior to the class of people whom he argued epitomized the true timeless Japanese: the *nōmin* 農民 (farmers).¹⁰ As we shall see, this bias informs later scholarship, even as some of his students turned to the study of *yamabito* and hunters.

Rather than Yanagita himself, it was one of his students, Chiba Tokuji, who authored what might still justifiably be called the definitive collection of texts on the culture, history, and religion of hunters in Japan. Chiba published his first academic investigation of hunting in Japan in 1969. Titled *Shuryō denshō kenkyū* 狩猟伝承研究 (*A Study on Hunting Traditions*), the work is expansive in what it covers both chronologically and spatially as it relates the history of hunting in the Japanese archipelago as well as distinct regional hunting cultures from the Ainu in the northern island of Hokkaido to local hunting groups in the southern island of Kyūshū.¹¹ However, the works of Chiba reflect influence from Yanagita's field of folkloristics and its early goal of cataloguing Japanese folk customs, as he devoted large portions of his published works to collecting materials and stories told by interlocutors in the regions he studied. For instance, Chiba devotes 116 pages of his 1971 work entitled *Zoku shuryō denshō kenkyū* 続狩猟伝承研究 (*A Continued Study on Hunting Traditions*) to reproductions of printed material collected during his research on hunting groups. Analysis of the collection, or even general contextualization, is largely absent within these collections of reproduced material in favor of presenting the

⁹ Kunio Yanagita, *Yama no kami to okoze* (Tokyo: Nara Shoin, 1936), 99–114.

¹⁰ J. Victor Koschmann, "Folklore Studies and the Conservative Anti-establishment in Modern Japan," in *International Perspectives on Yanagita Kunio and Japanese Folklore Studies*, eds. J. Victor Koschmann, Keibō Ōiwa, and Shinji Yamashita (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1985), 145.

¹¹ Tokuji Chiba, *Shuryō denshō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1969).

documents or stories themselves directly to the reader.¹² Analysis of these works is then left to separate monographs within his series of published works.

Even as Chiba Tokuji was writing expansive works on the history of hunting in Japan, an intellectual phenomenon called *nihonjinron* 日本人論 (discourse on Japaneseness) was gaining popularity. The anthropologist Harumi Befu analyzes this phenomenon in his 2001 monograph, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, in which he argues this pseudo-academic discourse actively pushed ahistorical notions of Japan as a timeless rice-monoculture-based agriculturalist society.¹³ The historian Amino Yoshihiko argues that this discourse is in part based on a linguistic misreading reinforced by misunderstandings of Japan's historically rice-centric taxation.¹⁴ Tax was collected in the form of rice with taxation rates based on estimated crop yields.¹⁵ For non-agrarians, taxation was based on conversion tables fixed to rice.¹⁶ Alone, this may not have caused confusion. However, Amino adds that a linguistic change acted in concert with the above to obscure nonagrarians in Japanese history. The change revolved around the word *hyakushō* 百姓 (lit. hundred surnames), which originally acted as a referent to commoners in general, but which came to refer specifically to farming peasants. This meaning has since been superimposed on all *hyakushō* throughout history regardless of their profession.¹⁷ This historical misunderstanding was problematic for the study of hunters, because it both obscured and denied their contributions to Japanese society before the advent of the modern period. *Nihonjinron*-influenced thought is so pervasive in Japanese society and academia that

¹² Tokuji Chiba, *Zoku Shuryō denshō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1971), 439–555.

¹³ Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), 74.

¹⁴ Yoshihiko Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, trans. Alan S. Christy (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2012), 3–5, 22–24.

¹⁵ Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 22–23.

¹⁶ Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 23–24.

¹⁷ Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 21, 25–30.

even academics who admit its potential to obscure historical realities may still fall into the trap of believing in a fundamentally agriculturalist understanding of pre-modern and early modern Japan.

For instance, the anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney devotes her entire book, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*, to rethinking the historical prevalence of rice and its importance within the average Japanese person's diet and Japanese culture. Nonetheless, she uncritically accepts the popular belief that, even if rice was not a prominent foodstuff in Japan before the modern period, the Japanese diet must then have consisted of fish and vegetables.¹⁸ Ohnuki-Tierney admits that there existed a nonagricultural population which suffered discrimination because their diet included meat; however, she maintains that the majority of Japanese people lived under a continual taboo against meat eating from the introduction of Buddhism until the Meiji Restoration.¹⁹

This misconception of the history of meat eating in Japan is the focus of Hans Martin Krämer's 2008 article "'Not Befitting Our Divine Country': Eating Meat in Japanese Discourses of Self and Other from the Seventeenth Century to the Present." Krämer first presents an ultranationalist cartoon by the right-wing *manga* author Kobayashi Yoshinori, which argues that Japanese people are more peaceful than Europeans because the former were vegetarians while the latter were meat eaters. Krämer then notes this belief in a vegetarian (or more properly "pescatarian"), Japanese history is linked by authors like Kobayashi to the idea that meat eating was outlawed in Japan with the introduction of Buddhism.²⁰ Of note, this is the same rationale provided above by Ohnuki-Tierney for a history of societal vegetarianism in Japan. Krämer then

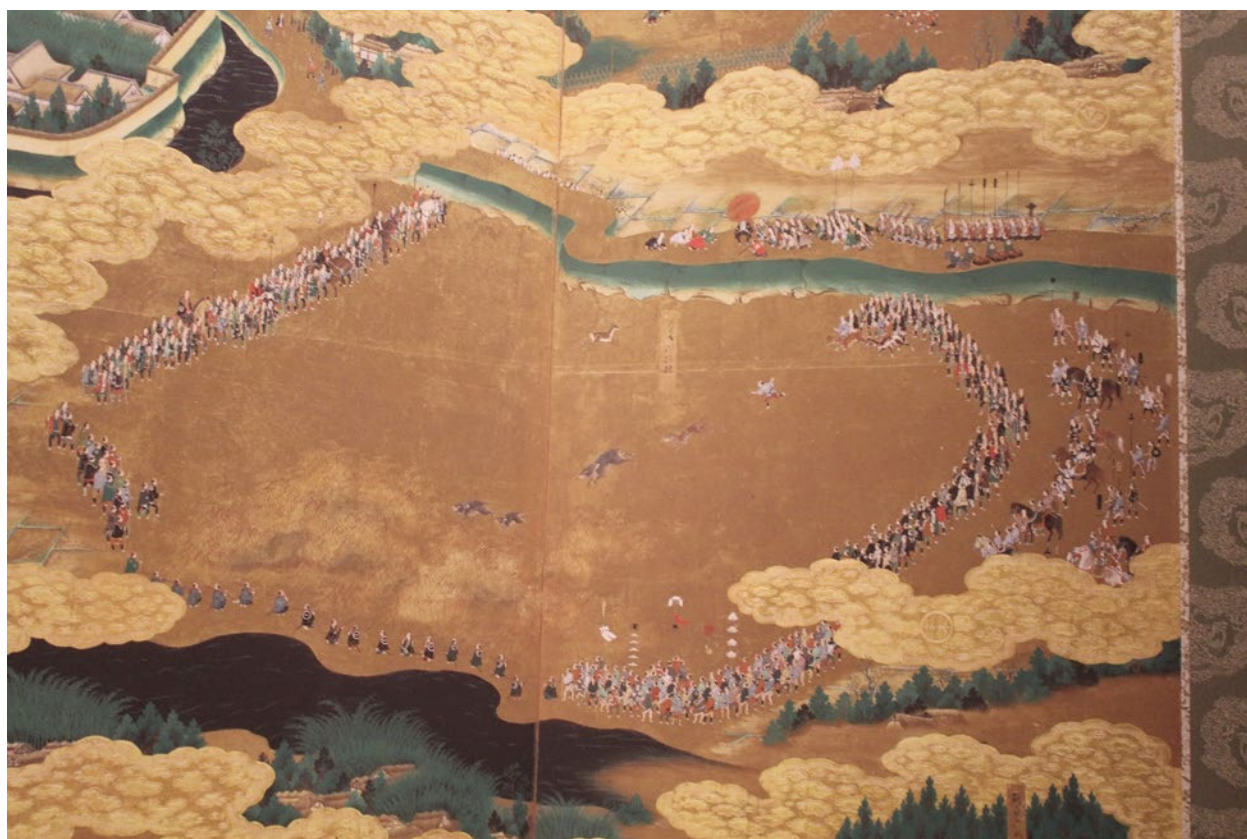
¹⁸ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 106.

¹⁹ Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, 98, 106.

²⁰ Krämer, "'Not Befitting Our Divine Country,'" 33–34.

proceeds to show how this belief is both ahistorical and rooted in a reimagining of Japanese history fostered in the pseudo-scientific discourse of *nihonjinron*.²¹

In fact, such historical sources as illustrated panels, scrolls, and folding screens themselves do not shy away from depicting hunting and meat eating. For example, in the *Edozu byōbu* 江戸図屏風 (Illustrated Screen of Edo), the artist depicts multiple deer, pheasant, and boar hunts across the six-panel folding screen. Created in 1634–1635, the *Edozu byōbu* consists of two six-panel folding screens depicting the capital at Edo and events in the life of the third shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu 徳川家光 (1604–1651).²² Below is one extracted example in which a man and his hunting dogs are cheered on by spectators during a hunt.



²¹ Krämer, “Not Befitting Our Divine Country,” 38, 46–47.

²² Ono Kenkichi, “‘Edo-zu byōbu’ kara yomitoku kan’ei-ki no Edo no tei’en” *Nihon Kenkyū*, no. 50 (2014): 61.

Figure 1. A man and his hunting dogs give chase to three boars during a hunt. From Folding Screen, Gallery 3: Early-Modern Japan, “*The Illustrated Screen of Edo*,” National Museum of Japanese History, Sakura, Japan, 2019.

Even if this artistic representation does not reflect a particular historical event, its inclusion on this screen alongside many other depictions of hunting ventures illustrates an understanding of hunting as being important to the imagined geography and social life of the country’s new capital at the turn of the early modern period.

As we shall see, though, simply because hunting and its associated meat eating existed does not mean that it was free from judgement or ideological attack. Understanding the historical development of hunting’s place within Japanese society and how hunters actually adapted to changing views on their activities requires us to turn to the question of religious discourse and institutions and their interactions with hunters.

The Question of Soteriological Legitimation Paradigms for Hunting

In an environment for opprobrium for hunting, hunters themselves sought out legitimation techniques from one of the same discourses used to target them: religion.²³ Lisa Grumbach argues during the medieval period hunters turned to the Suwa faith, centered on Suwa Taisha 諏訪大社 (Suwa Grand Shrine) in Shinano Province, modern Nagano Prefecture, and that by the year 1317 they had adopted a specific religious technology called the *Suwa no mon* 諏訪ノモン (Suwa incantation), also rendered as the *Suwa no kanmon* 諏訪の勘文, which allowed for the hunting of animals.²⁴ This was based in a soteriological paradigm wherein hunting was

²³ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 106–107.

²⁴ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 112, 204. While Suwa Taisha is technically a modern Shinto Shrine, the classification schema firmly differentiating Buddhist temples (*tera*, *ji'in*, etc.) and Shinto shrines

redefined into a compassionate way to bring animals onto the Buddhist path.²⁵ This relied on the theory of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (lit. origins and traces, referring to the combinatory paradigm wherein Buddhist deities [the original ground] manifest themselves as local gods [the trace it bestowed]).²⁶ With the understanding that local Japanese gods were manifestations of buddhas and bodhisattvas, hunting in the name of sacrificial gods, such as those at Suwa, was understood as a form of *upāya* which brought the animal onto the Buddhist path through its exposure to the buddhas and bodhisattvas manifested forms as local gods.²⁷ In this way, karmic responsibility is transferred from the hunter directly to the god-cum-buddha in whose name the animal was hunted.²⁸ This framing apparently proved popular in medieval Japan, with Suwa approaching some ten thousand branch shrines.²⁹

However, the reported prevalence of the Suwa faith brings into question whether all hunting activities were legitimated through this soteriological paradigm. This is important because the understanding of hunting legitimation as put forward by Grumbach's interpretation

(*yashiro*, *jinja*, etc.) originates with the turn into the modern period with the Meiji government's policy of *shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離 (separation of Kami and buddhas). Prior to this, Suwa had both Buddhist and Shinto clerical communities. For more on the syncretic religion at Suwa, especially during the early modern period, see Takami Inoue, "The Interaction Between Buddhist and Shinto Traditions at Suwa Shrine," in *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, eds. Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 287–312.

²⁵ Grumbach, "Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan," 2.

²⁶ Grumbach, "Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan," 106. For more on *honji suijaku* and its importance in Japanese religious history, see Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

²⁷ Grumbach, "Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan," 111. *Upāya* here acts as a synonym of *upāyakauśalya* meaning skillful means. It refers to the abilities of buddhas and bodhisattvas to use expedient teachings given to those unable to fully comprehend the Buddha's advanced teachings. It has often been used to reconcile apparent contradictions within Buddhist thought. See Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez, "upāyakauśalya" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 942–943.

²⁸ Grumbach, "Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan," 110–112.

²⁹ *Suwa Taisha*, pamphlet (Suwa Grand Shrine, n.d.), in author's possession, 2019. Figures on Suwa branch shrine numbers taken from pamphlet produced by Suwa Taisha. Whether there were actually 10,000 or more branch shrines is less relevant than the claim of broad popularity this represents.

of the Suwa faith is now cited by scholars such as Barbara Ambros as the way in which hunting historically overcame Buddhist objections.³⁰

Ambros's work specifically focuses on a new discourse which emerged in Japan in the first two decades of the twenty-first century which seeks to undercut the discriminatory attitudes toward butchers, reminiscent of the discrimination faced by Japan's outcast communities, by rethinking the permission structures around the killing of animals.³¹ Ambros's work focuses on the Jōdo Shin 浄土真 lineage and the 2009 children's book *Inochi o itadaku: Miichan ga o-niku ni naru hi* いのちをいただく: みいちゃんがお肉になる日 (Partaking of Life: The Day that Little Mii Becomes Meat) written by the Jōdo Shin adherent Uchida Michiko 内田美智子 (b.1957). Ambros relates how this discourse of gratitude is used to justify the killing of animals in a society which still associates the activity with pollution.³² These two works by Grumbach and Ambros succeed in outlining fascinating ways in which hunting and meat eating could be soteriologically justified; however, they still leave an incomplete picture of the religious technologies utilized for this purpose in Japanese history.

To broaden academia's current understanding of these soteriological paradigms, this study takes up the question of the methods of soteriological legitimation utilized by hunters who were not affiliated with Suwa. Specifically, it looks at the utilization of salvific rhetoric and discourse within the *Nikkō-zan engi*. This specific foundational scroll was chosen for examination herein as Nikkō affiliated hunters appear to be the largest non-Suwa aligned guild within Japan. Indeed, it is worth reproducing here an excerpt of the *Shasekishū* 沙石集 (*Collection of Sand and Pebbles*) of Mujū Ichien (1227–1312), as translated by Robert E.

³⁰ Ambros, "Partaking of Life," 291.

³¹ Ambros, "Partaking of Life," 12.

³² Ambros, "Partaking of Life," 12–15. English translation of the title hers.

Morrell. This excerpt appears in both Grumbach's aforementioned dissertation and Klaus Vollmer's "Buddhism and the Killing of Animals in Premodern Japan."³³ It reads:

While inspecting the premises, a certain venerable priest who had confined himself to the shrine on retreat saw countless numbers of fish from the sea donated as offerings to the gods. Now the Original Ground of the gods who soften their light are the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who, placing compassion before all else, admonish men not to take life. This custom of making offerings of fish was so utterly questionable that the monk prayed to the gods especially that they might resolve his doubts about the matter.

This is what the deities revealed to him: "Indeed, it is a strange business! Unaware of the nature of moral causality, wantonly taking life and unable to rid themselves of delusion, there are those who hope to serve us by offerings of living beings. Because we transfer the responsibility for this to ourselves, their guilt is light. The creatures whom they kill use this as a 'skillful means' to enter into the Way of the Buddha, since their lives are wantonly cast away and offered up to us, their days numbered by past karma now being exhausted. Accordingly, we gather to us those fish whose numbered days of retribution are spent." When he had heard this, the priest's doubts were immediately resolved.

This is perhaps the reason that offerings of deer and birds are made at *Suwa in Nagano province*, and at *Utsunomiya in Tochigi province*, where there is much hunting.³⁴ (emphasis added)

³³ Grumbach, "Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan," 1; Klaus Vollmer, "Buddhism and the Killing of Animals in Premodern Japan," in *Buddhism and Violence*, eds. Michael Zimmermann, Chiew Hui Ho, and Philip Pierce (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2006), 204–205.

Emphasis is added to “Suwa in Nagano province, and at Utsunomiya in Tochigi province” to draw attention to their coexistence within Mujū Ichien’s passage. “Utsunomiya” here refers to Utsunomiya Futarayama Shrine 宇都宮二荒山神社, which was becoming the premier shrine in the Mt. Nikkō religious ecosystem by the time Mujū Ichien was compiling the tale above. Mt. Nikkō, then, should be understood as a religious center in eastern Japan just as concerned with soteriological justifications for the hunt as Suwa Taisha. Further, we should not assume that the religious complex on Mt. Nikkō simply adopted any soteriological justifications directly from Suwa. It is worth investigating to see similarities and differences between how Mt. Nikkō and Suwa addressed this issue.³⁵

This study consists of a main body of two chapters, as well as an introduction and conclusion, followed by an appended third chapter, consisting of my own annotated translation of the *Nikkō-zan engi* itself. A note must also be made with regard to nomenclature. The religious complex at Mt. Nikkō is elaborate and consists of multiple temples and shrines (some of whose names have changed through their own history).³⁶ For clarity, the complex writ large will be

³⁴ Robert E. Morrell, *Sand and Pebbles: The Tales of Mujū Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 92. While Morrell’s translation renders the above with their modern prefectural names affixed with province, the original renders them with their medieval provincial titles of *Shinshū no kuni no Suwa* 信州国の諏訪 (here using an alternative name for Shinano Province 信濃国) and *Shimotsuke no kuni no Utsunomiya* 下野国の宇都宮. For the original Japanese text of this passage, see Mujū Ichien, *Shasekishū* (Kyoto: Nishimura Kurō’emon, 1897), 35.

³⁵ Whether or not the *Nikkō-zan engi* represents the current legitimation strategies used by hunters in the modern day is neither argued nor taken as fact within this study. Instead, it is limited in its scope to understanding the soteriological paradigms of the Nikkō lineage during the medieval period when this *engi* developed. As such, broad conclusions which assume hunting legitimation strategies remained static and unchanging throughout Japanese history and into the present day will be rigorously avoided. This is instead meant to help us understand a snapshot of Japanese history and how hunters and their religious lineages adapted to anti-hunting rhetoric in the medieval period.

³⁶ The joint existence of temples and shrines in the same religious complex may strike the modern reader as odd, but under the system of *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 (unity of gods and buddhas) temples and shrines formed intimate religious complexes with ambiguous distinctions. It was only under the Meiji policy of *shinbutsu bunri* (see note 26) which saw these ambiguities clarified and territories more clearly demarcated. For a study of how *shinbutsu bunri* affected the country through a case study of Buddhist temples in Shinano Province, see Takami Inoue, “Local Buddhism and Its Transformation in Nineteenth Century Japan: Shinbutsu Bunri in Shinano Province” (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2010).

referred to as Mt. Nikkō. The temple on the tallest peak in the Nikkō mountain range, Mt. Nantai, will be referred to as Rinnōji 輪王寺. The main shrine in Nikkō city will be called Nikkō Futarasan Shrine 日光二荒山神社, and the main shrine in the nearby city of Utsunomiya will be known as the Utsunomiya Futarayama Shrine.

Chapter I

The Historical Background: Hunting and Defilement in Japanese History

The Question of Defilement

To understand attitudes to hunting, we must first ask how Japanese religious institutions and practitioners historically attempted to legitimate controversial activities in the highly syncretic environment of medieval and early modern Japan. Investigations into this question by preeminent scholars of Japanese religion examine this question through the broader conversation surrounding historical Japanese treatments of *kegare* 穢れ (religious pollution). One such scholar, Jacqueline Stone, focuses specifically on Japanese Buddhists' attempts to manage human death pollution at a time when Japanese Buddhism was turning its attention to funerary rites.³⁷ A similar form of pollution also required defense and legitimation within Japan's late medieval and early modern religious landscape: the pollution incurred through the hunting of animals. Whether the death was of a human or of an animal, contact with death was at its very core a polluting activity.

The classification of religious pollution underwent a seismic shift in 1966 with the advent of Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*. While the contents are a case study of taboo and pollution within the Jewish culinary sphere, the broader arguments are still cited for their importance to all pollution discourse.³⁸ Douglas asserts that "dirt is essentially disorder...Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment."³⁹ Further, dirt is defined as "matter out of place... [and] is the by-product of a

³⁷ Jacqueline I. Stone, "Do 'Kami' Ever Overlook Pollution? Honji Suijaku and the Problem of Death Defilement," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 16, (2006-2007): 203–205.

³⁸ Robbie Duschinsky, Simone Schnall, and Daniel Weiss, eds., *Purity and Danger Now: New Perspectives* (Routledge, 2019), 1–3.

³⁹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2–3.

systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements.”⁴⁰ Douglas relates the concepts of dirt and pollution as one and the same, existing as symbolic systems expressed in different details.⁴¹ The importance of this theory, therefore, is in part its ability to apply the concept of purity and impurity across the profane/secular divide.⁴² In other words, the very concept of what is polluting in a religious sense can be tied in to broader secular concerns and their negotiation by a society.

Douglas’s theory is widely accepted within the framework of Japanese religious studies as it relates to *kegare*.⁴³ However, Namihira Emiko argues that the conceptualization of pollution required adaptation into the Japanese context as it was not only displacement, or what Namihira terms “liminality,” which caused pollution, but also refusal or inability to conduct purification rite.⁴⁴ The non-performance of mitigating rites, therefore, becomes a secondary source of social disorder, or pollution, all its own. In other words, since there existed a task which would effectually eliminate the embodiment of the pollution, there were two human acts consisting of the exposure to death and the refusal or inability to perform purification rites which acted as sources of pollution.

The question then becomes one of whether rites actually eliminate pollution. This is the line of questioning taken up by Stone, in her article “Do ‘Kami’ Ever Overlook Pollution? Honji Suijaku and the Problem of Death Defilement.” Stone argues that a literary genre of Buddhist *setsuwa* 説話 (didactic tales) emerged in the medieval period to legitimate the activities of a new

⁴⁰ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 44.

⁴¹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 43.

⁴² Duschinsky, Schnall, and Weiss, eds., *Purity and Danger Now*, 4.

⁴³ Jayne Sun Kim, “A History of Filth: Defilement Discourse in Medieval Japan” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2004), 46.

⁴⁴ Emiko Namihira, “‘Hare,’ ‘Ke’ And ‘Kegare’: The Structure of Japanese Folk Belief” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1977), 246.

class of Buddhist priests who were consistently coming into contact with death pollution by performing funerary rites.⁴⁵ As long as the proper rites were followed, the *setsuwa* suggest, pollution would not be incurred. As stated above, however, contact with human death was not the only pollutant the handling of which needed legitimation through the medieval to early modern periods; animal death was also a potent source of pollution which theoretically required purification.

Jayne Sun Kim outlines the historical relationship between the outcast communities of the *eta* 穢多 (“greatly defiled”), *hinin* 非人 (“non-persons”), and *kawaramono* 河原者 (“riverbank dwellers”), on the one hand, and animal slaughter and religious pollution, on the other, in her 2004 thesis “A History of Filth: Defilement Discourse in Medieval Japan.” Mirroring Namihira in certain respects, Kim takes exception to the broadly uncritical acceptance by Japanese academia of Douglas’s theories regarding pollution, arguing that defilement in a Japanese context centered on death, childbirth, blood, and illness rather than on taxonomic ambivalence.⁴⁶ Further, Kim asserts that the idea of what constituted defilement was consistently negotiated throughout society.⁴⁷ Importantly, this negotiation led to significant qualitative changes in the status of women, due to beliefs on the polluting qualities of menstruation and childbirth, and the outcast classes, due to their association with disease such as leprosy or the polluting nature of their occupations, in medieval Japan.⁴⁸ Ongoing defilement discourse helped shape the boundaries of these groups as certain activities associated with animal slaughter, such as leatherworking, became associated with the polluted and marginalized.⁴⁹ In this discourse,

⁴⁵ Stone, “Do ‘Kami’ Ever Overlook Pollution? Honji Suijaku and the Problem of Death Defilement,” 226.

⁴⁶ Kim, “A History of Filth,” 46.

⁴⁷ Kim, “A History of Filth,” 259.

⁴⁸ Kim, “A History of Filth,” 264.

⁴⁹ Kim, “A History of Filth,” 265.

those who came into frequent contact with pollutants seem to have lost the ability to be purified within the conceptualizations of the lay population, to the point where they instead actively embodied said pollution. However, the outcast communities were not the only groups in medieval and early modern Japan who engaged in killing animals. Another group existed which was intimately familiar with the act of taking animal life, the hunter, who as we shall see sought out ways to legitimate an increasingly controversial practice of taking life.

The Question of Meat

Though the modern discourse denying the prevalence of historical meat consumption discussed in the introduction to this paper is incorrect, there were still challenges to the hunting activities which supplied this meat throughout Japanese history. The first anti-hunting and anti-meat edict in Japanese history dates to 675, when Emperor Tenmu announced a ban on meat.⁵⁰ While much academic literature seeks to classify this edict as a Buddhist attempt to excise hunting and the meat-eating which results, the edict itself only banned particular hunting activities, such as the digging of boar trapping pits. Nowhere in the edict is Buddhism mentioned.⁵¹ Indeed, many edicts were issued during the Nara period which curtailed hunting for explicit durations in attempts to mitigate disasters such as floods and famine.⁵² These measures appear to be based not on Buddhist rationales, but instead on the notion that abstinence from pleasure or indulgence would placate the particular *kami* 神 (god) responsible for those natural disasters.⁵³ A strictly Buddhist law did appear in the *Yōrō ritsuryō* 養老律令 (Yōrō Code) of 757,

⁵⁰ Krämer, “Not Befitting Our Divine Country,” 36; Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 72–73.

⁵¹ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 72–73.

⁵² Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 73–75.

⁵³ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 76.

but it was aimed exclusively at preventing meat eating among the Buddhist clergy.⁵⁴ It was not until the medieval period that broad, religiously defined anti-hunting measures appeared.

Governmental and religious institutions in the Kamakura period moved to restrict—and in some cases, even to criminalize—hunting under a dual framework based on a conservative interpretation of Buddhist doctrine surrounding hunting and the taking of animal lives and the inclusion of meat as a form of *kegare*.⁵⁵ The clearest indication of a move against hunting was the push by the Shingon-Ritsu monk Eizon/Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290) to establish *sesshō kindan* 殺生禁断 (restrictions on the taking of life) zones on the properties of his followers wherein hunting was forbidden; it is estimated that he established over one thousand such *sesshō kindan* zones by the time he died in 1290. Indeed, Grumbach holds Eizon up as the arch-conservative position in opposition to hunting.⁵⁶ In one of the more well-known acts of his career, Eizon was appointed to organize the repair of the Uji Bridge 宇治橋. He demanded that the fishermen of the Uji River 宇治川 give up their fishing rights and go so far as to bury their tackle in the riverbed. He then encouraged the now jobless fishermen to take up tea cultivation as a more appropriate profession.⁵⁷ Fundamentally, Eizon wanted the eradication of life-taking professions within Japan.

Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries a popular discourse developed which saw meat eating as a polluting act, and the requisite abstention periods, or timeframes within which one could not partake of meat, which had to be observed before participating at shrine events grew increasingly longer.⁵⁸ By the early thirteenth century at Iwashimizu Hachimangu shrine, the

⁵⁴ Ambros, “Partaking of Life,” 291.

⁵⁵ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 81, 142–143.

⁵⁶ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 108.

⁵⁷ Kenji Matsuo, “The Life of Eizon,” trans. Ugo Dessì, *The Eastern Buddhist* 39, no. 2 (2008): 112.

⁵⁸ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 80.

abstention period required for those who consumed deer meat had grown to one hundred days, more than three times the abstention period for those exposed to a human death.⁵⁹ As time progressed, then, a pattern emerged wherein hunting was vilified out of both Buddhist concerns for the sanctity of life and shrine concerns with *kegare*.

This move against the act of hunting had a tangible impact on hunters by the later medieval period, not only as a hindrance to their way of life, but also as a concrete form of marginalization. Scholars like Wakita Haruko have argued that by the late medieval period hunters should be regarded as belonging to the *kawaramono* or *eta* classes of outcast groups. Others, including Niunoya Tetsuichi, have instead posited hunters' inclusion within a broad and nebulous category of *hinin*.⁶⁰ While scholars disagree over the exact designations applied to hunters by the late medieval and early Edo period, there is a general agreement that they fell within the broader conceptualization of outcast groups.⁶¹ Krämer is right to note the ahistoricity of a fundamentally vegetarian pre-modern and early modern Japan, yet there was still a growing association between meat eating, butchering, and hunting with the outcast communities outlined previously.

In fact, by the early eighteenth century, when the philosopher Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) wrote his travel diary, he denounced outcasts as *toke* とけ (butchers) to explain their inferior status.⁶² We see then that certain outcast communities were actively equated with the slaughter of animals, an act also conspicuously committed by hunters, by the beginning of the mid-Edo

⁵⁹ Jayne Sun Kim, “A History of Filth,” 134.

⁶⁰ Kim, “A History of Filth,” 204.

⁶¹ Kim, “A History of Filt,” 204.

⁶² Thomas Keirstead, “Outcasts before the Law: Pollution and Purification in Medieval Japan,” in *Currents in Medieval Japanese History*, ed. Gordon Mark Berger (Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2009), 267–269. No kanji is provided for the word *toke* here translated as butcher, but a likely possibility is that it is the nominalized form of the verb *toku* 解く (to release) which is used in the phrase *inochi o toku* 命を解く (literally “to release life,” used as a euphemism for butchering animals).

period. It is important to mention, however, that the inclusion of hunters into conceptualized outcast groups during the late medieval period has an altogether different meaning than their inclusion in the following, early modern period. Institutionalized discrimination against outcast communities is a specific hallmark of Japan's early modern period and the codification of outcast status by the Tokugawa *bakufu*.⁶³ While some practices and traditions regarding outcast groups might have existed before the Edo period, the turn towards the intense discrimination of the Edo period cannot be read back onto the earlier medieval period.⁶⁴

This does not mean that negative societal attitudes toward hunters did not exist, merely that, even if hunters were to some degree subsumed into the medieval category of *kawaramono* or the early modern category of *eta*, the institutionalized discrimination against them cannot be easily projected beyond the confines of the Edo period. We do know, however, that within Buddhist discourse the figure of the hunter featured prominently as a stereotypical *akunin* 悪人 (evil person) during the late medieval period.⁶⁵

Non-Suwa Hunters and their Response

Suwa-aligned hunters were not the only hunting society within Japan in the medieval and early modern periods. A readily available and informative example lies just to their north in the Tōhoku region of northeastern Japan. These are the *matagi* マタギ, a socio-cultural minority group which is perhaps best thought of as a loosely defined occupational guild, primarily active in the uplands generally, and the harsh *okuyama* 奥山 (deep mountains) environment specifically. The *matagi* hunt throughout the *bunarin* ブナ林 (beech forests) that cover the mountains of

⁶³ Keirstead, "Outcasts before the Law," 270–271.

⁶⁴ Keirstead, "Outcasts before the Law," 272.

⁶⁵ Kim, "A History of Filth," 254.

northeastern Japan and historically participate in a wide range of subsistence activities, including swidden agriculture, charcoal making, and, most famously, hunting.⁶⁶ The animals they hunt vary both geographically and temporally, but have included weasels, badgers, rabbits, the Japanese deer, the Japanese serow, and pheasant.⁶⁷ Their most famous prey, however, is the Asian black bear, also known as the *tsukinowaguma* 月の輪熊 (literally meaning “moon disc bear,” and here indicating the Japanese black bear: *Ursus thibetanus japonicus*), for the crescent moon-shaped patch of fur on its chest.⁶⁸ Importantly for this study, the *matagi* are aligned not with the hunters in the *Suwa ha* 諏訪派 (Suwa Guild) affiliated with Suwa Taisha, but instead with either the *Kōya ha* 高野派 (Kōya guild), affiliated with the religious center founded by Kūkai (774–835) on Mt. Kōya, or more popularly, the *Nikkō ha* 日光派 (Nikkō guild), affiliated with the religious center on Mt. Nikkō discussed herein.⁶⁹

What makes a *matagi* hunter distinct from other categories of hunters is somewhat murky. In his *Shuryō denshō* 狩獵伝承 (*Hunting Traditions*), Chiba Tokuji focuses his descriptions of the *matagi* on the group nature and ritualization of their bear hunts.⁷⁰ Scott Schnell, however,

⁶⁶ Scott Schnell, “Kuma Matsuri,” *Journal of Religion in Japan* 9, no. 1–3 (2020): 172.

⁶⁷ *Yama to kurashi yamadachi ushinawareyuku kari no shūzoku*, (Tōno, Japan: Tōno shiritsu hakubutsukan, 1998), 73–77.

⁶⁸ Catherine Knight, “The Moon Bear as a Symbol of Yama: Its Significance in the Folklore of Upland Hunting in Japan,” *Asian Ethnology* 67, no. 1 (2008): 81–82.

⁶⁹ Kūkai 空海, posthumously known as Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, was the founder of the Shingon lineage of Japanese Buddhism. Having traveled to China in 804 CE, he introduced esoteric Buddhism into the Japanese mainstream upon his return in 806 CE. In 816 CE he founded the temple on Mt. Kōya 高野山, and in 823 CE his lineage was further granted Tō-ji 東寺, a temple near Kyoto. For more information on his life and exploits, see Yūsen Kashiwahara and Kōyū Sonoda, eds., *Shapers of Japanese Buddhism*, trans. Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo, Japan: Kōsei Publishing Co., 2004), 39–51. A note on the use of the term guild is also necessary: The original Japanese *ha* 派 can be translated variously into English as faction, group, lineage, and school among many other potential options. Each was considered, but ultimately these terms often fail to convey that there is no overarching structure above the *ha* which they all belong to, or they ignore either the occupational or religious nature of hunting within these groups. Accepting no translation is perfect, the term guild is used above in its loosest sense as a voluntary association of people for a religious, social, or commercial purpose rather than the specific medieval European meaning indicating an association of merchants or craftsmen.

⁷⁰ Chiba Tokuji, *Shuryō Denshō* (Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 1975), 82–85.

sees the defining feature of the *matagi* as “their abiding veneration of the *Yama no kami*” 山の神 (mountain god).⁷¹ The worship of the Yama-no-kami as central to the *matagi* identity is supported in part by attestations like that of Ono Kantarō (n.d.), a *matagi* guild member from Yuri District 由利郡 in Akita Prefecture 秋田県 (dissolved in 2005 and now part of Yurihonjō City 由利本荘市 and Nikaho City にかほ市), whom Mutō Tetsujō (1896–1956), a folklorist in the lineage of Yanagita Kunio, includes in his collection of *matagi* tales called *Matagi kikigaki* (*matagi* interviews). Ono describes a ritual called the *sunō iwai* スノ祝い (*sunō* offering); *sunō* is part of the *yamakotoba* 山言葉 (mountain words), a special argot used by *matagi*, and indicates a hut which the *matagi* use while in the mountains.⁷² The *sunō iwai* consists of offering the Yama-no-kami roasted beans and seaweed on the morning of the hunt, and of chanting the following ritual phrase in *yamakotoba*, “*Tautai, Tautai, Yama-no-kami,*” while praying for the success of the day’s hunt and declaring which mountain they will hunt on.⁷³ Alongside such rituals, this argot highlights the importance of the Yama-no-kami, and by extension mountain worship, to their identity as a hunting guild.

These *matagi* are understudied within Anglophone scholarship.⁷⁴ Due to this lack of scholarship, studies of the paradigms they use to justify their hunting are sparse. Carmen Blacker also takes up the question of the *matagi*’s veneration of the Yama-no-kami and importantly gives a brief history of the *matagi*, in which she describes the foundation stories by which they claimed

⁷¹ Schnell, “Kuma Matsuri,” 174.

⁷² Tetsujō Mutō, *Matagi kikigaki: sono ryōshi minzoku to kai’i tan* (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2017), 132–133.

⁷³ Mutō, *Matagi kikigaki*, 133.

⁷⁴ While a full investigation into the question of why the *matagi* have remained un- or under-studied within Anglophone scholarship is beyond the scope of this study, many elements which contribute to their exclusion from academic inquiry can be briefly outlined. As discussed herein, the broader topic of hunting and meat eating in Japan is understudied. Further, the *matagi* as currently understood inhabit a region which was consistently the northern marches of the Japanese polity throughout its history, and consequently appears to attract less interest than the heartland in central Honshū.

the right to hunt across Japan's mountains.⁷⁵ However, she does not expand on the religious impetus or significance behind these documents. Further, Blacker remarks that *matagi* rarely intermarried with the families inhabiting the agricultural villages below the mountains, and attributed this to the belief that agriculturalists "held [the *matagi*] in abhorrence because they killed and ate four-footed beasts."⁷⁶ Thus, she gives credence to why the *matagi* would need to justify their hunting in an antagonistic environment and suggests a link between religious permission structures to hunt and foundational documents claiming a right to hunt, but this topic of discrimination is never fully explored within either Blacker's articles or broader Anglophone scholarship.

Scott Schnell's article, "Kuma Matsuri: Bear Hunters as Intermediaries between Humans and Nature," is both the longest and most in-depth account of the *matagi* in English to date. Though Schnell is interested in the religious aspects of *matagi* society and the hunt, he focuses almost exclusively on the role of the Yama-no-kami in *matagi* permission structures and the conceptual right to hunt.⁷⁷ This is understandable as the goal of Schnell's article is to understand the role of *matagi* religious beliefs as they relate to Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), or a culturally transmitted body of knowledge on the relationship between humans and their environment.⁷⁸ However, the above also means the history of the links between modern *matagi*, premodern hunting guilds, and the religious institutions which interacted with hunters remains a largely unexplored facet of Anglophone scholarship on Japan.

⁷⁵ Carmen Blacker, "The Mistress of Animals in Japan: The Yamanokami," in *The Concept of the Goddess*, eds. Sandra Billington and Miranda Green (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1996), 180.

⁷⁶ Blacker, "The Mistress of Animals in Japan," 179.

⁷⁷ Schnell, "Kuma Matsuri," 174–186.

⁷⁸ Schnell, "Kuma Matsuri," 173. For more information on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and its origin and uses, see Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management* (Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis, 1999).

A note of caution regarding these links is first necessary. No clear history tracing the lineages of these various hunting guilds back to the medieval or classical periods has been found by this author. Indeed, Catherine Knight states the category of *matagi* itself only goes back as far as the sixteenth century.⁷⁹ Therefore, no unequivocal statement can be made naming the Nikkō *matagi* outlined by Schnell as part of a direct and unbroken lineage going back to hunters affiliated with Mt. Nikkō in the classical or medieval periods. However, we should not then declare there is no connection between the two groups as both premodern and early modern hunters in northern Japan were affiliating with Mt. Nikkō to justify their activities.

Links can be teased out by piecing together the information available. It is noteworthy that the justification paradigms used by the *matagi* are remarkably similar to those used by earlier hunting societies. Like the hunters of Suwa Taisha, the *matagi* perform a ritual incantation, here called a *kebokai* ケボカイ, over the body of the animal.⁸⁰ However, while the *Suwa no mon* is couched in Buddhist soteriological language, the *kebokai* chant is conceptualized as a prayer offering to the Yama-no-kami. Yet, even here a seemingly solitary Buddhist phrase “*abira unken sowaka*” is included.⁸¹ The exact meaning of this phrase is uncertain, but the final word, *sowaka* 蘇婆訶 or 薩婆訶, is the Japanese translation of the Sanskrit word *svāhā*, which is used to indicate the end of a mantra.⁸² If this phrase is read as a holdover from earlier, more explicitly Buddhist, ceremonies performed by hunters in the area affiliated with Mt. Nikkō, it suggests

⁷⁹ Catherine Knight, “The Moon Bear as a Symbol of Yama,” 81–83.

⁸⁰ Schnell, “Kuma Matsuri,” 183–185.

⁸¹ Schnell, “Kuma Matsuri,” 184; Schnell includes a note attributing the inclusion of this phrase to nebulously defined folk religious practices and *yamabushi* (mountain ascetics); however, he provides no translation into English or interpretation of its meaning.

⁸² Mantra here means a spell, often in Sanskrit, consisting of one or more syllables which may or may not have semantic meaning, but which are thought to be in some way efficacious. See Buswell and Lopez, “mantra,” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 529.

earlier iterations of *matagi* guilds or their forebears had close enough links to Buddhist institutions that they were provided with mantric formulas similar to those used at Suwa Taisha.

Further, the *matagi* record their foundations in origin scrolls which vary depending on the guild or even sub-guild consulted. Some of these scrolls present stories akin to the soteriological framework of the *Suwa no mon*. For instance, the *Yamadachi yurai no koto* 山立由来之事 (The Hunters' Origins), also called the *Yamadachi konpon hiken* 山立根本秘券 (The Hunters' Secret Foundational Certificate) depicts stories of the foundation of the Kōya *matagi* guild after three hunters lent aid to Kūkai in establishing a temple on Mt. Kōya, in return for which he taught an *indō* 引導 (a guiding phrase used to help the dead journey to the next life) intended to guide the deceased to their future rebirth), to repeat over the corpses of animals they hunt.⁸³ This text ends with a warning to the hunters that those who kill without reciting this prayer will be no different than *eta*.⁸⁴

Other scrolls, however, depict completely different rationales by which the *matagi* are legitimately allowed to hunt; some even give them monopoly rights over hunting. For example, the *Yamadachi konpon no maki* 山立根本之巻 (Hunter's Foundational Scroll) outlines a story in which the originating ancestor of the Nikkō *matagi*, named Banji Banzaburō 磐次磐三郎, fights on behalf of Nikkō Gongen 日光権現, the deity of Mt. Nikkō, against another god fighting in the form of a snake called Akagi Myōjin 赤城明神.⁸⁵ With Nikkō Gongen's victory, Banji Banzaburō and his descendants win the right to hunt in the mountain forests.⁸⁶ Yet another scroll

⁸³ Schnell, "Kuma Matsuri," 176. Translations of scroll titles his.

⁸⁴ Grumbach, "Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan," 105.

⁸⁵ Schnell, "Kuma Matsuri," 175. The title *gongen* is more explicitly Buddhist in origin and translates to manifestation or avatar. It indicates the relevant god is the manifestation form of a specific buddha or bodhisattva under the *honji suijaku* paradigm popular in medieval Japan. The term *myōjin* here is a respectful title for a god. Cf. *daimyōjin* in note 119.

⁸⁶ Schnell, "Kuma Matsuri," 175.

tells the story of two brothers, named Banji and Banzaburō, who happen upon the Yama-no-kami while she is giving birth. While Banji flees in fear of *kegare* originating from the act of birth, Banzaburō delivers the *kami*'s baby and in return wins the right to hunt in the mountains over which she reigns.⁸⁷ Though these origin stories differ, they all seek to legitimate a right to hunt and avoid punishments, religious or secular, which hunting might invoke.

The key to understanding these *matagi* hunting permission structures outlined above, and those of all non-Suwa affiliated hunters in Japan, lies in recognizing the division of hunting legitimization into various different lineages centered on specific religious power centers. Within the examples above, we see that the hunters aligned with Mt. Kōya use a religious technology similar to those hunters aligned with the Suwa faith; namely, they recite an *indō* for the animal, thus justifying their hunting soteriologically. The *matagi* affiliated with Nikkō rely not only on prayers invoked during the hunt itself, but also on the recorded documents above which outline their rights and justify the hunt. Indeed, the fact that the scrolls themselves act as agents of legitimization is important to this study.

As we shall see, the works noted above work in much the same way as the *Nikkō-zan engi*. Beyond entrusting the reader with a religious technology which they will then use to act as agents of the deity as done at Suwa, the work itself acts as an agent of legitimization and indeed salvation. These documents are themselves a distinct and self-contained religious technology based around soteriological paradigms which hunting guilds can utilize to justify the hunt. This is especially evident within the foundational document of the religious center from which the Nikkō lineage derives its name: Mt. Nikkō.

⁸⁷ Schnell, "Kuma Matsuri," 176.

Chapter II

The Nikkō-zan engi 日光山縁起 (The Origins of Mt. Nikkō)

What is an *Engi*?

To understand the importance of the *Nikkō-zan engi*, it is necessary to first outline the form and functions of *engi* as a Japanese literary style. At their most fundamental level, *engi* outline the “origins, which is to say the invention, of sacred sites.”⁸⁸ In their introduction to a special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* focused on the study of *engi*, Heather Blair and Kawasaki Tsuyoshi note the study of *engi* has not always been approached with an open mind by the academy as they were considered merely corrupted pseudo-histories aimed at the glorification of the issuing institution.⁸⁹ However, these attitudes are rapidly changing as *engi* are reconsidered in the twenty-first century as targets of study similar to premodern Japan’s *setsuwa* and *honjimonō* 本地物 (deity origin stories).⁹⁰

This new focus on the value of studying *engi* is readily apparent when we consider two books published only seven years apart: *Shaji engi no kenkyū* 社寺縁起の研究 (A Study on the origin accounts of Shinto Shrines and Buddhist Temples), published in 1998, and *Jisha engi no bunka gaku* 寺社縁起の文化学 (Cultural Studies of the Origin Accounts of Buddhist Temples and Shinto shrines), published in 2005. *Shaji engi no kenkyū* mirrors many works in the folkloristics vein, which gather up primary texts and append a relatively small analytical section at the end. In this case, the work achieves no small feat by compiling together 279 *engi* over

⁸⁸ Tsuyoshi Kawasaki, “The Invention and Reception of the Mino’odera *engi*,” trans. Carina Roth, in “Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” eds. Heather Blair and Kawasaki Tsuyoshi, special issue, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (Nanzan University) 42, no. 1 (2015): 134.

⁸⁹ Heather Blair and Kawasaki Tsuyoshi, “Editor’s Introduction: Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” in “Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” eds. Heather Blair and Kawasaki Tsuyoshi, special issue, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (Nanzan University) 42, no. 1 (2015), 2–3.

⁹⁰ Blair and Kawasaki, “Editor’s Introduction: Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” 3.

1127 pages. Yet, this unannotated compendium also takes up the vast majority of the book itself, with the author's two appended analytical papers consisting of only 30 pages combined.⁹¹ Less than 3 percent of the book is analytical. This is not to downplay the importance of this book as a published repository for often difficult to find materials, but it is more akin to an anthology than an academic treatise.

This is starkly contrasted with *Jisha engi no bunka gaku*, whose second authorial preface is entitled “*Atarashii engi kenkyū ni mukete* 新しい縁起研究に向けて (Towards a New *Engi* Studies).” This edited volume eschews the above approach in favor of dedicated treatments of *engi* as a category often accompanied by a specific case study. It is divided into sections by topics, including *jisha engi no seisei to tenkai* 寺社縁起の生成と展開 (the generation and development of temple and shrine *engi*) and *josei bunkaken to engi* 女性文化圏と縁起 (women's cultural sphere and *engi*), as well as articles such as “*Soshiki to engi—Heian · Kamakura-ki no Shingon mikkyō ni okeru* 〈engi〉 gensetsu 組織と縁起 —平安・鎌倉期の真言密教における〈縁起〉言説 (Organization and Engi—Remarks on ‘Engi’ in Shingon Esoteric Buddhism in the Heian and Kamakura Periods),” and “*Minkan miko no gunzō zaichi no naka no engi katari* 民間巫女の群像—在地のなかの縁起語り (A Group Portrait of Folk Shrine Maidens—A recital of Local *Engi*).”⁹² These academic treatments of the subject are meant to investigate *engi* as a form all its own, much like Blair and Kawasaki do in the special edition cited above.

Blair and Kawasaki also bring to attention the power *engi* held in premodern Japan as arbiters of authority and legitimation. Temple and shrine complexes were not historically static

⁹¹ Kazuo Yanase, *Shaji engi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1998), 1139–1169.

⁹² Kunihiko Tsutsumi and Kazuo Tokuda, eds., *Jisha engi no bunkagaku* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2005), 4–6, 41–54, 249–268.

and harmonious institutions, but instead were active sites of conflict between various interest groups, such as competing priestly lineages.⁹³ In such disputes, ownership of *engi* was sometimes used to legitimate power claims, such as when the *yamabushi* 山伏 (itinerant Buddhist monk) Sōzaichō Gyōshun 惣在庁行俊 (fl. eleventh century) utilized his possession of the *Ōmine engi* 大峯縁起 (Origin Account of Ōmine) in a dispute with the temple Kōfukuji 興福寺 over a *shōen* 莊園 (estate in premodern Japan).⁹⁴ These *engi* were also often actively entertaining, or they functioned in explicitly didactic modes similar to *setsuwa*.⁹⁵ To dismiss *engi* as simple histories corrupted by mythology discounts the multifaceted purposes and meanings, such as tools for education and amusement as well as the settlement of disputes, ascribed to them by the people of premodern Japan who wrote and read them.

As a delineated genre of writing, *engi* themselves have conventional standards which reappear across different regions and time periods. D. Max Moerman notes that these include such basic plot elements as “a wandering holy man, a strange encounter, a divine revelation, the construction of an image and image hall, [or] even the conversion of the local deity as temple guardian.”⁹⁶ Indeed, Moerman contends that while every *engi* asserts its own uniqueness, and importantly the uniqueness of the religious site it is describing, they all draw on the same tropes.⁹⁷

It should be noted, though, that many of these tropes are not constrained to the *engi* genre, and can be found across contemporary Japanese literary and artistic works. For instance, in her

⁹³ Blair and Kawasaki, “Editor’s Introduction: Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” 11.

⁹⁴ Blair and Kawasaki, “Editor’s Introduction: Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” 6.

⁹⁵ Blair and Kawasaki, “Editor’s Introduction: Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” 13.

⁹⁶ D. Max Moerman, “The Buddha and the Bathwater: Defilement and Enlightenment in the Onsenji Engi,” in “Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” eds. Heather Blair and Kawasaki Tsuyoshi, special issue, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (Nanzan University) 42, no. 1 (2015): 75.

⁹⁷ Moerman, “The Buddha and the Bathwater,” 75.

analysis of the Ten Kings of Hell within the *Takamurayama Chikurinji engi emaki* 篁山竹林寺縁起絵巻 (Illustrated Legend of the Temple Chikurinji at Mount Takamura), Wakabayashi Haruko investigates how the imagery of the Court of Enma—the Japanese name for the Buddhist deity King Yāma, who rules over the various hells—is part of a broader ecosystem of literary and artistic depictions and conventions rather than an invention of this *engi* itself.⁹⁸ Indeed, the *Takamurayama Chikurinji engi emaki* specifically draws on a long lineage of hell depictions stretching back to *setsuwa* from the Heian period.

We should not, therefore, see *engi* as a static genre whose tropes are removed from Japanese cultural developments and literary trends. Rather, as Moerman argues, *engi* should be considered a “composite and fluid genre, one in which multiple narratives and diverse interests are sutured together to formulate a single and singular history.” As we shall see in the *Nikkō-zan engi* itself, this “composite and fluid” nature can even extend into the changes singular *engi* undergo in their own development through consistent adaptation and recreation across time and space.

Engi as Soteriological Objects

Beyond form, there is also the question of intended purpose. A primary goal of *engi* is to outline and reinforce the exceptionality of a singular sacred site through a historical account of its founding.⁹⁹ However, there is an important secondary soteriological goal, which Moerman

⁹⁸ Haruko Wakabayashi, “Officials of the Afterworld: Ono No Takamura and the Ten Kings of Hell in the Chikurinji Engi Illustrated Scrolls,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture) 36, no. 2 (2009): 327. Translation of *engi* title hers. For an alternative explanation of the term *engi*’s origin as relating to the Sanskrit *nidāna* (one of the 12 classical forms of Buddhist discourse) see Ryūichi Abé, “Revisiting the Dragon Princess: Her Role in Medieval Engi Stories and Their Implications in Reading the Lotus Sutra,” in “Engi: Forging Accounts of Sacred Origins,” eds. Heather Blair and Kawasaki Tsuyoshi, special issue, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (Nanzan University) 42, no. 1 (2015).

⁹⁹ Moerman, “The Buddha and the Bathwater,” 74.

teases out through his analysis of the *Onsenji engi* 温泉寺縁起 (Origin account of the Temple Onsenji). One explanation for the creation of the term *engi* lies in Buddhist discourse and has a specific meaning as the Japanese translation of the Sanskrit term *pratītyasaṃutpāda*.¹⁰⁰ Often translated into English as “dependent origination,” *pratītyasaṃutpāda* is one of the most fundamental Buddhist teachings, centered on the conditionality of existence and explained as a series of causation in the form of the *nidāna* (twelvefold chain). This consists of *avidyā* (ignorance), *saṃskāra* (predispositions), *vijñāna* (consciousness), *nāmarūpa* (name and form), *āyatana* (the six senses), *sparsā* (sensory contact), *vedanā* (sensation), *trṣṇā* (thirst), *upādāna* (grasping), *bhava* (existence), *jāti* (birth and rebirth), and *jarāmaraṇa* (death)—along with *jarāmaraṇa*’s associated *śoka* (sorrow)—*parideva* (lamentation), *duḥkha* (pain), *daurmanasya* (grief), and *upāyāsa* (despair).¹⁰¹ Moerman argues that *jisha engi* return to this etymological root by “translating soteriological formulae into narrative texts and images that articulate the origins and overcoming of human suffering.”¹⁰²

Even if we do not accept the etymological argument behind Moerman’s assertion about why we can understand *engi* as potential repositories for salvific discourse, he proves that they can have soteriological importance.¹⁰³ As we shall soon see, while Moerman strictly limits his argument to discussions of how pollution and ablution narratively demonstrate the process of human suffering’s rise and cessation, this concept can be expanded to other *engi*, such as the

¹⁰⁰ Moerman, “The Buddha and the Bathwater,” 74.

¹⁰¹ Buswell and Lopez, “*pratītyasaṃutpāda*,” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 669–670.

¹⁰² Moerman, “The Buddha and the Bathwater,” 74.

¹⁰³ This discourse on *engi* as soteriological tools is the portion of Moerman’s argument important for this study. This does not constitute agreement with Moerman’s answer as to why these *engi* are used for a salvific purpose. Indeed, this paper argues that *engi* held the potential to act as repositories of salvific discourse in a broader capacity than Moerman originally argues. When Moerman’s findings on ablutionary salvation are combined with the findings herein regarding the salvation of hunters and hunted animals, a view wherein *engi* are even be thought of as sites of negotiation and contestation in medieval Japanese salvific discourses begins to take shape.

Nikkō-zan engi itself, which rely heavily on karmic cause and effect and provide their audience with soteriological technologies aimed at the discontinuation of non-desirable karmic links. This educational goal of bringing karmic realities to the reader's attention and offering ways to avoid negative karmic effects further illustrates the secondary salvific goals outlined by Moerman. *Engi*, therefore, can and should be seen as soteriological didactic outlets important to the concept of salvation within medieval Japan.

The *Nikkō-zan engi*

The Study of the *Nikkō-zan engi*

The *Nikkō-zan engi*, or more appropriately the class of *engi* which claim to relate the foundation of Mt. Nikkō, first came to scholarly attention with its inclusion in Yanagita Kunio's monograph *Kami o tasuketa hanashi* 神を助けた話 (Stories of Helping the Gods).¹⁰⁴ Yanagita himself credits his own inclusion of the tale to its discussion in the early works of the famous neo-Confucian scholar Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657), while admitting that Hayashi's version is much abridged.¹⁰⁵ Still, Yanagita's summary and analysis of the *engi* extends for a mere eight pages, of which fully half are devoted to discussing the role of Utsunomiya, the clan and the shrine, to the development and history of Mt. Nikkō.¹⁰⁶ Even with such a brief entry, his work still sparked continued interest and study, and maintains a position of importance among academics. Since Yanagita Kunio's publishing of the monograph above, research concerning the *Nikkō-zan engi* has continued, with numerous articles written by such folklorists as Hosoya

¹⁰⁴ Tōsaku Hosoya, "Futarasan Jinja Engi," *Kokugakuin daigaku Tochigi tankidaigaku Nihon bunka kenkyū* 15 (1977): 37.

¹⁰⁵ Kunio Yanagita, *Kami o tasuketa hanashi* (Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha, 1949), 13–15.

¹⁰⁶ Yanagita, *Kami o Tasuketa Hanashi*, 18–21.

Tōsaku and Marutani Shinobu. The work is now well known enough that the National Center Test for University Admissions 大学入試センター試験 even included a passage from it on their 2005 test.¹⁰⁷

The Plot of the *Nikkō-zan engi* and its sectional divisions

The *Nikkō-zan engi* consists of a *jōkan* 上巻 (upper scroll) and *gekan* 下巻 (lower scroll). These collectively narrate the founding, history, and religious superiority of the sacred site at Mt. Nikkō and its gods. These *jōkan* and *gekan* can be further collectively divided into five distinct sections, as outlined by Marutani Shinobu: (1) “About Mt. Nikkō,” (2) “About Utsunomiya,” (3) “The tale of the Middle Captain Ariu’s wandering in a foreign country,” (4) “The tale of the Middle Captain Ariu's previous life and resurrection,” and (5) “The tale of Ono Sarumaru's divine battle.”¹⁰⁸ The first two relate the mythical origin stories of the sacred site at Mt. Nikkō and the superiority of the Utsunomiya Shrine, while the latter three consist of a narrative tale illuminating how the Nikkō gods originated and their relative placements in a divine hierarchy, as well as their original Buddhist forms.¹⁰⁹ Within the version of the *engi* translated herein, sections 1 and 3 make up the *jōkan*, while sections 2, 4 and 5 constitute the *gekan*. These sections are largely consecutive, though the section “About Utsunomiya” largely falls at the end of the text, rather than between “About Mt. Nikkō” and “The tale of the Middle Captain Ariu’s wandering in a foreign country.”

¹⁰⁷ Though it should be humorously noted that a major reason its inclusion was brought to the author’s attention is that the National Center Test for University Admissions had to apologize for the ambiguity of the question involved and the difficulty of interpreting the text correctly. See “Sentā shiken kokugo de shutsudai misu ka yobikō ga kōkai shitsumon-jō” (Asahishinbun Dejitaru: Asahishinbunsha no Nyūsusaito, January 16, 2006), <https://www.asahi.com/edu/nyushi/TKY200501160136.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Shinobu Marutani, “Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu,” *Bungakushi kenkyū* (Ōsaka Shiritsu Daigaku Kokugo Kokubungaku Kenkyūshitsu) 27 (1986): 23.

¹⁰⁹ Marutani, “Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu,” 23-24.

The *jōkan* begins with an account of the world's formation as outlined within the introduction of the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (The Chronicles of Japan). It then narrates a historical account of the founding of Mt. Nikkō and subsequent sectarian divisions which occurred in its history. As Marutani has discussed at length, the actual sectarian history laid out within the *Nikkō-zan engi* and its preceding iterations can be corroborated through other contemporary historical documents. The sacred site at Mt. Nikkō is traditionally believed to have been founded by the monk Shōdō Shōnin 聖道上人 (735–817) in the late Nara period, and this is attested to in the *Nikkō-zan takio konryū sōsō nikki* 日光山滝尾建立草創日記 (Diary of the beginnings of the erection of Takio Shrine in Mt. Nikkō).¹¹⁰ The *engi* further notes how Kūkai later visited Mt. Nikkō and an active mountain ascetic practice associated with Shingon Buddhism flourished there; this is again corroborated by the same document.¹¹¹ The final portion of this sectarian history is the at least partial conversion by the monk Ennin of the Shōdō-Kūkai descended Shingon 真言 lineage into a Tendai 天台 lineage. This is corroborated by the *Ennin wajō nyūtōzan ki* 円仁和尚入当山記 (Record of the Abbot En'nin's Assumption of the Abbacy).¹¹² The *jōkan* then accounts for the sacred site of Mt. Nikkō, and specifically the god of Mt. Nantai, which it declares to have existed on the mountain for over 2080 years dating back to the reign of the mythological earth deity Ugayafukiaezu-no-mikoto 鸕鷀草葺不合尊, before ruminating on the Buddhist origins of the Nikkō god.

The text turns to its largest narrative portion: the story of the life of the *chūjō* 中将 (middle captain; a court rank in the imperial guard) Ariu, often referred to simply by his title, and

¹¹⁰ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 21.

¹¹¹ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 21–22.

¹¹² Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 21. The term *wajō* above can also be pronounced *kashō* in the Tendai lineage and *oshō* in the Zen lineage. The pronunciation of the title 「円仁和尚入当山記」 is unclear; the pronunciation included herein is the author's best guess.

his wandering through the northern country. It begins by asserting the talents and respectable qualities of the Middle Captain and how he is even adored by the emperor himself. The tale then turns to the flaw of his character, his love of hunting in the form of hawking, which is attributed to some karma from one of his past lives. This karmically derived love of hunting causes him to neglect attending to the emperor and his duties at court in favor of consistently going on hawking outings and thus incur a *tsumi* つみ (meaning “sin” or “crime”).

The Middle Captain then sets off in exile, wandering north from the capital to Shimotsuke Province 下野国, where he meets the *chōja* 長者 (a title used for wealthy land owners in premodern Japan) Asahi and his daughter. He marries the young Lady Asahi and passes several years in tranquility before his mother's spirit appears before him and chastises him for disappearing without a trace. Her immense grief led to an untimely death, the knowledge of which compels him to make a trip to the capital to make penance for abandoning his parents. However, on the way to the capital he meets an untimely end at the hands of an immense river known as the Tsumasaka River 妻離川 (lit. the river of parting from one's wife). This section of the narrative ends with the Middle Captain's younger brother, the *shōshō* 少将 (minor captain in the imperial guard) Arushige, and the Lady Asahi gathering to mourn him. Thus ends the *jōkan*.

The *gekan* begins with the Middle Captain's arrival in the court of King Yāma (rendered in Japanese as Enma-ō 閻魔王 [King Enma]), where humans are judged for their collective deeds, good and bad, and appropriate punishments are determined. The Middle Captain is met there by his mother and the Lady Asahi, both of whom are revealed to have died untimely deaths inconsistent with their karmic burdens. Importantly, the Middle Captain is explicitly acknowledged as having died in accordance with his karma and is very briefly forced to observe the horrors of the *avīci* hell (the hell of unceasing suffering). He is saved, however, with the

revelation of a vow he made in a previous life. In this past life, he was a hunter who accidentally shot and killed his mother who was dressed in deer hide for warmth. This hunter blamed his need to hunt on his family's destitution, and so vowed to become a god and deliver beings from the suffering of great poverty. King Yāma revives the Middle Captain, as well as his mother and the Lady Asahi, with explicit instructions to fulfill his vow.

The story now enters the final narrative portion wherein the Middle Captain is granted stewardship of the north. He and the Lady Asahi then have a son, Batō, who in turn has a son so hideous he is banished to a place called Ono in Ōshū 奥州.¹¹³ This son then comes to be called Ono Sarumaru 小野猿丸 (lit. the monkey of Ono). Ono Sarumaru becomes a champion archer of unparalleled talent; meanwhile, his grandfather, the Middle Captain Ariu, is revealed to be Nikkō Gongen and becomes the guardian deity of Shimotsuke Province.¹¹⁴ Nikkō Gongen then engages in a protracted war with Akagi Daimyōjin 赤城大明神 of the neighboring Kōzuke Province and turns to his grandson for aid.¹¹⁵ Ono Sarumaru agrees and smites the *gongen*'s enemy with a single shot of his bow. The gods gratefully name him the *kan'nushi* 神主 (chief priest) of Nikkō. Next, the statuses of various characters within the story are explicated.¹¹⁶

The scroll then ends with a discussion of the Utsunomiya Shrine and a full-throated defense of the supremacy of its resident god. In the version translated below, the name of the specific shrine is never given; instead, only the simple and self-referential *tōsha* 当社 (“this shrine”) is used within the work. It is understood to refer to Utsunomiya Futarayama Shrine, as

¹¹³ Ōshū here is another name for the premodern Mutsu Province 陸奥国. With the institution of the prefecture system in the Meiji Period 明治時代, it was split into Fukushima Prefecture 福島県, Miyagi Prefecture 宮城県, Iwate Prefecture 岩手県, and Aomori Prefecture 青森県 with two municipalities further being absorbed by Akita Prefecture 秋田県.

¹¹⁴ For *gongen* see note 88.

¹¹⁵ *Daimyōjin* is a type of divine title given to particularly respected gods in Japan with large numbers of worshippers or a venerable history.

¹¹⁶ These relationships can be found in figure 2 below.

opposed to Nikkō Futarasan Shrine, due to the location of its discovery. As is noted by the editors of the *engi* anthology *Jisha engi* 寺社縁起 (Origin Accounts of Temples and Shrines), this specific *engi* was in the possession of the Utsunomiya Shrine in the city of Ōzu 大洲市 in Ehime Prefecture 愛媛県. This may strike the reader as odd considering the roughly one-thousand-kilometer distance between the two shrines; however, the Ehime shrine is simply a branch off from the Utsunomiya shrine. In 1331, Utsunomiya Toyofusa 宇都宮豊房 (1293–1369) was appointed lord of Ōzu Castle 大洲城 in what would become modern day Ehime Prefecture and created the Iyo-Utsunomiya branch family of the Utsunomiya clan. As part of the branch family relocating to Shikoku, the Nikkō god was divided and part of it was re-enshrined in the new Ōzu City Utsunomiya Shrine.¹¹⁷

As the above summary illustrates, keeping track of the various characters, their relationships, and their status as deities is quite complex; the following table created by Marutani Shinobu is amended for clarity.

¹¹⁷ *Nihon no shinbutsu no jiten*, eds. Ōshima Tatehiko, Sonoda Minoru, Tamamuro Fumio, and Yamamoto Takashi (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 2001), 176; “Ōzu jinja ni tsuite,” (Ōzu jinja, 2013), <https://oozujinja.jp/oozujinja01.html>.

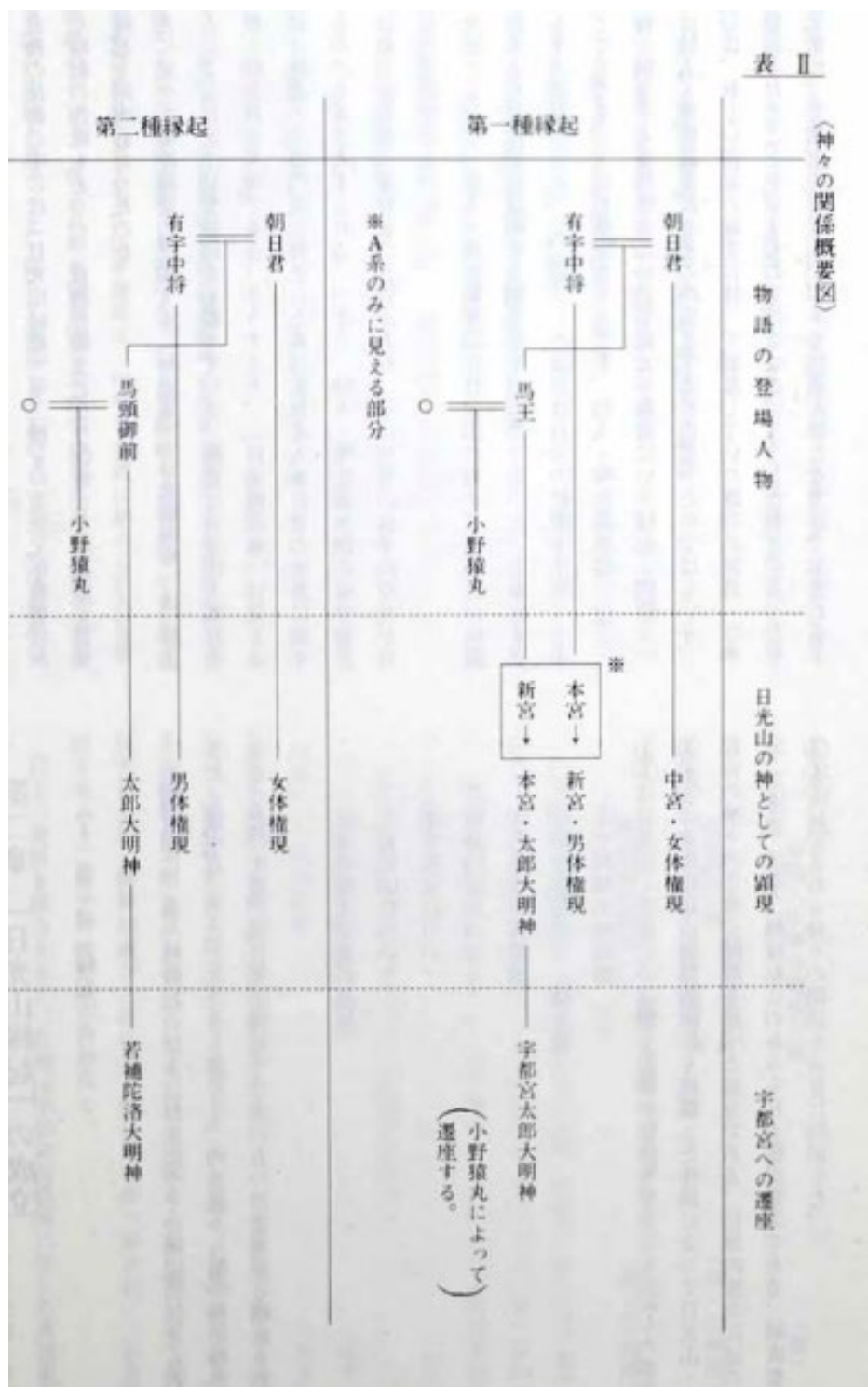


Figure 2. The Relationships of the Characters and Gods in the *Nikkō-zan engi*. From Marutani Shinobu, "Nikkō-zan engi no Seiritsu," *Bungakushi Kenkyū*, (Ōsaka Shiritsu Daigaku Kokugo Kokubungaku Kenkyūshitsu) 27 (1986): 24.

The Formation of the *Nikkō-zan engi*

The history of the *Nikkō-zan engi* cannot be simply summed up with a creation year and clear authorship. Instead, it evolved over the course of centuries through a consistent process of negotiation. Marutani lists twenty different versions of the tale provided in the *Nikkō-zan engi* under names as varied as the *Nikkō-zan gongen ini engi* 日光山権現因位縁起 (Origin Account of the Nikkō Avatar's Path to Becoming a Buddha), *Nikkō-zan yurai no koto* 日光山由来事 (On the Origins of Mt. Nikkō), and the *Futara-san engi no koto* 二荒山縁起事 (Origin Account of Mt. Futara).¹¹⁸ Using linguistic analysis, Marutani links the name Ono Sarumaru 小野猿丸 from these *engi* with another character, called Onsarama 唵佐羅麼, who appears in earlier ballads and tales and who performs the same actions in helping a friendly deity claim victory in a divine battle.¹¹⁹

Importantly for this work, Onsarama is explicitly a hunter who comes to the aid of the god and is rewarded.¹²⁰ Thus, the final narrative section of the *engi* appears to be an adaptation of the story of Onsarama from earlier works, used to suit the didactic and proselytizing purposes of the *engi* authors. The story has successfully been incorporated into the broader narrative of the Middle Captain Ariu and the origination of the various mountain gods through genealogical links, the most important of which is Ono Sarumaru's status as the grandson of the Middle Captain Ariu, who by that time had been revealed as the Nikkō Gongen.

The Utsunomiya Clan and Legitimacy

¹¹⁸ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 16–17.

¹¹⁹ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 19–23.

¹²⁰ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 19–20.

Beyond the development of the *engi*'s narrative portions, another consideration which must be accounted for in its creation is the role of the Utsunomiya clan. As previously stated, this version of the *engi* originates from a shrine in Ehime that is aligned to the Utsunomiya clan. While the history of the sacred complex on Mt. Nikkō has been discussed, here it is useful to focus on the Utsunomiya clan's assumption of power on Mt. Nikkō and how this *engi* helped solidify their authority. Marutani argues that by the first year of the Shitoku era (1384), the twin sacred complexes at Utsunomiya and on Mt. Nikkō were openly jostling for supremacy; the Shingon monk Jōzen, a resident of the Western Sutra Hall at Utsunomiya, declared it was the former which deserved to be seen as the main shrine for the Nikkō gods.¹²¹

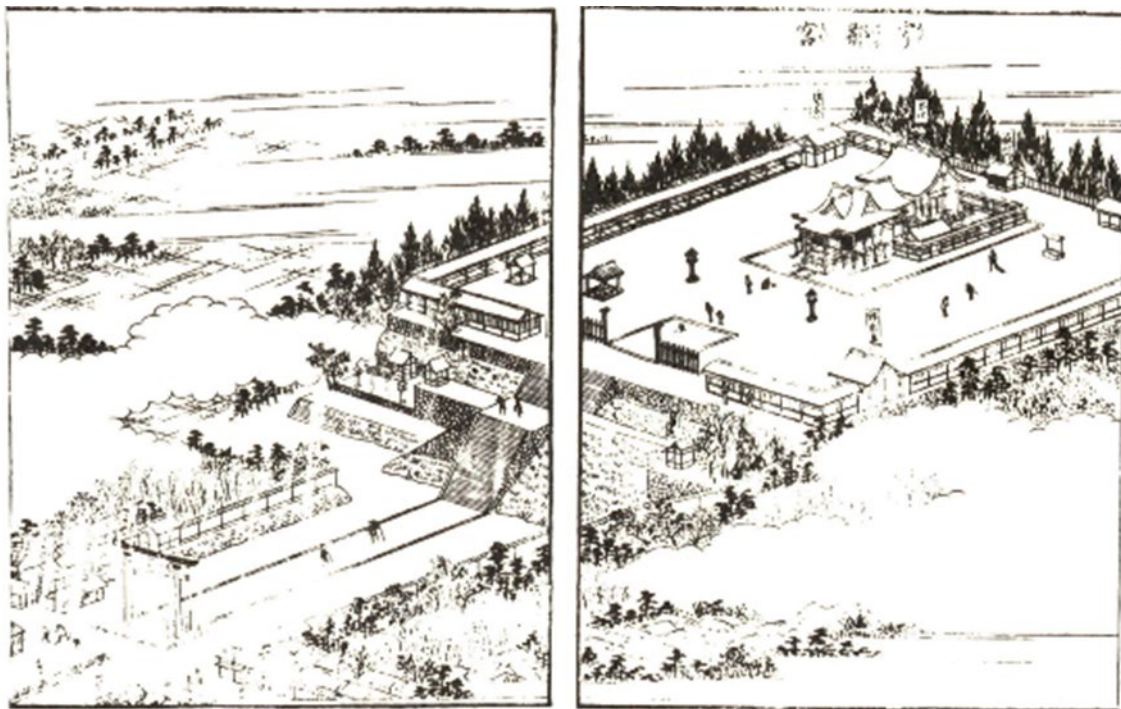
A key part of Jōzen's argument was the character of Ono Sarumaru as a founding figure who transferred the Nikkō deity from Mt. Nikkō to Utsunomiya.¹²² Further, beginning with Utsunomiya Shigetsuna 宇都宮茂綱 in the late 1400s, the head of the Utsunomiya clan was also the *kan'nushi* of the Utsunomiya complex.¹²³ In order to legitimate themselves, the Utsunomiya clan spent decades constructing a main shrine building at Utsunomiya and presented it as the foremost shrine for the broader Mt. Nikkō area.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 23-26.

¹²² Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 26.

¹²³ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 28.

¹²⁴ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 27-28.



宇都宮二荒山神社（『木曾路名所図会』 5 より）

Figure 3. Illustration of Utsunomiya Futarayama Shrine. Reproduced in the *Shinto-shi Daijiten*, ed. Sonoda Minoru and Hashimoto Masanobu, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunka, 2004), 868.

The *Nikkō-zan engi* certainly includes many attestations to the supremacy of Utsunomiya Futarayama Shrine and the broader religious complex at Mt. Nikkō. First, it asserts the status of Mt. Nikkō and its gods as the ultimate protector of the state: “Although all these gods can be said to use *upāya* to save lives and bestow their blessings as ancestral deities acting as spiritual protectors of the state, it is the Great Bodhisattva Mangan of Mt. Nikkō, in the province of Shimotsuke, in the eastern mountain circuit, who surpasses the other gods.” The evidence for this claim does not arrive until the end of the *gekan*, when the scroll asserts that it was the Nikkō god who saved the state from multiple crises:

Halfway through the first year of Jōhei. The bandit leader Taira no Masakado rose up in rebellion. At that time, the gods lent us their almighty power, the Kusanagi

sword appeared from in front of the shrine, and the bandit's head was delivered to the capital. Thusly, since being granted the honored title as a shrine of the first rank, the five subjugations of Taira no Masakado, Abe no Sadato, the Taira clan, Fujiwara no Yasuhira, and the Mongols were by this god's power. Consequently, through generations of divine monarchs and Shogunal households, he has never not been revered.

The specific incidents enumerated in the above passage include some of the greatest threats to Japan's centralized state in the premodern period. It begins with Taira no Masakado's 平将門 (903–940) rebellion in the mid tenth century, in which the Kusanagi sword is linked with the shrine and the subjugation of Masakado is directly linked to the Nikkō god's powers.¹²⁵ It next mentions a dispute largely confined to premodern Mutsu province, wherein the Abe clan, led by Abe no Sadato 安倍貞任 (1019–1062), rebelled against the imperial family and were defeated by Minamoto no Yoriyoshi 源頼義 (988–1075).¹²⁶ The passage then moves from a country-wide war and the defeat of the Taira in the Genpei Kassen 源平合戦 (Genpei War, 1180–1185) to a specifically northern focus with the defeat of the Ōshū Fujiwara 奥州藤原 (Northern Fujiwara) leader, Fujiwara no Yasuhira 藤原泰衡 (1155–1189), who sheltered Minamoto no Yoritomo's 源頼朝 (1147–1199) brother Yoshitsune 源義経 (1159–1189) after the latter fled the capital.¹²⁷ Finally, it ends with the famous Mongol invasion attempts of 1274 and 1281. Importantly, the Nikkō god is always shown on the side of the imperial family and the court in Kyoto.

¹²⁵ For more information on the rebellion of Taira no Masakado, see the translation and analysis of the *Shōmonki* 将門記 by Rabinovitch: Judith N. Rabinovitch, *Shōmon Ki: The Story of Masakado's Rebellion*, Monumenta Nipponica Monograph, no. 58. (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1986).

¹²⁶ "Abe no Sadato," in *Nihon kokugo daijiten dai ni han*, ed. Shōgakkan Kokugo Jiten Henshūbu (Tokyo: Kabushiki Gaisha Shōgakukan, 2000–2002), n.p.

¹²⁷ "Fujiwara no Yasuhira," *Nihon kokugo daijiten dai ni han*, ed. Shōgakkan Kokugo Jiten Henshūbu (Tokyo: Kabushiki Gaisha Shōgakukan, 2000–2002), n.p.

The assertion that the Nikkō god consistently protected the Imperial family takes on particular significance when the following passage tying the Utsunomiya Futarayama Shrine to Ise is considered. The *engi* declares: “That pine forest-encircled shrine on Mt. Futara keeps the rituals of Ise Grand Shrine hidden from the public eye, and going according to these wishes, it reveals the logic of Ise’s outer shrine.” This seemingly places Mt. Nikkō’s religious institutions on par with the court-backed Ise Grand Shrine—or, at the very least, it emphasizes how it honors Ise and, by extension, the imperial family.

Its final extolling of Utsunomiya’s virtues is based around the assertion of the shrine’s perfect geomantic geography, stating “In general, this land has perfect topography for the gods of the four cardinal directions, with a river to the east, wide road to the west, polluted land to the south, and a mountain to the north.” Within premodern Japanese geomantic thought, the four cardinal directions were each ruled by a guardian deity of specific color and form. These *shijin* 四神 (Four Guardian Deities) consist of (1) Seiryū 青龍 (the Blue Dragon) to the East, (2) Suzaku 朱雀 (the Vermillion Bird) to the South, (3) Byakko 白虎 (the White Tiger) to the West, and (4) Genbu 玄武 (lit. “mysterious or black warrior,” translated into English as the Black Tortoise due to the god’s depiction as a tortoise with a snake’s neck and head) to the North.¹²⁸ Further, the *shijin* each has a favored topographical associated with each direction. Seiryū in the East is associated with an eastward flowing river, and sits opposite Byakko in the West, whose association is a great path or road. Suzaku in the South is identified with a pond, while the opposing Genbu favors a hill or mountain to the North.¹²⁹ All of these conditions are fulfilled at this site. In the environment described above, wherein the Utsunomiya clan actively attempted to

¹²⁸ Jirō Takei and Marc P. Keane, *Sakuteiki, Visions of the Japanese Garden: A Modern Translation of Japan’s Gardening Classic* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2001), 83–86.

¹²⁹ Jirō Takei and Marc P. Keane, *Sakuteiki, Visions of the Japanese Garden*, 86.

assert supremacy over Mt. Nikkō's religious institutions, the use of *engi* to bolster their position is notable, yet still falls within the normative uses of politico-religious legitimation outlined above.

Soteriological Paradigms within the *Nikkō-zan engi*

The more surprising use of the *Nikkō-zan engi* relates to soteriological paradigms. Its main salvific throughlines can be divided into two broad categories: the salvation of animals and the salvation of humans. This first soteriological goal is achieved directly through unambiguous assertions similar to the Suwa faith's *Suwa no mon*. In the final, non-narrative, section of the *Nikkō-zan engi*, which extols the virtues of Utsunomiya Shrine and the Nikkō gods, the authors praise the vow of the Nikkō gods to save all sentient life. In this refrain they argue that “eating fish, fowl and beast shortens the length of time they must spend in their long cycle of death and rebirth, and this will surely cause them to reach a world of Buddhist enlightenment.”¹³⁰ They then instruct the practitioners of the Nikkō faith to make offerings of animals to the gods, saying “In order to bring them into contact with Buddhism, either sacrifice them to the gods or use them as offerings.”¹³¹ This salvific model is based on a belief similar to that expressed at Suwa Taisha: that killing can be used as an act of *upāya* to bring animals into contact with Buddhism and free them from a continued existence in the realm of animals.¹³² The *engi* offers up a metaphor for this *upāya* as the following: “The great compassion and mercy shown by the Buddha's in their *upāya* is undoubtedly akin to how immersing something in indigo will turn it blue.”¹³³ Exposing

¹³⁰ Original Japanese: 飛流伏走のたぐみをして、長劫の生死をつづめて菩提の覚岸にいたらしめん。

¹³¹ Original Japanese: 値遇結縁のためには、あるひは是を贅にかけ、あるひはこれを胙にそなふ。

¹³² Grumabch, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 107, 111–12.

¹³³ Original Japanese: 大慈大悲の方便は藍より出てあいよりあをきなるべし。

the hunted animal to the Buddhist path metaphorically bathes it in the dharma so that it might achieve a better rebirth.

So far, this salvific paradigm heavily mirrors that which was utilized by followers of the Suwa faith in the medieval period, as laid out by Grumbach. However, there is still a fundamental difference in the mechanism of action. While the *Suwa no mon* is an *indō* requiring recitation after every kill, this *engi* provides a blanket rationale without indicating the necessity of any specific prayer. This is not to say that the Nikkō hunters never recited an *indō*; instead, it is meant to broaden our understanding of how religious institutions presented this salvific paradigm to the hunters affiliated with them. A religious center's foundational account could itself act as a religious technology by presenting this salvific vehicle.

Saving the Hunter

Beyond the clearly stated paradigm wherein hunting is justified, as it brings the animal into the Buddhist fold, there is a secondary tension with the *engi*. This elucidates a somewhat different soteriological paradigm, focused on the figure of the hunter, rather than the hunted animal. Contrary to what might be expected, the *Nikkō-zan engi* neither accepts nor praises hunting as a profession or pastime without qualification. While the opening of the narrative portion of the *Nikkō-zan engi* begins by extolling the virtues of the Middle Captain Ariu, it immediately tempers this praise with a negative reckoning that he enjoyed hunting: “Perhaps on account of some karma from a past life, he liked to hawk morning and evening.”¹³⁴ His hunting is shown as a flaw, and it is this love of hunting which causes him to commit the *tsumi* 辜 (meaning both “crime” and “sin” in the premodern context) of neglecting his duties to the

¹³⁴ Original Japanese: いかなる宿縁にや、明暮鷹をこのみ給ひけり。

emperor for which he is then reprimanded. Since both the Middle Captain's abandonment of the capital and then his mother's untimely death in her grief at his absence are caused by this censure, the unfortunate consequences of the Middle Captain's obsessive love of hunting continue throughout the *jōkan*. As hunters are vilified as one of the fundamental *akunin* 悪人 (evil people) within classic Buddhist thought, this is not unexpected. However, it hints at a fundamental tension within the scroll considering what then occurs in the *gekan*.

The Hunter and the *Śyāma Jātaka*

From its very beginning, the *gekan* shows how the Middle Captain's karmic deeds, including his love of hunting, result in King Yāma's sentencing him to suffer in the Avīci Hell. However, here the tension comes to the fore as the *engi* turns to a narration on the Middle Captain's past life, in which his life as a hunter directly results in a vow which saves him from that sentence to suffer in death and the role of the hunter transitions from *akunin* to redeemed savior.

The retelling of this past life of the Middle Captain follows the same conventions as the category of Buddhist tales known as *jātaka* tales. Sarah Shaw and Naomi Appleton note the many characteristics of a *jātaka*, singling out their most basic quality as “a story relating events that took place during a previous life of the Buddha.”¹³⁵ However, just as important are the genre's conventions comprised of a framing device which “always includes both a ‘story of the past,’ in other words the tale told by the Buddha of his past life, and a ‘story of the present,’ the situation that prompted the telling of the tale.”¹³⁶ Further, *jātaka* tales emphasize links between

¹³⁵ Naomi Appleton and Sarah Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha: The Mahānipāta of the Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (Bangkok, Thailand: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2015), 1.

¹³⁶ Appleton and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha*, 1.

characters in the past life and their identifications with people in the Buddha's present life. As we shall see, there are many parallels between the hunter's story in the *Nikkō-zan engi* and the *Śyāma jātaka*.¹³⁷

The *Śyāma jātaka* is famous in the Buddhist world as the third entry of the *Mahānipāta* (the last and most important ten *jātaka* tales of the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* within the Pāli canon). However, readers unfamiliar with the specificities of the *Śyāma jātaka* in the Japanese context might be surprised at the similarities involved to the *Nikkō-zan engi*.

The *Śyāma jātaka*

The basic outline of the *Śyāma jātaka* in its most popular forms can be summarized as follows: The Buddha is born as the son of ascetics from two hunting clans who renounce killing and go to live in the forest. His parents are blinded by a snake, so Śyāma vows to care for them from then on. After a time, a king out hunting happens upon Śyāma collecting water among a herd of deer, and thinking him either a god or *nāga*, intentionally shoots Śyāma with a poison arrow. The dying Śyāma then asks the king to take care of his parents, a task to which the king dutifully agrees. Śyāma's ascetic parents, on learning the news of their son's death, beg the king to take them to his body. The king does so and they make attestations of truth alongside the goddess Bahusundarī, which result in Śyāma coming back to life. The tale ends with Śyāma lecturing the king on the ten forms of righteous conduct for a king, including acting properly toward one's mother and father, one's sons and daughters, one's friends and courtiers, one's army and elephants, one's towns and villages, one's kingdom and country, recluses and brahmins, and

¹³⁷ The *Śyāma jātaka* is known by various names as the transliteration schema for Śyāma varies considerably by country and tradition. It is also called the *Sāma jātaka*, the *Suvaṇṇasāma jātaka*, or the *Śyāmaka jātaka*. For consistency, he will be referred to as Śyāma throughout this paper.

animals and birds.¹³⁸ Lastly, it offers an explanation by the Buddha on the links between characters in the *jātaka* and his contemporary companions.¹³⁹

Importantly, though, a version of the Śyāma *jātaka* popular in Japan can be seen through the *Sanbō ekotoba* 三宝絵詞 (Illustrations of the Three Jewels), though it differs with regard to key points. The *Sanbō ekotoba* (hereafter referred to by its shortened title *Sanbōe*) was a collection of three illustrated scrolls created in 984 CE by Minamoto Tamenori for the imperial princess Sonshi, newly ordained as a Buddhist nun.¹⁴⁰ This was not merely an illustrated story in the same genre as the then popular *monogatari*; rather, it embodied specific and consequential spiritual guidance.¹⁴¹ The *Sanbōe* was virtually ignored during the intervening thousand years between the period shortly after its creation and its discovery as a topic of scholarly interest in the twentieth century.¹⁴² However, what is important for this study is that it represents a distillation of Buddhist thought in premodern Japan and utilizes disparate sources, such as the *Nihon ryōiki*, to create a collation of the most important Buddhist tales for a new inductee. Among these tales is the story of the Śyāma *jātaka*.

In key respects, this version differs from its Indic predecessor. The *jātaka* begins with the two elders in the kingdom of Kapilavastu, both already aged and blind, who desire to go into the mountains to practice Buddhism. Their son Śyāma agrees to take care of them and the three retreat deep into the mountains. The account of how Śyāma was struck and revived contains a few parts worth reproducing in full:

¹³⁸ Only eight actual targets of action are outlined within the ten verses of righteous conduct with the last two outlining that good deeds are conducive to happiness and that this is how Indras and Brahmās attained their place in heaven. For more see, Appleton and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha*, 142–43.

¹³⁹ Appleton and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha*, 117–144.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Kamens, *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori's Sanbōe*, Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies, (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988), 3.

¹⁴¹ Kamens, “The Three Jewels,” 6–7.

¹⁴² Kamens, “The Three Jewels,” 7.

One day his parents asked him for water. He went down into the valley to fetch it, wearing a deerskin cloak, and when he bent down with his jug to scoop up the water among the deer who had also gathered to drink, he looked just as if he were one of them. Just then the king of that country had come into the mountains to hunt, and when he saw the deer, he shot at them, and by mistake his arrow struck Śyāma in the chest.¹⁴³

The story then continues in a similar manner, the king distraught over his actions and Śyāma consoling him:

“Do not blame yourself, oh king,” said Śyāma. “This is the result of sins in my own past. I do not regret the loss of my own life, but I am very sorry for my father and mother. They are very old, and both of them are blind. After one day without me they are sure to die.”¹⁴⁴

The story then plays out in a shortened version with the king retrieving Śyāma’s parents and bringing them to their son’s body. Upon their acts of truth, the arrow falls from Śyāma’s body and he revives. The king wishes to make amends, so Śyāma admonishes him thus:

Śyāma said, “If you wish to make amends, you would do better to return quickly to your own kingdom and look after your own people and encourage them to uphold the precepts. *And you, king—do not go hunting ever again! Your life in this world will not be easy, and in the next life you will go to hell* [emphasis added]. Long ago you garnered perfect merit, and so now you are a king. But do

¹⁴³ Kamens, “The Three Jewels,” 158.

¹⁴⁴ Kamens, “The Three Jewels,” 159.

not succumb to the willfulness of your heart and thereby commit sins through your headstrong actions.”

Having been thus instructed, the king agrees to live a righteous life. The tale ends with the Buddha explaining that he was Śyāma and that the father and mother in the tale were past lives of the Buddha’s father, King Śuddhodana, and mother, Lady Māyā.¹⁴⁵

Here, the focus is not on the unnamed king as an irresponsible and absent monarch, but instead on the wickedness of hunting as an act in its own right. The shot kills, but from accident rather than malice. The villain in the story is not the king himself per se, but instead the very act of hunting and taking life—an act which, the story notes, will surely lead to an unfortunate rebirth in hell. Overall, this story clearly fits within what Grumbach calls the conservative position towards hunting as a stereotypical evil act which should be immediately halted.¹⁴⁶ While this conservative position which denigrated the hunter held a privileged position in the Heian period, the story of the hunter in the *Nikkō-zan engi* reveals how the figure of the hunter was no longer solely one of revilement, but also a possible outlet of salvation. It proceeds to demonstrate this concept through the vignette of the Middle Captain Ariu’s past life as a hunter and his undertaking a bodhisattva vow.

The Middle Captain Ariu’s Past Life as a Hunter

When the Middle Captain Ariu arrives at King Yāma’s palace, he is sent before the *jōhari-no-kagami* 浄玻璃の鏡 (Mirror of Judgement) to weigh his karmic deeds, good and bad. The narrator then reveals he was saved from the Avīci Hell thanks to a vow made in a previous

¹⁴⁵ Kamens, “The Three Jewels,” 158–162.

¹⁴⁶ Grumbach, “Sacrifice and Salvation in Medieval Japan,” 108–110.

life, and immediately begins to recount the story. The Middle Captain was, in a previous life, a common hunter of Mt. Nikkō, whose tale has a striking resemblance to the *Śyāma jātaka* above.

It begins:

[...] in a past life the Middle Captain had been a hunter of Mt. Futara. In order to provide for her child, this man's mother entered the mountains to pick up firewood and gather fruits. The hunter went into the mountains so he could hunt deer. In order to protect herself from the cold, his mother was wearing deer hides. Alas, when she bent down to pick up a fruit in the tall grass beneath a tree, the hunter, thinking she was a deer, shot her with an arrow! When he stood up and looked at what he shot, he saw it was no deer but instead his very own mother.

The hunter then bemoans the tragedy of poverty which led him to go hunting and ultimately caused him to accidentally shoot his own mother. She kindly consoles him with the following:

His mother replied to him thus: "I am old and have approached the end of my life. Even if I were to survive being shot, there probably wouldn't be many more years left to me. This is the karmic consequence of deeds done in a previous life. I am only sorry that you have committed one of the Five Great Sins!"

This said, the hunter's mother dies, and King Yāma explains that the hunter could not accept the cruelties of such dire poverty and so made the following vow: "I vow that I will become the god of this mountain, and that, in the future lifetimes to come, I will save the impoverished." King Yāma returns the Middle Captain Ariu to the mundane world to fulfill said vow; the story wraps up by examining the relationships between characters in the pseudo-jātaka tale and those in the contemporary period, noting "The hunter in this story was born as the Middle Captain Ariu and

his mother was born as Aokage. The hawk Kumo-no-ue was the child in this story. The dog Akutamaru was the hunter's wife.”

The two stories above present striking similarities. The innocent caretaker Śyāma and the hunter's mother, both dressed in deerskin clothes, are mistaken for deer and accidentally shot. Neither blames the perpetrators of these actions; instead, each is resigned to his or her manner of death as the natural result of karmic consequences. Further, each proclaims only one lasting regret: the negative consequences their death will cause others. The tales end with the *jātaka* formula of linking characters between past and present. Interestingly, in the *Nikko-zan engi*, every other character involved was reborn as an animal excepting the hunter himself, who was instead reborn as a human-cum-god-cum-*gongen*. The vast difference in births may be attributable to the hunter's vow, which closely resembles the Mahāyāna bodhisattva vow to save all living beings.

The role of the hunter as a future bodhisattva is the fork at which the tales diverge in meaning. It is important to keep in mind that the principal characters in these two tales represent diametrically opposed positions within this story frame. Śyāma is the innocent, struck down by a king's wayward arrow, but the hunter is the very bowman whose arrow takes a life. This then leads to the contrasting endings of the two stories. Śyāma chastises the king for his evil act of hunting and demands he never engage in the practice again. Yet, the hunter instead vows to become a god and, by extension, is revealed as a *gongen* 権現 (manifestation) of a bodhisattva under the *honij suijaku* paradigm. His salvific vow to aid the impoverished acts in a similar manner to the salvation of animals outlined earlier, but from a fundamentally opposite perspective.

The hunter, a stereotypical evil being in Buddhist canon, becomes a god-cum-bodhisattva who then acts to save the impoverished, a regrettable state clearly equated with hunters earlier in the text. This passage therefore approaches soteriological issues in hunting from the perspective of the hunter needing salvation, rather than the hunter as an agent of the salvation, such as when a Suwa hunter recites the *Suwa no mon*. Both are methods of salvation, yet the agency involved differs slightly. We may even understand this difference as revealing the conflicting religious attitudes towards hunting in medieval Japan writ large. Combined with the explicitly stated soteriological framework in which animals are saved through the Buddha's and bodhisattva's *upāya*, the *Nikkō-zan engi* encapsulates the negotiation religious sites were navigating in a medieval world in which hunting was increasingly vilified and associated with conceptually polluted outcast groups.

Salvation and Legitimacy

Engi as a salvific religious technology should also be understood in the context of institutional legitimacy outlined above. To be sure, the *engi* performs the normative function and outlines why the complex at Mt. Nikkō is superior and worthy of support. However, the links between the institutional search for legitimacy and the inclusion of these salvific paradigms should not be overlooked. The main forms of hunting discussed within the text itself are bow hunting and hawking. This latter is especially relevant to the idea of institutional legitimacy due to the status of hawking in medieval Japanese society.

The antiquity of hawking in the Japanese archipelago is attested to by references to the activity appearing in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (The Record of Ancient Matters), *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (The Chronicles of Japan), *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), and

the *Shoku nihongi* 続日本紀 (The Continued Chronicles of Japan) compiled in 712, 720, 759, and 797, respectively.¹⁴⁷ From the eighth to twelfth centuries, the imperial court tried to maintain a monopoly over hawking; however, the warrior class increasingly took up the activity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁴⁸ Hawking further flourished in the sixteenth century under the three great unifiers: Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534–1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616).¹⁴⁹ By the Muromachi period 室町時代, hawking was more than simply a courtly sport; it was further a social activity imbued with political importance due to the use of hawks and prey as gifts within medieval society.¹⁵⁰

It is also necessary to note the institutional links between Mt. Nikkō and the political center during the medieval period. Mt. Nikkō maintained close ties to the Kamakura Shogunate. In 1202, the *bettō* 別当 (abbot) of Mt. Nikkō was appointed the *gusō* 供僧 (attendant monk at a Shinto shrine) of the shrine Tsurugaoka Hachimangū 鶴岡八幡宮 in the city of Kamakura 鎌倉市.¹⁵¹ By the mid to late fifteenth century, the religious complex at Mt. Nikkō was overseen by the Utsunomiya clan. They not only ruled over the area as a *daimyō* 大名 (lit. great name, a term for warlords during Japan's warring states period) household; they also acted as the *kan'nushi* of Utsunomiya.¹⁵² With this context in mind, it is worth rethinking the multiple meanings of the

¹⁴⁷ Morgan Pitelka, *Spectacular Accumulation: Material Culture, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and Samurai Sociability* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 98.

¹⁴⁸ Pitelka, *Spectacular Accumulation*, 98–99. It should be noted that the Kamakura Shogunate attempted to discourage hawking by the warrior class multiple times, but Pitelka sees these continuous edicts as an indication of hawking's popularity.

¹⁴⁹ Pitelka, *Spectacular Accumulation*, 99–105.

¹⁵⁰ Pitelka, *Spectacular Accumulation*, 99–100.

¹⁵¹ Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 21. The shrine Tsurugaoka Hachimangū's importance to medieval Japanese religion is in part due to its political patronage. Hachiman-centered worship spread among the warrior class in the transitional period from the Heian to Kamakura periods. In this environment, Tsurugaoka Hachimangū came to prominence as the patron shrine of the Kamakura Shogunate and specifically the Hōjō 北条 clan who acted as shikken 執権 (regents) during this period. For a general overview of Tsurugaoka Hachimangū, see: Joseph Cali and John Dougill, *Shinto Shrines: A Guide to the Sacred Sites of Japan's Ancient Religion*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 200–204.

¹⁵² Marutani, "Nikkō-zan engi no seiritsu," 28.

Nikkō-zan engi's salvific discourse. Not only does it offer salvation to the prey animals hunted and the hunters engaging in the activity, but it also legitimates the very act of hunting through this soteriological discourse. It thus offers a justification through which the aristocratic class—and later, the warrior classes—could justify their pursuit of a socio-politically important activity. This analysis does not detract from the importance of the *engi* as a mechanism of salvation. Rather, it adds to the multiplicity of meanings embodied within the *Nikkō-zan engi*.

Conclusion

While understanding the history of hunting and religion throughout Japan writ large through a single data point consisting of a religious complex's *jisha engi* is too great a task for any single paper to undertake, the analysis above has teased out certain themes. These themes work alongside previous scholarship to clarify how hunters and the religious lineages they belonged to adapted to the increasingly anti-hunting discourse which came to dominate Japan in the medieval period. Despite the Buddhist condemnation of the killing of sentient beings, and despite the local conceptualization of death as religiously polluting, hunting has had a long and important history in Japan. This history goes unfortunately overlooked within mainstream thought, as the belief that hunting was done away with after the introduction of Buddhism to Japan retains currency. Within Anglophone scholarship, especially, the figure of the hunter in Japan has gone understudied. This leaves a gap in our understanding of Japanese history. While its forms may vary, from an activity meant for subsistence in the mountains to the grand hunts of the imperial court, hunting is still an activity historically taken up by emperors, *daimyo*, peasants, and—according to the account within the *Nikkō-zan engi*—even priests.

Yet, hunting was a site of tension. Condemned by some, it was still readily practiced by others. Over the course of the medieval period, anti-hunting sentiment grew louder, and hunters actively sought out new legitimation strategies. One such method was centered around institutions of religious authority which would lend legitimacy to the hunters through religious technologies like the *Suwa no mon*. While the Suwa faith and its famed *Suwa no mon* had its role among Japanese hunters, it was not the only religious technology at work. As Suwa is only the patron religious center of one hunting guild lineage among many, it is worth looking to how centers of religious authority associated with other guilds legitimated their activities. In this

context, the religious complex at Mt. Nikkō from which the Nikkō guild takes its name is important for its negotiation of the issue of hunting evinced by the *Nikkō-zan engi*, its own origin account. The inclusion of specific salvific discourses work to mirror and then supplement other technologies such as the *Suwa no mon*.

Although a clear tension exists within the text itself, it is evident the *Nikkō-zan engi* constitutes an attempt by the religious institution at Mt. Nikkō to justify the hunting practices of its practitioners and to promise them salvation through the Nikkō-gods-cum-Buddhist-avatars. It couches itself in Buddhist rhetoric and literary tropes to justify the supremacy of the Nikkō faith and its god's salvific power. This salvific power importantly extends to encompass the broad salvation of hunters. The action of this *engi* is similar to, though slightly different from, the operation of the *Suwa no mon*. Whereas the hunter becomes an agent of the gods-cum-buddhas and bodhisattvas within the Suwa framework, a more explicitly merciful salvific paradigm is presented alongside the above by Nikkō.

Certainly, the work accepts the newer lineage of thought by which hunting could be justified as a form of *upāya*. The text openly states that “eating fish, fowl and beast shortens the length of time they must spend in their long cycle of death and rebirth, and this will surely cause them to reach a world of Buddhist enlightenment.” However, this message exists in tension with more conservative stances, which argue that hunters were in need of merciful salvation. The main character of the narrative portion, which takes up a majority of the text, is nearly cast down to the *avīci* hell due to his love of the hunt. It is only through a salvific vow akin to those given by bodhisattvas themselves that the hunter is saved and turned into the Nikkō deity. This deity's vow is a key mechanism within the *engi* as it affirms salvation for all sentient beings, even the destitute hunter. The authoring of this specific *engi* during the medieval period should be

understood as the site of a negotiation through which conflicting ideas over hunting and salvation are reconciled until we arrive at a new religious technology, the *engi* itself, which by its own existence works to legitimate hunting by Nikkō-aligned guilds.

While this analysis focuses heavily on the core text itself and the conditions under which it was composed, more research is needed to discern the lay believers' understanding of and reactions to the Nikkō faith and these soteriological paradigms. The Nikkō lineage is ripe for study, given its continued relevance among the surviving *matagi*. Further study is also necessary to understand the specific relationships between the *Nikkō-zan engi* and the various foundational scrolls utilized by the *matagi* outlined earlier. One wonders why the Nikkō *matagi* would not simply rely on the *Nikkō-zan engi* itself. Where is the fracture point at which this *engi*'s story is replaced within these hunting guilds by the tales of Banji Banzaburō? Further, why were the heavily Buddhist-coded Nikkō gods portrayed here later replaced in the Nikkō lineage of hunters with the seemingly generic Yama no kami, to the point that Schnell sees this focus on the mountain god as a distinguishing feature? Each of these topics offers a fruitful opening for discussion. Hopefully, future research may yet shed some light on the development between hunters and religious sites of power in Japanese history.

Chapter III

Annotated Translation

Upper Scroll

Now then, as for the world which was round as an egg and adrift like a fish in the sea, it was chaos, all mixed up and unseparated. Heaven and earth had as yet not appeared. After that, the light and clear part became heaven, and the heavy and opaque part became the earth. Yin and Yang were put in order here, and as soon as everything in heaven and earth were in perfect condition, the light of the gods of heaven and earth shone gently in Yamato.¹⁵³ Thenceforth, the imperial ancestral shrine continuously bestowed mercy on the Land-of-Abundant-Rice, and both far and wide, the eight million gods stood watch in the directions of the Four Seas and Eight Lands.¹⁵⁴ The three thousand gods nobly became the defenders of the five home provinces and seven circuits.¹⁵⁵ Although all these gods can be said to use *upāya* to save lives and bestow their blessings as ancestral deities acting as spiritual protectors of the state, it is the Great Bodhisattva

¹⁵³ Yamato is another name for ancient Japan. This entire section emulates the introductions to some of Japan's oldest texts including the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 and the *Nihongi* 日本記. For examples, see the opening of Aston's translation of the *Nihongi*: W. G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1896).

¹⁵⁴ The Land-of-Abundant-Rice is another name for Japan. Four Seas and Eight Lands is a metaphor for the world.

¹⁵⁵ The "three-thousand-gods" refers to the 3000 gods of the 3000 shrines enumerated in the *Engishiki* 延喜式 (Procedures of the Engi Era). Compiled in 927, the fifty volume *Engishiki* holds import as the earliest set of *shiki* 式 (procedures for carrying out the legal code) still extant and covers both secular and religious topics. For an English translation of the *Engishiki* and analysis of its importance, see Felicia Gressitt Bock, trans., *Engi-Shiki: Procedures of the Engi Era*, Monumenta Nipponica Monographs. (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970). The five home provinces and seven circuits refers to the system of geographic and administrative divisions in premodern Japan. The five home provinces consist of Yamato 大和国, Yamashiro 山城国, Kawachi 河内国, Settsu 摂津国, and Izumi 和泉国. The Seven circuits consist of the Tōkaidō 東海道 (Eastern Sea Circuit), the Tōsandō 東山道 (Eastern Mountain Circuit), the Hōkurikudō 北陸道 (Northern Land Circuit), the San'indō 山陰道 (Northern Mountain Circuit), the San'yōdō 山陽道 (Southern Mountain Circuit), the Nankaidō 南海道 (Southern Sea Circuit), and the Saikaidō 西海道 (Western Sea Circuit). The main action of this *engi* occurs in either the home provinces or the Eastern Mountain Circuit.

Mangan of Mt. Nikkō in the province of Shimotsuke, in the eastern mountain circuit, who surpasses the other gods.¹⁵⁶

Now then, If we were to inquire after the true form of this god, it is a manifestation of Pratyavekṣaṇajñāna in the real world, and they are the manifested form of Avalokiteśvara.¹⁵⁷ They rejected taking the final step to achieve the supreme enlightenment of a bodhisattva, and instead nobly revealed the form of their male and female bodies. While the light of the sun of the lands of True Recompense and Tranquil Light shines clearly onto the three peaks, the sound of the winds of *upāya*, benefiting living beings, is gentle at the foot of the mountain.¹⁵⁸ It is said “Heaven hung out images in the sky, and the sages regarded them as ruling principles.”¹⁵⁹ Truly,

¹⁵⁶ For *upāya*, see note 29. The title of Great Bodhisattva Mangan is only used here. It is likely referring to the Nikkō god by his alternate name, as the Nikkō temple Chūzenji was also referred to as the temple Manganji in the premodern period. See Tokutarō Sakurai, Tatsuo Hagiwara, and Noburo Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, (Iwanami Shoten, 1975), 437.

¹⁵⁷ Pratyavekṣaṇajñāna is Sanskrit for ‘wisdom of specific knowledge’ and is one of the five wisdoms of a Buddha. It specifically refers to the ability of a Buddha to understand all phenomena in the universe. See Buswell and Lopez, “Pratyavekṣaṇajñāna,” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 672. Avalokiteśvara, Sanskrit for ‘Lord who Looks Down in Empathy’ is the bodhisattva of compassion and is known as Kannon 觀音 in Japan. This deity often appears in a triad as one of two attendants, alongside the Bohisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta, to the Buddha Amitābha. See Buswell and Lopez, “Avalokiteśvara,” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 82.

¹⁵⁸ The three great mountains refer to the three mountain peaks of Nikkō, consisting of Mt. Nantai, Mt. Nyotai, and Mt. Tarō. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 276. The Land of Actual Reward and Land of Eternally Tranquil Light are two of the four types of lands in Tendai Buddhism alongside the Land of Sages and Mortals and the Land of Transition. The Land of Actual Reward is where bodhisattvas in their last stages reside while the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light is a land of Buddhas.

¹⁵⁹ This line is a modified lifting from the eleventh passage of the first *Xi ci* 繫辭上 (Great Commentary I) to the *I Ching* 易經 (Book of Changes) by way of the preface to the *Engi kyaku* 緣起格 (Stipulations of the Engi Era) of 907. While the portion recorded in the *Nikkō-zan engi* consists of the phrase “天垂象，聖人則之” translated herein as “Heaven hung out images in the sky, and the sages regarded these as ruling principles,” the original reads “天垂象，見吉凶，聖人象之。河出圖，洛出書，聖人則之。” Which is translated by Richard Lynn as, “Heaven hung images in the sky and revealed good fortune and bad, and the sages regarded these as meaningful signs. The Yellow River brought forth a diagram, and the Luo River brought forth writings, and the sages regarded these things also as ruling principles.” See Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching As Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 66. This translation is mirrored by James Legge more than a century earlier when he writes, “Heaven hangs out its (brilliant) figures from which are seen good fortune and bad, and the sages made their emblematic interpretations accordingly. The Ho gave forth the map, and the Lo the writing, of (both of) which the sages took advantage.” See James Legge, trans., *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1899), 2:374. For an easily accessible version of the original text of the Xi Ci with translations by Legge can be found at: “Book of Changes: Xi Ci I,” trans. James Legge, Chinese Text Project, 2023, <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang>.

drive the haze from the sky and [unknown]¹⁶⁰ the water and rocks to the land. Therefore, one sees rare magical trees lined up, and suspects it may be the residence of an immortal Daoist mountain wizard; one sees mysterious boulders and old rocks jutting out at angles and mistakes them for the altered form of some miraculous person.

After the descent of the gods, Buddhism spread around the world. In the seventh lunar month of the third year of Kōnin (820 CE), Kūkai¹⁶¹ came to this mountain and here performed the *rishūzanmai*.¹⁶² In the fourth lunar month of the first year of Kashō (848 CE), the monk Ennin¹⁶³ made a pilgrimage to this mountain and expounded the sutras of the three noble truths of Tendai Buddhism. Since then, the numinous efficacy of the gods and buddhas until now are all the more vivid, and the propagation of both esoteric and exoteric Buddhist teachings has grown ever more vigorous. In front of the window of the Ten Suchnesses,¹⁶⁴ a spring flower of a single color and a single scent emits fragrance on the wind; atop of the altar of the Yoga of Three Mysteries, the autumn moon floats on the water of the five perfumed water vessels.¹⁶⁵ The

¹⁶⁰ There are multiple characters missing from the extant versions of the text making this sentence illegible.

¹⁶¹ Kūkai 空海, posthumously known as Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, was the founder of the Shingon lineage of Japanese Buddhism. Having traveled to China in 804 CE, he introduced esoteric Buddhism into the Japanese mainstream upon his return in 806 CE. In 816 CE he founded the temple on Mt. Kōya 高野山, and in 823 CE his lineage was further granted Tō-ji 東寺, a temple near Kyoto. For more information on his life and exploits, see Kashiwahara and Sonoda, eds., *Shapers of Japanese Buddhism*, trans. Sekimori, 39–51.

¹⁶² A Tendai and Shingon practice of honoring the three treasures of Buddhism by reading the 10th portion of the 16th chapter of the 578th scroll of the *Daihannya haramitta kyo* 大般若經 (*Great Hannyā Sutra*) and the *Taira kinko fuko shinji sanmaya kei* 大樂金剛不空真実三摩耶經 (*Sutra preaching on a state of Buddhahood in which it is realized that great pleasure is permanent like diamond, not vanity but real*).

¹⁶³ Ennin was a Tendai priest and the third head of Enryakuji 延暦寺 on Mt. Hiei 比叡山. He traveled to China from 838–847 CE. Upon his return, he promoted the nembutsu meditation of walking and chanting Amida's name. See Kashiwahara and Sonoda, eds. *Shapers of Japanese Buddhism*, trans. Sekimori, 257.

¹⁶⁴ The Ten Suchnesses are a Tendai doctrine which argues true reality consists of ten distinct factors consisting of appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and consistency from beginning to end. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 277.

¹⁶⁵ Three secret yogas practiced by the Shingon lineage. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 277.

mountain is called Futara. It reveals the principles of yin and yang. Its shrines are divided among three places, and are modeled after the Three Powers of heaven, the earth, and man.¹⁶⁶

It is customary when inheriting a lineage to inquire after its origins, but there exist neither an origin story nor a biography by which to surmise the profound significance of this shrine's god's assuming of an appropriate form. The state of the shrine structures seems to have remained unchanged, not as if untold thousands of years had passed. The trees are in a state of aging, and the frost grows old on the pines and elms. There is only a tale from the village elders: an origin story composed of a single scroll, which relates the rebirth of the Middle Captain Ariu.

Incidentally, if we inquire after the origins of the imperial court's ranks of Major Captain and Middle Captain, they had begun in the fifth year of the Jingi era (724 CE), which was the imperial reign of Emperor Shōmu.¹⁶⁷ Incidentally, no one serves our current emperor as such, so the position should be filled. Regardless, in the fourth month of the seventh year of Kōnin (816 CE), Shōdō Shōnin continued his earnest work, and his bestowal on us was revealing the form of the god Sanjo Gongen, who declared such things as: "I have been on this mountain for more than 2080 years.....," etc.¹⁶⁸ From the seventh year of Kōnin (816 CE) back to the progenitor of a hundred kings, Yamato-Iwarebiko-no-mikoto [Emperor Jimmu], is a bit over one thousand and seven hundred years. The remaining three hundred plus years were passed in the end of the reign of the fifth earth deity Ugayafukiaezu-no-mikoto.¹⁶⁹ Also, in the preface of the inscription on

¹⁶⁶ The Principle of Duality in Buddhism is the idea that everything has an opposing side or force.

¹⁶⁷ Short for Middle Captain of the Palace Guards and Major Captain of the Palace Guards.

¹⁶⁸ An itinerant Buddhist monk of Shimotsuke Province in the late Nara and early Heian periods, Shōdō Shōnin was the founder of the religious center on Mt. Nantai (the highest peak in the Nikkō range). Sanjo Gongen refers to the trio of *gongen* of Mt. Nikkō consisting of the Nantai Gongen, the Nyotai Gongen, and the Tarō Gongen. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 277, 437.

¹⁶⁹ Ugayafukiaezu-no-mikoto was the fifth and final earth deity whose son Yamatoiwarehiko-no-mikoto became the Emperor Jimmu, Japan's mythological first emperor who assumed the throne in 660 BCE.

Kūkai’s stele, it states the following, and I quote, “the absence of Dongfang Shuo’s written works [missing characters].”

Just as in ancient times, our origins are unknown. The beginning of the incarnations and appearances of gods and Buddhas is unknown. Herein there is an explanation of the honorable appearance of Futara-no-mikoto in the later years of the age of the earthly deities.¹⁷⁰ Simply, the different ways of perceiving a buddha or bodhisattva is the same as water’s naturally conforming to the shape of a vessel, and the imposing height of the Buddha’s blessings may be like the waxing or waning of the moon as reflected on a river’s flow.

When we take into account that a Buddha, preaching and teaching according to each person’s needs in a rūpakāya, would surely be a Major or Middle Captain in the Kyoto bureaucracy, can we reveal his identity?¹⁷¹ Also, when the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara temporarily manifests, even if they conceal their name in front of ordinary people and serve the court, wouldn’t that individual become a god and then point out the proper way to serve? For now, to promote the faith of gentlemen and ladies alike, I will depict this using kana.

To begin with, there was a court official in Kyoto. He was the Middle Captain Ariu. As he was unparalleled in talent and accomplishment and offered service more loyal than all others, he was esteemed by the emperor and respected by others; truly, no one else could compare. However, perhaps on account of some karma from a past life, he liked to hawk morning and evening.

¹⁷⁰ Futara-no-mikoto is another name for the Mt. Nantai Nikkō god. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 437.

¹⁷¹ A rūpakāya is the physical body of the Buddha. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, it refers jointly to either the *nirmāṇakāya* (emanation body) or the *saṃbhogakāya* (enjoyment body) of a Buddha. See Buswell and Lopez, “Rūpakāya” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 722.

Now then, on a misty spring morning, he spent all day searching for the place where a pheasant he shot down fell; and on a stormy fall night, the first falconry outing of autumn was held. Thus, he spent these days without attending upon the emperor, who was practicing calligraphy under the blossoming trees. They even held a feast accompanied by singing and the playing of string music under the moonlight, yet the Middle Captain still spent night after night away from the court. Since the essence of our Criminal Code is punishment and the foundation of our Administrative Code is ‘recommending the good and punishing the bad,’ there was a royal edict of reprimand toward him. The Middle Captain thought, “To neglect one’s daily duties is to incur a sin. But I must blame neither my lord nor the times. After all, a hunting outing must surely cease. Both hawks and dogs are possessed of a sensibility that transcends human ethics. What a pity it would be to set aside their kindness.” Verily, he thought, “What could I do to hide away, even if it be in the furthest field or remotest mountain?”

He turned to address his horse, Aokage: “I have been reprimanded with an imperial censure. Bear me in whichever direction where there is a place where I can be at peace.” The horse then shed tears and allowed Ariu to mount him. The Middle Captain declared that he could not bring even a single human companion, but he indicated that he wished a hawk and a dog to accompany him. So, a northern goshawk called Kumo-no-Ue, a large male hawk, flew to his hand, and before him there stood a white-headed and black-tailed dog, named Akutamaru.¹⁷² They wept together as they set out, wandering away from the capital.

¹⁷² The northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis fujiyamae*) is a common Eurasian raptor species present throughout much of Japan.

Seven days passed with the Middle Captain entrusting everything to the horse, and he arrived at Mt. Nantai in Shimotsuke Province in the eastern mountain circuit.¹⁷³ There is a river there; the water was deep and it was impossible to ford it to the other bank. However, at the edge of the river monkey grass was growing. Turning this into a bridge of grass, he forded the river and then stopped for a night. When it became bright, he once more set out, leaving everything to the horse. Thusly, he crossed the bridge of monkey grass and returned to his journey. His travels took him to the Shimeji plain, where the cuffs of his tabi socks were continually wet with the morning dew, then across the vast distance of the Nasunoshi plain.¹⁷⁴ One day crossing the Shirakawa checkpoint, then finally to where he saw the irises of the Asaka marsh.¹⁷⁵

It was now the third of the month when he arrived at a place where there stood an awesome person's household.¹⁷⁶ Upon peering into the mansion grounds, he saw that the appearance of its gates as well as the design of the house were absolutely majestic. He took lodging in a hut before the gate and stayed for two or three days. Facing his landlord's wife, the Middle Captain asked her, "What kind of person is this?" She replied, "He is the honorable *chōja* Asahi, and he is well known within the province of Mutsu."¹⁷⁷ He said, "I intend to go into his

¹⁷³ Mt. Nantai is the principal peak in the Nikkō mountains. For details on the eastern mountain circuit, see entry on the five home provinces and seven circuits above.

¹⁷⁴ The Shimeji plain しめぢが原 is a plain that extends from the north of Tochigi City 栃木市 to the town of Tsuga 都賀町 in modern Tochigi Prefecture 栃木県. The Nasunoshi Plain is large expanse located in Nasu District 那須郡 in the former Province of Shimotsuke. It was well known at that time as a hunting ground and was often used as an *utamakura* 歌枕 (descriptive phrases frequently used in poetry).

¹⁷⁵ The Shirakawa Checkpoint 白河の関 (alternatively rendered as 白川の関) was one of the three *sekisho* 関所 (government-maintained checkpoints) in Mutsu Province along with the Nakoso Checkpoint 勿来の関 and the Nezu Checkpoint 念珠ヶ関 (alternatively rendered as 鼠ヶ関). The Asaka Marsh is a swamp at the foot of Mt. Asuka in modern day Fukushima Prefecture.

¹⁷⁶ While the location the Middle Captain Ariu arrives at is not named in this version of the tale, other variations such as the *Nikkō-zan Yurai no koto* 日光山由来の事 state that he arrived in the village on Ono in Mutsu Province. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 280.

¹⁷⁷ The title *chōja* 長者 can refer to a specific Buddhist concept of the *grhapati*, indicating a rich householder who supports Buddhism and the saṃgha. However, it also has a history of being used to simply mean wealthy rural landowner, and the literary figure of the *chōja* Asahi appears frequently within Japanese folk traditions with that

service; how about it?” She replied, “He has no male heirs, only a single daughter of fourteen years old.” As soon as he heard this, his interest was immediately piqued.

Well, he said, “If she is a princess, there must be some kind of servant.” The landlady replied, “My daughter is called Sayakeki and is in service to that person. You should give her a command.” She then left to summon her. The Middle Captain then had a face-to-face meeting with Sayakeki, and he immediately wrote out a letter to the princess, which he then entrusted to her. Sayakeki hesitated over what to do, but since the appearance of the Middle Captain seemed unlike that of an ordinary person, she felt a fondness for him, and at once she gave the letter to the princess. When she opened it she saw:

I have heard rumor,
About the morning sun’s light.
How might I become,
One in service at the court,
With Asahi on my sleeve?¹⁷⁸

The princess’s face reddened. She thought it would be bad if even a scrap were overheard by someone else, so she gave it to her mother. When her mother rushed to tell the honorable *chōja*, his response was, “This must be a respectable person. What’s more, he has the elegant nature reputed of one who serves at court.” He immediately had the Middle Captain Ariu brought inside and went to see him.

second generic meaning. See Buswell and Lopez, “grhapati” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 750; and Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 280.

¹⁷⁸ Here, the poem makes a play on words using the princess’s name, Asahi, which can also literally refer to the morning light.

When he did, he did not see an ordinary person. He wondered if this was akin to the god Hikohohodemi-no-mikoto, who entered the resplendent palace of Watatsumi in order to find his older brother's fishing hook, which he had lost.¹⁷⁹ Because of his dazzlingly shining form, the sea god saw him and he was married to Watatsumi's daughter, Princess Toyotama, all the while protecting and caring for her with love.¹⁸⁰ The moment the *chōja* saw him, he thought, "Truly, this could not be said to be an ordinary person." While rejoicing, he even prepared the western side-house which the princess had long since lived in and turned it into Ariu's everyday living quarters. Ariu and the princess's relationship was not a shallow one. So the *chōja*, who had prayed to the gods and buddhas with no shallow sincerity, thinking, "I have a single daughter; if only I could see her become the wife of a high ranking official," was overjoyed that his plan had indeed reached its fulfillment.

In this way, their relationship deepened, and six years passed. As for the situation in the capital, since the Middle Captain had disappeared, his father, the Major Captain, and his mother's grief and sadness were unbearable. The emperor, too, despite the aforementioned temporary loss of favor, wondered with surprise whence his companion had vanished, and dispatched messengers to the provinces and sought him out. At that time, the Middle Captain had a dream whilst napping. In a field of Amur silvergrass overgrown in every direction, a truly eerie

¹⁷⁹ Hikohohodemi-no-mikoto 彦火火出見尊 (also known as Hoori-no-mikoto 火折尊 and in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki as the god Yamasachihiko 山幸彦) is the son of Ninigi-no-mikoto 天孫瓊瓊杵尊 and the daughter of the mountain god 山の神 Konohanasaku-hime 木花開耶姫 (also known as Kashitsu-hime 鹿葦津姫 and Atatsu-hime 吾田津姫) as well as the father of Ugayafukiaezu-no-mikoto. He was also famed as deity of hunters and the *Nikkō engi* seems to be drawing a distinct and purposeful parallel by comparing the hawking loving Middle captain with the god of the hunt. The full legend of Hoori and his visit to the sea god's castle can be found in English in F. Hadland Davis and Evelyn Paul, *Myths & Legends of Japan* (London: George G. Harrap, 1912), 35–37. Watatsumi 海神 is the god of the sea who controls the sea, rain, and water itself.

¹⁸⁰ Princess Toyotama 豊玉姫 (the Luxuriant-Jewel-Princess) was the daughter of the sea god Watatsumi.

place, there stood for some reason only a single court lady with her silk sleeve hems drooping down with the dew.

He felt pity for her, and upon calling on her he saw it was his own mother. She saw the Middle Captain and without finishing wringing out her sleeve, she said, "Since you abandoned the Capital, six years have already passed, though I lamented, and despite the passage of time, I longed for you. Due to this grief and longing, I am now no longer of this world." Thinking that he saw her go off to the west, into the fields as if vanishing, he awoke from his dream. Now then, the Middle Captain thought, "Even if I were to return to the capital, I would not see my mother, but I will seek even her traces as a consolation." He spoke to the Lady Asahi: "My mother is in the Capital. Without even saying anything, I wandered off and separated from her. Since I am dearly missed, I must take my leave from you for a while." He set off, intent on his destination.

Although the Lady Asahi said "I'll go as well," the Middle Captain responded, "This time, I may not take companions," to which the Lady Asahi said, "In that case, while on the road at least take some attendants and the like." What the Middle Captain said in reply was, "When I left the Capital, too, nothing more than a horse, a dog, and a hawk which accompanied me. I should not exceed that even now." When the middle captain responded thus, without much grief, while knotting a light blue Obi, they held it together and vowed, "If we ever part ways, then may this knot come undone." Furthermore, she said, "There is a river you will reach in the future. It is called the Tsumasaka River. It is said that once you have drunk the water of this river, you can never again meet your wife. Prepare for this, and do not drink!"

The Middle Captain traveled for a single day and at last came to a large river. As soon as he saw its water, the thought that he should drink it flooded his mind. Nevertheless, he remembered the warning the Lady Asahi gave him, and forded the river. Yet, because he was on

the very brink of death, he could not help but drink it. Due to this he fell ill, and spent five days prostrate in a field near the river, suffering. Nevertheless, he began to breathe again.

Now then, what he said when he turned and faced the horse was, “Alas, I do not think I will live for much longer. Quickly now, no matter the direction, take me along to some place where my heart can be at peace.” He then mounted the horse, and he was borne into the mountains in the eastern mountain circuit where he had stayed that first night so long ago. From there, he sent a letter to his honorable mother in the capital. Forlorn, he wrote: “Having seen you in a dream, I set off quickly for the capital, but on the way I fell ill. And now I shall vanish from this world along with the dew on an unknown mountain road. Although my fate in this lifetime was poor, our karmic ties will not decay, and I shall see you in the next life.” And while tying it onto the saddle fork, he said, “You, Aokage, if you understand my ambition of these past years, then carry this letter to the capital.” The horse wept and hurried off towards the capital.

Furthermore, he wrote a detailed letter to the Lady Asahi, as follows:

I have met my fate,
 Due to the water of the,
 Tsumasaka River.
 Oh! My life has now become
 As evanescent as dew.

What he then told the hawk was thus: “The horse has gone to the capital. You, take this letter to the Lady Asahi,” and he entrusted the hawk with the letter. Well now, since the Lady Asahi’s light blue obi had come undone, she felt strange, and at night she was mysteriously drawn away from her home, and while her mind was drawn to it/something she wandered off, and after seven

days she arrived at the Tsumasaka River. The hawk swooped down from out of the blue and dropped the letter. Since this was a letter from the Middle Captain, she replied immediately.

We vowed a bond,
 That light blue sash!
 Will guide me forward,
 You who I am parted from,
 I go now to seek you out.

When the Lady Asahi commanded him, “Hurry up and take this letter ahead of me!” the hawk hurriedly flew off.

In the Capital, the Middle Captain’s mother was dead. And now, after seven days of Buddhist memorial rites, the horse entered the Major Captain’s courtyard and neighed. People recognized him and said, “Oh my! It’s Aokage, the horse on which the Middle Captain rode out on some years ago. Is the Middle Captain here?” and the Major Captain also hurried out to see. Instead of a rider, there was only a letter attached to the horse’s saddle. He hurriedly took it up. It was the Middle Captain’s death letter. As for the Major Captain, one may imagine how this grief added to his anguish at being parted from his wife.

The Middle Captain happened to have a younger brother, the Minor Captain Arushige, who took leave of his father, the Major Captain, and went down from the capital with the horse Aokage as his guide.¹⁸¹ In no time at all, he entered onto a road deep within the mountains. When the Minor Captain hurriedly approached and saw the place indicated by the Middle Captain, the Middle Captain had already passed away. Thinking this a final comfort for the deceased, the Minor Captain tied together a pillow of grass, upon which to lay his brother’s head.

¹⁸¹ Minor Captain here is short for Minor Captain of the Palace Guards.

Oh! To think you would,
Pass on from this mortal world.
Unable to wait,
To meet with the people who
Would come here to seek you.

When he looked to the side, he saw that the reply from the Lady Asahi had been left there. It appeared that the Lady Asahi would quickly set forth on her journey to come find the Middle Captain. He thought, “It must be because their relationship was not shallow that, even though far away, the Lady Asahi thought of him. There was no question that I would come down from the capital. Well then, instead of burying him at once, I should at least show his deceased form to the Lady Asahi, and console her by sharing memories of the Middle Captain from those who now mourn for him.” But alas he felt sorry for her on the path, as the way appeared unfamiliar, and she would be weighed down with tears and wet with the dew. He came up with the thought: “Aokage already knows the way, so I will hurry to go and pick her up.” While he was coming down from the capital, the Lady Asahi was already on her way, thinking, “Although days had gone by, the Middle Captain must still be far away.”

On the bank of the Tsumasaka River, she came across the Minor Captain. The Minor Captain suspected that this might be the Lady Asahi and hurriedly dismounted from the horse, saying, “Hello! I am the younger brother of the Middle Captain. This horse is Aokage. You have probably grown used to seeing him and surely recognize him. I came down from the Capital and entered the provinces in search of the Middle Captain, only to find that he had already passed on. Although I intended to bury him in a grave in the shadow of a boulder, I have come to get you so that I might show his visage to you once more.” Thus, he assisted the Lady Asahi and let her ride

the horse. Having disguised himself, the Minor Captain accompanied her as if he were a mere traveler. Since that time, the Tsumasaka River has been called the Abukuma River.¹⁸²

Lower Scroll

Well, the Middle Captain died and arrived at King Yama's palace.¹⁸³ When he looked around, his mother had come and was outside the entrance gate. And by her side, a lady had arrived. It was the Lady Asahi. They saw each other and wept. Those very emotions became flames and filled the inside of King Yama's hall. King Yama's third attendant spoke thus: "The two women have died untimely deaths inconsistent with their karma. We should return them to the mundane world. The Middle Captain Ariu's death is in accordance with his karma. We should drag him to the face of the Mirror of Judgment and find out his deeds, good and bad!"¹⁸⁴ When the Middle captain Ariu peered into the Mirror of Judgment, there was no escape from his karmic deeds. Yet, because he had made a vow in a past life, he only briefly glimpsed the suffering of falling into the Avīci Hell.¹⁸⁵

The reason for this was that in a past life the Middle Captain had been a hunter of Mt. Futara. In order to provide for her child, this man's mother entered the mountains to pick up

¹⁸² The river name Tsumasakagawa 妻離川 literally translates as "the river of parting with one's wife." The new name, Abukumagawa 阿武隈川 refers to a river in the Tōhoku region which flows into the Pacific Ocean around Sendai. It is often used as an *utamakura* to mean 'to meet.' See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 284.

¹⁸³ King Yama, called King Enma 閻魔王 in Japan, is a Buddhist deity who rules over death and acts as the king of hell. He judges those who have died and assigns them to the appropriate rebirth. See Buswell and Lopez, "Yama" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 1018.

¹⁸⁴ The Mirror of Judgement, rendered in Japanese as the *Jōhari no kagami* 浄玻璃の鏡, is a mirror in King Yama's palace which reveals every good and evil deed a person has done in their life. It is used to help determine the most fitting punishment (such as being assigned to the appropriate hell). See See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 284.

¹⁸⁵ The Avīci Hell, called the *Muken jigoku* 無間地獄 in Japanese, translates as the hell of incessant suffering, and constitutes the worst of the Eight Great Hells. It is where those who commit the most heinous acts within Buddhism are sent to be punished. See Buswell and Lopez, "Avīci" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 86.

firewood and gather fruits. The hunter went into the mountains so he could hunt deer. In order to protect herself from the cold, his mother was wearing deer hides. Alas, when she bent down to pick up fruit in the tall grass beneath a tree, the hunter, thinking she was a deer, shot her with an arrow! When he stood up and looked at what he shot, he saw it was no deer but instead his very own mother. The Hunter lamented, “How sad is this! If we, mother and son, had not both been so poor, then we would never have had to hunt deer or collect firewood. Would I ever have shot my mother before my own eyes if only we had not been so destitute?” His mother replied to him thus: “I am old and have approached the end of my life. Even if I were to survive being shot, there probably wouldn’t be many more years left to me. This is the karmic consequence of deeds done in a previous life. I am only sorry that you have committed one of the Five Great Sins!”¹⁸⁶ So saying, she closed her eyes and breathed her last.

King Yama then spoke: “It is only natural, then, that the hunter would say that although he accepted the suffering that comes with death, he could not accept such dire poverty. So, he vowed thus: ‘I vow that I will become the god of this mountain, and that, in the future lifetimes to come, I will save the impoverished.’ Swiftly return him, and let him fulfill this vow!” Once he said this, the Middle Captain immediately came back to life. The hunter in this story was born as the Middle Captain Ariu and his mother was born as Aokage. The hawk Kumo-no-ue was the child in this story. The dog Akutamaru was the hunter’s wife.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ The Five Great Sins, or *gogyakuzai* 五逆罪, are called *ānantaryakarman*, or acts that bring immediate retribution, in Buddhism. They are enumerated as matricide, patricide, killing an *arhat*, wounding a Buddha, or creating a schism in the *saṃgha*. See Buswell and Lopez, “*ānantaryakarman*” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 40.

¹⁸⁷ Here, the tale of the hunter concludes in exactly the same way as a standard *jātaka* tale by outlining connections between story characters and contemporary figures.

After the Middle Captain's revival, the Lady Asahi became pregnant and bore a child. He was called Lord Batō.¹⁸⁸ This was the reincarnation of Aokage. Now then, the lord Middle Captain went up to the capital and was promoted not just to the very next rank but instead that of Major Captain. He governed the land from the Eight Provinces of Sagami, Musashi, Awa, Kazusa, Shimousa, Ueno, Shimotsuke, and Hitachi to Mutsu. He even granted Mutsu to Lady Asahi's father, the *chōja* Asahi! When Batō was seven years old, he traveled to the capital and had an audience with the emperor. At the age of fifteen, he became a lower captain and within no time at all was further promoted to Middle Counselor.

When the Middle Counselor came down from the capital and stayed with the *chōja* Asahi, a lady-in-waiting whom he had spent a night with became pregnant with a single boy. At the age of three this son had an audience with his father. Yet, when the Middle Counselor saw the child, he found his form to be so exceedingly ugly that this son was sent to live in a place called Ono, in Ōshū, without even paying a visit to the capital.¹⁸⁹ He came to be called Ono Sarumaru.¹⁹⁰ He took up the bow and arrow and surpassed all others in it. Not even one out of every hundred arrows he fired missed their mark. There was not a single instance in which he missed either the birds flying in the air or the beasts roaming on the land.

Incidentally, within no time at all of the Middle Captain Ariu ascending to the rank of Major Captain, he was revealed to be a god and even became the guardian deity of Shimotsuke Province within the Eight Provinces. Thereupon, he repeatedly fought divine battles against

¹⁸⁸ The naming of the child as Batō 馬頭 becomes significant as this story progresses as Lord Batō becomes the god Tarō Daimyōjin who is revealed to be a manifestation of Hayagrīva-Avalokitesvara, known in Japan as Batō Kannon 馬頭觀音.

¹⁸⁹ Ōshū 奥州 is another name for Mutsu Province.

¹⁹⁰ The name Ono Sarumaru 小野猿丸 translates as the Monkey of Ono, emphasizing the child's perceived ugliness.

Akagi Daimyōjin of Kōzuke Province over the territorial boundary of a certain lake.¹⁹¹ As this momentous event was so out of the ordinary, he consulted Kashima Daimyōjin and they held a war council. When the Major Captain Ariu, now the Nikkō Gongen, explained the situation to Kashima Daimyōjin, his advice was thus: “Your grandson Sarumaru is a marvelous archer in Ōshu. Trust in him, and he should be able to fulfill your longstanding desire.”¹⁹²

Thus decided, Nyotai Gongen manifested as a deer with three golden stars on its back and entered Mt. Atsukashi.¹⁹³ Sarumaru taifu laid eyes on a deer not of this world. He chased it all the way to a far-off mountain, and thus entered Mt. Nikkō. The *gongen* had lured Sarumaru onto Mt. Nikkō. With this accomplished, the deer had disappeared. The *gongen* then revealed himself and what he spoke to Sarumaru was thus: “In truth there is no deer. It was an *upāya* to get you to enter this mountain. I am Mangan Gongen.¹⁹⁴ Even you should not regard this mountain so carelessly. Now then, the purpose of all this is so I can make a fervent request. The reason behind it being that Kouzuke Province’s Akagi Daimyōjin is trying to take a mountain lake in my province by force. Because of this, we have met in battle a few times. Even so, there is as yet no decisive outcome. You have a reputation as the greatest archer in the world. Won’t you join your strength with mine and fulfill my longstanding desire?” When the *gongen* finished speaking, Sarumaru readily agreed. This brought a smile to the *gongen*’s face, and lo! it was decided the fight would take place the following day at noon!

¹⁹¹ Daimyōjin 大明神 is a type of divine title given to particularly respected gods in Japan with large numbers of worshippers.

¹⁹² The title *gongen* 権現 is more explicitly Buddhist in origin and translates to manifestation or avatar. It indicates the relevant god is the manifestation form of a specific Buddha or bodhisattva under the *honji suijaku* paradigm popular in medieval Japan.

¹⁹³ Mt. Atsukashi lies at the northern tip of modern-day Fukushima Prefecture in the district of Date 伊達郡. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 284.

¹⁹⁴ Similarly to the title of Great Bodhisattva Mangan used earlier, this is likely referring to the Nikkō god by alternate name as the Nikkō temple Chūzenji was referred to as the temple Manganji in the premodern period. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 437.

The two opposing god's armies set off to meet each other in battle as usual, and each army held their own internal deliberations. Above all else, it was Sarumaru taifu whom the *gongen* relied upon! When the dawn broke at last, Sarumaru taifu set up a watchtower among a thicket of various trees and in this way eagerly awaited his enemy. Then suddenly the sky grew cloudy; the mountain winds swayed the trees and grass, and whitecapped waves had now risen wildly atop the lake's surface. Since this was something Sarumaru had prepared for in advance, he moistened his bowstring with his mouth, nocked an arrow, and laid in wait.

As he thought, "Is this my enemy coming here?" an entity appeared on the surface of the lake. Its eyes were like a row of mirrors. The innumerable giant legs were no different than if a great many fires were set ablaze. The *gongen* had taken the form of a giant snake! The cries of enemies and allies alike reverberated throughout the mountains and hills. Thunder clapped above the clouds and over the water, lightning flashed, and Sarumaru's senses were completely overwhelmed. The enemy was a centipede, and he saw clearly that its eyes shone brightly. On a bow so powerful it normally took three men to string it, he took up and nocked an arrow fifteen palms long. He held this fine draw for awhile yet, and then loosed it at his enemy. The whistling arrow flashed across above the water and hit its mark, piercing deep into the centipede's left eye. This being a life-threatening wound, it was beyond its power to continue the fight, so it retreated.

For lo, Sarumaru had struck the *gongen*'s foe! Now then, the Nikkō Gongen felt deeply moved by the extent of Sarumaru's loyalty, and what he said to Sarumaru was thus: "You have great prowess with the bow and arrow. You have fulfilled my longstanding wish; you smote my enemy and have seized this land. Recall your origins, that you are my grandson. Henceforth, this domain is entrusted to you. Alongside my son, Tarō Daimyōjin, it shall be that you bestow your

blessings on all sentient beings in these foothills.¹⁹⁵ And lo, you will be appointed as the *kan'nushi* of this mountain!”¹⁹⁶ Thus said, Sarumaru felt a great eagerness, and the various gods were pleased and danced their traditional dances and sang songs. Since they were so merry and enjoyed themselves there, the southern shore of the lake was thenceforth dubbed Uta-no-hama, or the Singing Beach.

Sarumaru looked out and saw purple clouds gather on the three mountain peaks and flow down towards him. Waves of many colors formed atop the lake, and he smelled an otherworldly scent on the breeze. From within the strange cloud, a single crane flew down. Above its left wing appeared Hayagrīva-Avalokiteśvara, and the Bohisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta could be seen above its right wing. That crane immediately transformed into a woman and said “Tarō Daimyōjin is Hayagrīva-Avalokiteśvara. Your original form is the Bohisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta. You will become the god of the Forest of Ono, and you should guide the *kan'nushi* of these mountains.” This said, she disappeared completely.

To our awe, the *gongens* manifested themselves as Nikkō Sanjo in Shimotsuke Province and as Kashima Daimyōjin in Hitachi Province. They were married in a previous life. Their vows were such that they will not reward neither the wickedness of humans nor their jealousy and the mocking of the poor. Further, they will take pity on those in great poverty as well as the orphans and aged. Well indeed, the original form of the hawk called Kumo-no-Ue was the Bodhisattva

¹⁹⁵ The term blessings used herein specifically refers to the Buddhist concept of *anuśaṃsa* which constitute the rewards of those who live a virtuous life including wealth, a good reputation, self-confidence, a peaceful death, and a good rebirth. See Buswell and Lopez, “*anuśaṃsa*” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 54.

¹⁹⁶ Hayagrīva-Avalokiteśvara, or the Horse-necked Avalokiteśvara and known in Japan as Batō Kannon 馬頭観音, is a wrathful form of Avalokiteśvara and the patron of horses in Japanese Buddhism. See Buswell and Lopez, “Hayagrīva” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 347.

Ākāśagarbha.¹⁹⁷ The dog called Akutamaru was the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, and was revealed to us as the present Mt. Takao.¹⁹⁸ The horse Aokage was the grateful Tarō Daimyōjin, the trace form of Hayagrīva-Avalokiteśvara. The Major Captain Ariu was the Nantai Gongen, whose original form was Sāhasrabhujasāhasranetrāvalokiteśvara, and the Lady Asahi was the *nirmāṇakāya* of the Nyotai Gongen, Amitābha Tathāgata.¹⁹⁹

Long ago, at the time when the venerable Shōdō pushed onward to found this temple, he found he could not ford the wild river of a ravine. When he had prayed fervently for help, the god Jinja-Daiō appeared before him and spoke out, “For the sake of Genjō Sanzō, I saved him from the hardships of the flowing sands.²⁰⁰ Monk, you have shown your resolve here!” This said, the god threw down two serpents, and they became a bridge over the river. Shōdō then walked across it.²⁰¹

After this, the eldest son Tarō Daimyōjin relocated to Mt. Kotera in the district of Kawachi, of the same province, and was named Futara Daimyōjin.²⁰² There is a great road to the south of the altar there, and the god will grow angry and punish our comrades who pass through there who do so minor a slight as to not perform the courtesy of dismounting their horses and

¹⁹⁷ The Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha, meaning the ‘Womb of Space’ and known in Japan as Kokūzō Bosatsu 虚空藏菩薩, is one of the eight great bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna and tantric Buddhism. See Buswell and Lopez, “Ākāśagarbha” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 26.

¹⁹⁸ The Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, meaning ‘earth store’ and known in Japan as Jizō Bosatsu 地藏菩薩, is one of the eight great bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna and tantric Buddhism alongside the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha above. The Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha is known in Japan as the patron of children, travelers, and community thresholds. See Buswell and Lopez, “Kṣitigarbha” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 448.

¹⁹⁹ Sāhasrabhujasāhasranetrāvalokiteśvara, or Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Avalokiteśvara, is one of the manifestations of the bodhisattva of compassion and is known in Japan as Senju Kannon 千手觀音. See Buswell and Lopez, “Sāhasrabhujasāhasranetrāvalokiteśvara” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 736.

²⁰⁰ In the Mahāyāna traditions, the *nirmāṇakāya* of a Buddha is the bodily form visible to ordinary beings and constitutes one of their three bodies alongside the *dharmakaya* and *sambhogakāya*. See Buswell and Lopez, “*nirmāṇakāya*” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 587.

²⁰¹ This legend recounting Shōdō Shōnin’s founding of Nikkō, and specifically its famous bridge, is widely popular. It can be found in English in Davis and Paul, *Myths & Legends of Japan*, 241.

²⁰² Mt. Kotera 小寺山 is an old name for a small mountain to the south of the Utsunomiya Futarasan Shrine now called Shitamiya-yama 下宮山. See Sakurai, Hagiwara, and Miyata, eds., *Jisha engi*, 287.

bowing to it. Therefore, it was respectfully relocated to the mountain north of the shrine fence. That pine forest encircled shrine on Mt. Futara keeps the rituals of Ise Grand Shrine hidden from the public eye, and going according to these wishes it reveals the logic of Ise's outer shrine.²⁰³ Even if one says inner enlightenment and outward actions are the same, the Bodhisattva vows made by the gods of this shrine to soften their light in our world for the sake of saving all sentient beings are truly superior to all others.²⁰⁴

The reason is thus, when there is no delineated *sīmābanda*, women who themselves suffer from the five obstacles can walk by, one cannot karmically distinguish between good and evil, and even evildoers who commit one of the four great sins of killing, robbing, committing adultery, or lying will clasp their hands together in prayer.²⁰⁵ Also, eating fish, fowl and beasts shortens the length of time they must spend in their long cycle of death and rebirth, and this will surely cause them to reach a world of Buddhist enlightenment. In order to bring them into contact with Buddhism, either sacrifice them to the gods or use them as offerings. The great compassion and mercy shown by the Buddha's in their *upāya* is undoubtedly akin to how immersing something in indigo will turn it blue.

Halfway through the first year of Jōhei, the bandit leader Taira no Masakado rose up in rebellion.²⁰⁶ At that time, the gods lent us their almighty power, the Kusanagi sword appeared

²⁰³ The exact references used here are *naikū* 内宮 (inner shrine) and *gekū* 外宮 (outer shrine). To this author's knowledge these phrases are used solely to refer to the Grand Shrine at Ise, though there is a possibility it refers to a delineation in the older Nikkō Futarasan Shrine. Should this indicate Ise as believed, the inclusion of the imperially backed Ise Grand Shrine in this *engi* is worth further study as it appears the *Nikkō-zan engi* is asserting Mt. Nikkō as on par with Ise, and therefore the religious authority of the imperial family itself.

²⁰⁴ Based on ownership of the *engi* translated herein, *tōsha* 当社 (this shrine) is believed to refer to the Utsunomiya Futarasan Shrine 宇都宮二荒山神社.

²⁰⁵ The term *sīmābanda* here refers to the boundary around a geographical area in which monks and nuns would gather to perform their duties and recite scripture. See Buswell and Lopez, "sīmā" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 824.

²⁰⁶ Taira no Masakado is considered the first large scale rebellion to threaten the Imperial household's position in Japanese history. See note 125.

from in front of the shrine, and the bandit's head was delivered to the capital. Thus, since being granted the honored title as a shrine of the first rank, the five subjugations of Taira no Masakado, Abe no Sadato, the Taira clan, Fujiwara no Yasuhira, and the Mongols were by this god's power.²⁰⁷ Consequently, through generations of divine monarchs and Shogunal households, he has never not been revered.

In general, this land has perfect topography for the gods of the four cardinal directions with a river to the east, wide road to the west, polluted land to the south, and a mountain to the north. The river of the Azure Dragon, Guardian of the East, flows eastward, and the road of the White Tiger, Guardian of the West, extends into the west.²⁰⁸ In the front, a deep pond is filled to the brim, and the gills of the dragon god are buried in its cavernous depths.²⁰⁹ To the rear, mountain cliffs tower high, and there appears a single splendid mountain in the shape of a turtle spirit. The landscape excels in the highest degree, and further the miracles of the gods and Buddhas can be seen through its shrine festivals.

²⁰⁷ Taira no Masakado is covered above. Abe no Sadato was a rebel leader in a dispute largely confined to premodern Mutsu province wherein the Abe clan revolted against the Imperial family and were defeated by Minamoto no Yoriyoshi. The Taira clan mentioned herein refers to the defeat of the Taira clan by the Minamoto during the Genpei Kassen 源平合戦 (Genpei War). For more information see the chapter on the Genpei War in Bryant, Anthony J. *Early Samurai AD 200–1500*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1991. Fujiwara no Yasuhira 藤原泰衡 was the last ruler of the Ōshū Fujiwara 奥州藤原氏 (Sometimes translated as the Northern Fujiwara) whose semi-autonomous fiefdom included ancient Dewa and Mutsu Provinces and held a capital at Hiraizumi 平泉. Yasuhira sheltered Minamoto no Yoshitsune 源義経 from his elder half-brother Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 for a time before ultimately betraying him to Yoritomo. However, Yasuhira was himself defeated by Yoritomo's forces shortly afterward. The Ōshū Fujiwara capital at Hiraizumi was sacked and Yasuhira was killed ending the clans rule in northern Japan. For more on Hiraizumi and the Ōshū Fujiwara, see MacKenzie M. Coyle, "Re-Centering the Northern Periphery: International Trade and Regional Autonomy in the 'Hiraizumi Century,'" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2021). Finally, the famous Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281 can now be understood through interactive readings of the scrolls commissioned by Takezaki Suenaga 竹崎季長 to commemorate the events. See Tom Conlan, "Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan," (Princeton University, 2020). <http://digital.princeton.edu/mongol-invasions/>.

²⁰⁸ The Azure Dragon 青龍 and White Tiger 白虎 are two of the four directional guardian deities, protecting east and west respectively, alongside the Black Tortoise 玄武 (Guardian of the North) and the Vermillion Bird 朱雀 (Guardian of the South).

²⁰⁹ The specific deity being referenced is unknown.

The so-called twin Otari shrine festivals began with the Emperor's imperial prayer, and the *pūjjā* of the third and fifth lunar months began with the prayer of the Shogun.²¹⁰ The Chrysanthemum infused sake of the Chrysanthemum feast flows neatly into a small puddle in front of the shrine, and the Fall Mountain's Adornment Festival wherein the leaves change color pays exemplary focus to the offerings of duckweed and mugwort as well the offering of rice to the gods. As for the clapper's hand-ropes of the five field paddy watchmen, they have long hid the ancient traces of the premier rice field of Takamahara.²¹¹ Yet more, in the light of the bonfire of the sacrificial storehouse of the ruler of hunters, some of the ancient words of the deer scapulimancy performed by the fortunetellers of the Department of Divinities are still preserved.²¹²

Fin

²¹⁰ A *pūjjā* is any ritual in which offerings are made. See Buswell and Lopez, "pūjā" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 679.

²¹¹ Takamahara 高天原 is the realm of the gods in Japanese mythology.

²¹² The *urabe* 占部 were fortunetellers in the Department of Divinities 神祇官 in the *ritsuryō* 律令 system of premodern Japan. This section appears to be explicitly seeking legitimacy by tying the shrine to the earlier centralized religious bureaucracy.

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