

**Maruyama Incidents:
Shinto Authority and Fuji Faith in Imperial Japan**

By

Avery Morrow

M.A., The University of Tokyo, 2018

M.A., St. John's College, 2014

B.A, Carleton College, 2010

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This dissertation by Avery Morrow is accepted in its present form
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Date _____

Janine Sawada, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date _____

Jason Protass, Reader

Date _____

Kerry Smith, Reader

Date _____

Caleb Carter, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

David Lindstrom, Dean of the Graduate School

Vita

Avery Morrow's prior education includes Carleton College, where he read Religion, and St. John's College in New Mexico, where he read Eastern Classics. From 2015 to 2018 he attended the University of Tokyo, where he obtained an M.A. degree in *Religionswissenschaft-Religionsgeschichte*. His essay "Shinto and Numinous Healing in Meiji Japan" is forthcoming in the edited volume *A Century of Reiki* from University of Hawai'i Press. His work has been published in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, the *Journal of Religion in Japan*, and *Japanese Religions*.

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INTRODUCTION

In Japanese religious studies, the doctrine of the nineteenth-century Maruyama movement has been presented as a classic example of anti-modern, anti-imperial, radically independent thought in the late nineteenth century. I was first introduced to the movement through Miyata Noboru's 1970 book *Miroku shrinkō no kenkyū*. Based on period newspaper reports, Miyata presented the Maruyama *kō* (confraternity) as a strange rural cult founded by a man who “saw himself as a god” and who preached that the world would soon be thrown into chaos and “Maruyama *kō* believers alone would survive.”¹ Later, I learned about the influential thesis of Yasumaru Yoshio, who had read the actual Maruyama doctrine behind the sensational newspaper reports and proposed that it appealed to a “common morality” (*tsūzoku dōtoku*) based on premodern ideas of self-sufficiency and rejecting imperialism and centralization.

The Maruyama *kō* is succeeded today by a religious organization called Maruyamakyō. In 2020, I set out to translate a section of Maruyamakyō's scripture *Oshirabe*, out of interest in better understanding this “common morality.” As part of the massive primary source compilation *Nihon shisō taikei*, Yasumaru had

¹ Miyata, *Miroku*, 323. Miyata removed this passage from the second edition of *Miroku*, probably because Yasumaru's research showed that it was not the whole story.

excerpted a section of the dense and difficult *Oshirabe*, showing off passages that promoted fascinating and obscure religious and folk concepts and that opposed mainstream Meiji ideology. However, in Maruyamakyō's full text of the *Oshirabe*, I found other, stranger things: a divinely inspired rearrangement of the Three Articles of Instruction issued by the Meiji government to religious groups, and the Maruyamakyō founder bragging that he had received a promotion within the Sect Shinto (*kyōha Shintō*) bureaucracy. I searched Japan's National Diet Library and found a digitized copy of a Maruyama publication from the founder's lifetime, hoping to compare it against the modern scripture. Not only were the contents completely different from *Oshirabe*, but this book took a much more optimistic approach to modernity, comparing the founder's revelations to the latest scientific experiments by psychologists in France.²

This was something rather different from the “common morality” being attributed to the Maruyama movement as a whole. The contradiction between Yasumaru's selections and these other passages was puzzling to me. What could be the explanation? As I began pulling at these threads, an entire world revealed itself to me. The Maruyama movement had anti-modernization aspects, but it was also so much more. As the movement transitioned from traditional neighborhood confraternities (*kō*) to a national “church” (*kyōkai*) over the course of 1868 to 1945, it encountered and reacted to various ideas of mountain religion, community, nationality, Japaneseness, and religiosity. To some extent, the story of the

² Saitō and Urushibara, *Shinkyō jutsugi*, vol. 4, 3.

Maruyama movement was the story of the making of national identity in Imperial Japan.

This introductory chapter summarizes two types of past academic studies of the Maruyama movement. The first type, which is better known among religion scholars, has analyzed the teachings circulating in the Maruyama movement and observed how they interacted with hegemonic beliefs, the popular anti-hegemonic concepts of *yonaoishi* and *miroku*, and the construction of Shinto. The second type has described social disturbances and economic impacts of the Maruyama movement using sociological data, sometimes integrating critique of Maruyama practices or leadership. After this, I provide an overview of the contents of the dissertation and analyze some issues with the primary sources available to us.

The Maruyama movement in the history of ideas

Until 1952, the Maruyama movement had no independent legal existence. From its unknown founding through 1875 it was a single *kō* meeting, which then came under the influence of a Shinto sect known primarily as Fusōkyō. As it spread throughout the country, it split from Fusōkyō in 1885 and reorganized beneath another sect, Shintō Honkyoku. But even prewar Shinto scholars separated the Maruyama group from both parent organizations and analyzed what they considered the independent teachings of its founder.³ As the contemporary scholar

³ Inoue N., *Keisei*, 68–9.

Isomae Jun'ichi observes, these prewar studies focused on the value of Shinto sect founders as “teachers of the masses” who “gave Shintō the power to compete even with Christianity” and thereby contributed to the spiritual health of the Japanese state.⁴ One such Shinto scholar, Tanaka Yoshito, published a study of Maruyamakyō in which he remarked positively: “It is worth noting that [Maruyamakyō doctrine] recognized the sanctity of the Rising Sun Flag at a time when the concept of a national flag had not yet spread among our people.”⁵ The rest of Tanaka’s brief summary of Maruyamakyō history and doctrine resembles a censor’s inspection, finding everything in order and nothing out of line at the time of his research in the 1930s. Isomae notes that Tanaka’s “positive attitude did not extend to those aspects of Sect Shintō that were incompatible with the state authorities, such as ... certain ideas of their founders.”⁶

The 1960s sparked new interest in precisely those areas of incompatibility. Heralded by Murakami Shigeyoshi’s 1958 *Kindai minshū shūkyōshi no kenkyū*, a new generation of “people’s history” researchers sought to locate an independent popular consciousness in the teachings of Tenrikyō, Kurozumikyō, Konkōkyō, Ōmoto, Maruyamakyō and Renmonkyō, all groups that at one point or another aligned themselves with “Sect Shinto.” This new scholarly approach, employing the term *minshū shūkyō* or “popular religion” instead of *shinkō shūkyō* “new(coming) religion,” emphasized a popular subjectivity which had not been the concern of

⁴ Isomae, *Religious Discourse*, 251.

⁵ Tanaka, “Shintō Maruyamakyō,” 55.

⁶ Isomae, *Religious Discourse*, 251.

earlier Shinto studies professors. The activities of “popular religions” were often placed in opposition to a “State Shinto,” a hegemonic religion or religious system supposedly imposed by the Meiji regime.

Carol Gluck notes of this generation of scholars that they rejected the modernization theory shared by prewar scholars and postwar liberals, as well as developmentalist Marxism. “Popular religions” as idealized by these historians did not seek equity or justice within the Meiji capitalist ethic, but rejected its “fake *Zeitgeist*” through “*yonaoshi* [world-renewal] risings” which called for a return to value systems common among the people.⁷ Janine Sawada points out that despite this rejection of most of modernist historiography, these scholars retained a core modernist belief: “popular religions” were claimed to be the product of a Japanese people that was becoming aware of their autonomy as individuals and, to various extents, desiring to empower themselves rather than placing their faith in higher powers.⁸

A core text in this popular religions paradigm was a 1966 study of the Maruyama movement, coauthored by Yasumaru Yoshio and Hirota Masaki. For Yasumaru and Hirota, the core doctrine of what they called “Maruyamakyō” was belief in “self-discipline” originating in a “common morality” (*tsūzoku dōtoku*). They traced this to Maruyamakyō’s origin in Tokugawa period popular worship of Mount Fuji, as popularized and propagated by Jikigyō Miroku (1671–1733). They portray

⁷ Gluck, “People in History.”

⁸ Sawada, *Faith*, 17f.

Jikigyō as originating a popular cult characterized by an emerging rationality which eliminated “magical and religious” beliefs and focused people’s attention on self-discipline and, as Yasumaru later put it, a “philosophy of mind.”⁹

Yasumaru and Hirota write that in Maruyamakyō doctrine, “people's illness and poverty also compel people toward self-transformation—that is, common moral self-discipline.” Unfortunately, they explain, these teachings took time to instill, and as the Maruyama movement grew rapidly, believers proved unable to understand the basis of social change in self-discipline. Instead, the movement embraced post-medieval “magical and illusory” beliefs about the founder’s divinity, which caused the group to fantasize about the downfall of the Meiji regime. The Maruyama movement is compared to the Taiping Rebellion, to the German Peasants’ War, and to the False Dmitry impostors of Czarist Russia who are said to have captured the hopes of peasants for *yonaoshi* world-renewal.¹⁰ It must be noted that all these points of comparison were violent uprisings, while there was virtually no violence involved in the Maruyama movement during the lifetime of its pacifist founder.

After Yasumaru highlighted the Maruyama movement’s alignment with “popular religion” historiography, other scholars took note. Haga Noboru, a prolific scholar of Edo and Meiji period culture, took up “Maruyamakyō” as a major example of “*yonaoshi* thought” in his 1973 book on that subject, and returned to the topic

⁹ Yasumaru, *Minshū shisō*, 29–44.

¹⁰ Yasumaru and Hirota, “Yonaoshi,” 59.

several times over the following decades.¹¹ Murakami Shigeyoshi devoted a central section of his 1982 book *Kokka Shintō to minshū shūkyō* to the dramatic early life of movement founder Itō Rokurōbei. The Maruyama movement, alongside such famous examples as Chiba Takusaburō's Itsukaichi Constitution, was now a case study that demonstrated a strain of independent, progressive thought among non-elites.

At the end of the 1980s, a new generation of religion scholars rediscovered the historicity of “popular religions” and connected them back to Shinto, this time with a more careful concern for their subjectivity. Kozawa Hiroshi's 1988 *Ikigami no shisōshi* was one of the first books to reconsider the supposed opposition to modernization, giving credit to the active negotiation of religious and Shinto identity. Kozawa focuses on the prewar history of Konkōkyō, not from an “anti-modern” perspective but based on the idea of modernity as a social construct which Konkōkyō was able to participate and mold to its own needs. Notably, Kozawa insists that religious studies scholarship cannot merely bask in nostalgia for the perceived “anti-modern” intent of long-dead religious founders but must also have a purpose to their scholarship for those living in modernity.

In 1992, Koyasu Nobukuni was able to position himself and Katsurajima Nobuhiro as pioneering a “pivot” in popular religion research, away from the idea that any cooperation with the state was a “deviation” from the posited anti-modern

¹¹ Haga, *Yonaoshi*, and “Maruyamakyō.”

or anti-state essence of “popular religions,” and towards the idea that cooperation could actually have affirmed the beliefs of at least some members.¹² Katsurajima’s work on Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō highlighted how reinterpretation of key words used by these groups brought them into alliance with the goals of the Meiji state.¹³ Simultaneously, Inoue Nobutaka published *Kyōha shintō no keisei*, demonstrating the way in which Shinto groups and *minshū shūkyō* together constructed the concept of Sect Shinto, which became part of an imperial period “religious system.”¹⁴

The Maruyama movement had been the central exhibit of not just Yasumaru but several of the “people’s historians.” The movement’s history and teachings seemed to offer evidence for the existence of a “common morality,” or at least demonstrate that some popular resistance to state ideology manifested in religious terms. Scholarship has pivoted away from this for some decades, and the idea of a “common morality” shared among large populations of the premodern Japanese archipelago has been critiqued from various sides.¹⁵ Despite the multitude of new studies analyzing different aspects of new religious movements in the Meiji period, however, the Maruyama movement, the supposed exemplar of “common morality,” has mostly gone untreated. In the 2010s, Nagaoka Takashi, relying largely on a 1932 Maruyamakyō compilation of oral history, noticed some of the discrepancies

¹² Koyasu, “Tenkan.”

¹³ Katsurajima, *Bakumatsu*.

¹⁴ Inoue N., *Keisei*, 7.

¹⁵ Isomae, *Religious Discourse*, 65; Isomae, “Shisō,” 306–315; Yasumaru, *Shisōshi*, 96–103.

that I described above and used them to suggest that Yasumaru's preoccupations caused him to overlook other major aspects of the movement.¹⁶

Recent works in English have introduced new angles and complexity to various aspects of this debate. The idea of *yonaoshi* (world-renewal) as a single form of thought with a revolutionary motive has been called into question by Takashi Miura's *Agents of World Renewal*. Miura shows that *yonaoshi* was used in various contexts throughout the Edo and Meiji periods and was not synonymous with "revolution." *Yonaoshi* gods were believed to bring about the revitalization of specific local communities, comparable to modern-day desires for *machiokoshi* or *machizukuri* (community uplift, community building) in rural Japan. If there was no theme of "revolutionary," "messianic," or "millenarian" thought in Japanese peasant life, it becomes harder to explain the reports attributing such thought to rural Maruyama members.

Janine Sawada's *Faith in Mount Fuji* has tackled the complicated topic of Tokugawa period Mount Fuji faith associated with Jikigyō Miroku. Sawada shows that Jikigyō did not have a single-minded concern with self-cultivation. Rather, Jikigyō put Fuji at the center of multiple interlocking types of meaning: Fuji as a provider of health, responsive to healing prayers; Fuji as a physical landscape, bringing pilgrims into connection with the cosmos; and especially, Fuji as a central deity who served as the cosmic womb of creation and was believed to have ushered

¹⁶ Nagaoka, "Fujikō-teki mōsōryoku" and "Kindai Nihon."

in a new age of economic and political reform. While Jikigyō condemned those who accepted money for prayers, his critique came along with endorsement of Fuji healing traditions such as talisman distribution.

In an earlier publication on the Maruyama movement itself, Sawada called into question Yasumaru's assertion that "for [founder] Itō [Rokurōbei], the source of divinity and truth is located within one's own self." She concluded that Rokurōbei would "never [have] allow[ed] that God is in any way dependent on one's mind" and that the Maruyama movement operates in a "fundamentally theistic framework."¹⁷ This point is reemphasized in *Faith in Mount Fuji*: the Fuji faith's unique articulation of divinity and healing power must be understood on its own terms and not set up as a precursor to modern psychology or atheistic philosophies.

These clarifying works in English call into question these concepts of *yonaoshi* and self-cultivation which seemed to apply all too well to the Maruyama movement in the earlier work of the "people's historians." If the Maruyama movement did not have a revolutionary tradition of *yonaoshi* thought to rely on, then did it indeed have any revolutionary or rebellious aspects, and if so where did they come from? If the purpose of Maruyama doctrine was not solely to urge moral discipline on *kō* members, then what was that doctrine trying to accomplish? How did members connect the Maruyama *kō* to prior Mount Fuji worship and emerging ideas of Japaneseness and empire?

¹⁷ Sawada, "Mind and Morality," 122, 124–5.

Social history and the Maruyama movement

Meanwhile, a second type of scholarly analysis of the Maruyama movement was always present, aiming to document the disruption it caused to communities in central Japan and possible links to liberal social movements. The earliest such studies were two articles published by an ex-Maruyamakyō staff member named Taima Seishi about the impact of the movement on villages in rural Shizuoka prefecture. These short articles were consumed by massive footnotes sharing inside stories from the movement's height in the 1880s, including lengthy anecdotes of financial corruption and power disputes. Taima's contribution is unique; it is not clear why he relegated his findings to a pile of footnotes, and his lack of precise sourcing leaves something to be desired, but his publications remain invaluable. The earliest outsider study in this vein was by sociologist Haraguchi Kiyoshi, who contextualized the Maruyama movement in relation to the politics of Meiji period Shizuoka. Haraguchi's end goal was to demonstrate the impact of the Maruyama *kō* on rural economics and politics, not to illustrate life or beliefs within Maruyama communities. As a result, Haraguchi relied largely on court records and newspaper sources—sources which tend to have biases and lapses in their coverage of new religious movements.

Taima and Haraguchi were followed by several other sociological studies, published in very low-circulation specialty journals, but whose authors were equally if not more diligent in their methods. In 1984, Takeda Yasuhiro studied Maruyama

kō uprisings in Nagano as regional history and unearthed many documents from local archives in Nagano, which showed that apocalyptic teachings, whatever their origin, deeply affected the Maruyama movement for many years. Starting in 1986, Suzuki Masayuki produced in-depth studies of Maruyama *kō* in Shizuoka and their relationship with larger and more famous economic uprisings in the 1880s. Suzuki was granted access to the private Maruyamakyō archives and made available some interesting documents from there in his Ph.D. dissertation, published in 2014. Suzuki considered rural Maruyama members' excessive faith in higher powers to have obstructed the potential for rural participation in liberal movements.

The social historian Emura Eiichi made a serious attempt to unite these two streams of research. Like the aforementioned sociologists, Emura was principally interested in Maruyama participation in social movements, but unlike them, he dug deep into the hundreds of surviving manuscripts of Maruyama doctrine, hunting for points of sociological interest. Like Yasumaru, Emura noticed that concrete calls to political action were lacking, but he also noticed a chronological shift in doctrine, from explicitly apocalyptic prophecies in the early 1880s to more quietist ideas in the 1890s. Lacking a thesis as compelling as Yasumaru's, Emura limited himself to publishing short overviews: a section in the multi-volume compendium *Kōza Nihon no minzoku shūkyō* (1979–80), anonymous contributions to the Kanagawa prefectural history project (1967–1983), and a chapter in his 1984 study of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement.

The sociological literature on the Maruyama movement leaves some questions unanswered. Haraguchi showed, interestingly, that the Maruyama *kō* was not the only Fuji *kō* in 1884 Shizuoka with apocalyptic beliefs. If this is the case, what made the Maruyama *kō*, with its origins in distant Kanagawa, especially appealing to local farmers? Emura concluded that there had been changes to Maruyama doctrine over time, but why did Rokurōbei change his teachings, and if he did not, who ordered those changes? Moreover, given the harsh criticism of the Maruyama movement by secular authorities, why was it never suppressed in a similar fashion to the suppression of the new religions Renmonkyō or Ōmoto in later decades?

Approach and summary

These past approaches have had some blind spots. Emura Eiichi excepted, the social historians tended to ignore how Maruyama doctrine was replete with existing concerns about Shinto, religion, and Fuji faith, while religion scholars and historians of thought, despite their insights into the depths of Maruyama doctrine, have neglected the complex human relationships and power struggles which shaped the beliefs and practices of the Maruyama *kō* during its height. I intend to draw on both of these bodies of scholarship in a more detailed investigation covering the murky origins of the Maruyama *kō* in the early 19th century, the birth of a mass movement during the integration of the Maruyama *kō* into Fusōkyō, the split into

two organizations, and finally the activities of the independent organization Maruyamakyō through 1945.

Chapter One provides an overview of the tradition of pilgrimages to Mount Fuji and the formation of Fuji pilgrimage *kō* (confraternities) in late eighteenth and nineteenth century Japan. I intend to show that in an era before centralized education and national identity, Fuji confraternities formed an important opportunity for social belonging for many in east-central Japan, both in rural and urban areas. I also introduce the early experiences of Itō Rokurōbei, who went on to become *sendatsu* (spiritual leader) of the small Maruyama Fuji *kō* in Kanagawa Prefecture.

Chapter Two introduces a second major protagonist of the Maruyama story, Shishino Nakaba. I show that Shishino, a scholar of Kokugaku (National Learning) from southern Japan, became involved in organizing and licensing Fuji *kō* confraternities in the Meiji period not out of faith in Fuji but from a single-minded concern with transforming the confraternities into a National Teaching (*kokkyō*), that is, something like a state religion grounded in a “purified” Shinto. I also outline Shishino’s long battle with Itō Rokurōbei, whose vision for the Maruyama *kō* combined traditional Fuji *kō* beliefs and his own ascetic commitments. I argue that the debate between Shishino and Rokurōbei was not only a question of who would have authority over the *kō*, but also the very purpose and meaning of the *kō*.

Chapter Three introduces the beliefs, motivations and practices of Maruyama *kō* members in the Tokyo-Kanagawa area during the group’s expansion from 1875–

1884. I focus first on the attitudes of *kō* members towards their bodies and experiences, and then on the different types of texts that were produced by Shishino and his Kokugaku allies to try to shape the Maruyama *kō* based on their ideal of a National Teaching. Especially of note is how many of the texts from this period emphasize liturgy and administrative organization rather than attempting to directly influence doctrine. The success of Shishino's transformation of Fuji *kō* offers insight into categories such as "faith" and "doctrine" traditionally imposed on religious organizations by sociology.

Chapter Four explains a clash of values between Shishino's and Rokurōbei's groups which led to a dispute over Maruyama *kō* finances and to the sudden appearance of Maruyama-based apocalyptic prophecy in Shizuoka, which has been the focus of past sociological analysis. The final third of the chapter discusses Rokurōbei's personal intervention into the power struggle, which I have dubbed the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons. I show that Rokurōbei attempted to integrate the believers in apocalypse into a plan to cleanse the Maruyama *kō* of financial mismanagement and dramatically increase its national prestige, but that he failed to provide a detailed, logistical vision for how this could be accomplished.

After surveying the logistical fallout of the split between Shishino's sect, Fusōkyō, and the newly created sect, Maruyamakyō, Chapter Five explains the struggle to overcome or work around the effects of the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons. I show that even during Rokurōbei's lifetime, Maruyamakyō had begun the process of transforming from a charismatic movement to a religious institution dominated by

bureaucratic authority. The final section demonstrates that Maruyamakyō was collapsing at the time of Rokurōbei's death and that Rokurōbei's followers had largely abandoned him by this time.

Chapter Six focuses on the Maruyamakyō sect's network-building with pro-Shinto political leaders to restore its reputation after Rokurōbei's death, including a new commitment to a "portable" Sect Shinto identity which could inject an essential Japaneseness into foreign settlements. First, I discuss Maruyamakyō's involvement in the War God Rite (Gunjinsai), an official Shinto rite conducted in Korea to sanctify the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5. Next, I explain how and why so much of the attention of Maruyamakyō headquarters from the 1900s through the 1930s was devoted to nurturing tiny overseas missions in Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Seattle. I conclude that Maruyamakyō headquarters attempted to bolster the sect's *raison d'être* by making its expression of Shinto useful to the Japanese cause.

An epilogue surveys a 1952 internal debate in Maruyamakyō over what conclusions and independent values should be drawn from the group's complicated history, which trailed off without resolution. I observe that although other Japanese new religious groups like Tenrikyō attempted a "return" to the imagined pure ideals of their founder, Maruyamakyō's history demonstrates the impossibility of returning to an original purity.

Finally, at the very end of this study, the especially curious reader will find an appendix in which I evaluate the reported membership numbers for the Maruyama movement over the course of Rokurōbei's lifetime.

Notes towards source criticism

The Fuji faith organization which eventually split into Fusōkyō and Maruyamakyō produced a surprisingly complex body of primary sources. As mentioned above, when compared with each other, these sources contain contradictions in basic tone and outlook which need to be resolved through comparison and application of historical context. In this section I will lay out major issues I encountered while reading through the principal primary sources of Maruyama movement history. As I hope to revise this dissertation for publication, these notes will be useful for myself; I cannot predict if they will be useful to anyone else.

There are two major hagiographies of Maruyama movement founder Itō Rokurōbei: *Maruyama kyōso ichidai kiryaku* (“Abbreviated Life of the Maruyamakyō Founder,” 1903), hereafter *Kiryaku*, and *Maruyama kyōsoden* (“Biography of the Maruyamakyō Founder,” 1955), hereafter *Kyōsoden*. Even this basic fact requires obnoxious *Redaktionsgeschichte*-style interrogation. From 1894–1899,¹⁸ a brilliant and eccentric Shinto philosopher named Aoikawa Nobuchika was hired by Rokurōbei’s adoptive son to produce a massive hagiography of his father entitled *Shōtoku Kōgyō ichidaiki*, hereafter *Ichidaiki*. *Ichidaiki*, which is seemingly

¹⁸ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, inside cover.

no longer extant,¹⁹ was abridged into *Kiryaku* due to space limitations,²⁰ but also in a politically conscious manner, for instance erasing all of Aoikawa's references to Urushibara Shika, a female associate of Rokurōbei who split from the group after his death. Aoikawa went missing in Shizuoka in 1909,²¹ but his editors continued to revise the *Kiryaku* in private publications for Maruyamakyō members.²²

One of the later editors of *Kiryaku*, Yuri Jun'ichi, began work on a new hagiography after World War II. Yuri still had access to *Ichidaiki*, and quoted excerpts at length for new, postwar political reasons (for instance, restoring Urushibara Shika to the narrative) while also seeking out many other new sources, both print and oral. Compared to other hagiographers of his time, Yuri had an especially difficult burden. As Nagaoka Takashi observes, postwar Japanese new religious movements often drew on police reports and skeptics to demonstrate their founders' resistance to state oppression.²³ Yuri located a few official documents, but in this case the period critics did not really paint an uncomplicated picture of resistance, as we will see. The end result of this work is *Kyōsoden*, which has become the bedrock upon which all subsequent study of Maruyamakyō history has lain. Therefore, *Kiryaku* is a selective redaction of *Ichidaiki*, but *Kyōsoden* also

¹⁹ At least, it does not appear in the catalog of Maruyamakyō's archives, was not used by a 1979 hagiography by Aoki Kōun ("Shōden") and has never been referenced in Maruyamakyō publications after 1955. Maruyamakyō stopped replying to my queries in 2024 so I cannot know if it was really lost.

²⁰ Itō Iten, preface to *Kyōsoden*, 1.

²¹ Shimao, "Shinkaronja," 92.

²² First edition 1903, second edition 1913; third, expanded edition 1920–1923; sixth edition 1930; seventh edition (highly abridged) 1941. This dissertation cites the third edition, which is digitized and easily accessible through the National Diet Library Digital Collections. I believe it to be, conveniently, the most complete edition.

²³ Nagaoka, *Shūkyō bunka*, 211–253.

provides very large and more faithful quotations from *Ichidaiki*. Before the advent of digitization, *Kyōsoden* was also the only source readily available to scholars.

Ichidaiki, *Kiryaku*, and *Kyōsoden* are all hagiography, which may be seen as a cross-cultural genre that filters historical fact through the attitudes held towards respected leaders by the communities that emerged around them.²⁴ My use of these texts in this dissertation raises several interpretative issues. First, there is the issue of miracles. Maruyama sources claim that Rokurōbei as well as a few other Maruyama *kō* members fasted for extreme lengths of time, sometimes multiple months. Such claims are likely to be viewed with skepticism by modern readers. I report accounts of extreme asceticism neutrally as “social facts;” they are important for understanding the appeal of the Maruyama *kō* and were not problematic at the time. Similarly, we have no way to investigate the widely attested claims that Rokurōbei could emit healing light from his fingers, as this practice was not continued after Rokurōbei’s death. The scientific verification of Rokurōbei’s miracles is needless to say beyond the scope of this dissertation.²⁵

Rokurōbei’s hagiographies are replete with citations. *Kiryaku* and *Kyōsoden* identify *Ichidaiki* as the source of their large quotations, and *Ichidaiki* itself reports on a large body of period sources, which one might expect to be heartening for a scholar. However, these period sources are mostly inaccessible and are not free of trouble. For instance, the lost *Ichidaiki* cites a so-called diary of Urushibara Shika’s

²⁴ Rondolino, “Prolegomena.”

²⁵ For similar discussions regarding the interpretation of Western hagiographical literature, see Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 8, and Eire, *They Flew*, 20–23.

ascetic practice, but this diary, if real, was subjected to later editing. On pages 118–9 of *Kyōsoden*, Yuri provides an *Ichidaiki* quotation from Shika’s diary entry about an 1873 conversation between Rokurōbei and a prison guard on the dangers of “foreign religions” (*gai shūkyō*). This supposed 1873 diary entry is an incongruous use of the word *shūkyō*, which is generally understood to have been introduced in 1874 by Mori Arinori.²⁶ Furthermore, on pages 165–6 of *Kyōsoden*, Yuri again provides an *Ichidaiki* quotation from a *completely different source*, an “Itō household record,” which says that the same conversation about “foreign religions” happened during a separate arrest in 1874. One of these sources has copied the other, which Yuri reports despite being bothered by it, and both accounts of this conversation were probably written years after it allegedly happened.

Another source used in these hagiographies is still extant in manuscript: a chronology of Rokurōbei’s ascetic practice, written by Ōishi Saburōhei in 1886.²⁷ However, the hagiographies do not mention that there was an earlier chronology, which is referenced by the marginal source *Shintō Maruyama Takasago Kyōkaijo kiin ryakki* (1888).²⁸ This missing text apparently discussed Rokurōbei’s earlier perception of his mission, using terms which sound less Shinto and more Buddhistic. In contrast, Ōishi lists Rokurōbei’s ascetic acts in a barebones manner,

²⁶ Isomae, *Religious Discourse*, 35. Krämer, *Shimaji Mokurai*, 44–5, discusses the lack of consistency and frequency in uses of the term *shūkyō* prior to 1874.

²⁷ Ōishi Saburōhei 大石三郎平, “Inchō sonshi goshugyō no bu” 院長尊師御修行之部, 1886, manuscript, collection of Maruyamakyō honcho, photocopy in Kanagawa Prefectural Archives. Incidentally, Ōishi was the father-in-law of Motoki Fukuharu who compiled multiple extremely useful oral histories, cited heavily in Chapters Three and Four. (Motoki, “Ōishi Saburōhei”)

²⁸ Shida M., *Takasago*.

with no discussion whatsoever of how the founder saw his mission at the time. If Ōishi indeed relied on the older text, he must have redacted it severely.

These two examples exemplify the challenge of reliably documenting this small religious group. Already by the 1880s, in the midst of Rokurōbei's career, texts were being rewritten, abandoned, and possibly redacted for ideological reasons. We cannot exclude the possibility that some sources were fabricated. The original 1899 hagiography which assembled the extant texts of that time is no longer extant, and both of our major sources are selectively edited from it. Despite this, as a general rule I have accepted most statements made in the *Ichidaiki* and the *Kyōsoden*.²⁹ Non-denominational sources tend to back up their accounts. Notably, *Ichidaiki* was written in the 1890s when most of those who witnessed the major events of Rokurōbei's life were still alive, and Aoikawa worked with the Maruyama community to assemble his narrative.³⁰

What I have found is that the most difficult or historically notable aspects of Maruyama history are not directly contradicted by forgeries or lies in these hagiographies, but are passed over in silence, becoming “unknown unknowns” to the reader. Yuri's research for *Kyōsoden*, compared to his prewar work, had the noble goal of assembling and presenting every possible source on Rokurōbei's ascetic practice and revelations still accessible in 1955, but the genre of hagiography still gave him a convenient excuse to avoid digging into troublesome realities in

²⁹ I write *Ichidaiki* and not *Kiryaku* here purposefully. *Kiryaku* was redacted for both financial and ideological reasons, as I explained above, and as a redaction has little to recommend itself.

³⁰ Itō Iten, preface to *Kyōsoden*, 1.

Maruyama movement history. He was also dealing with a small community that had probably lost most of its institutional knowledge, and it is likely that he never knew about, for example, the financial issues discussed in the first half of Chapter Four. Generally, one does not know what is missing from these texts until comparison is made with other sources. Much of my historical research for Chapters Three through Six has focused on uncovering these “unknown unknowns.”

By historical accident, perhaps, no Maruyamakyō staff member ever went rogue and assembled a full thesis about the dramas recounted in Chapters Four and Five. It is possible that only a few of them knew the whole story. The closest source we have is Taima Seishi, whose footnote-heavy geography articles were described above. The other internal sources documenting the incidents in Shizuoka are a hand-scrawled mimeograph by Motoki Fukuharu that includes a basic ground-level overview, a testimony by Katagiri Makoto that survives only in a heavily redacted hand copy, and Sasaki Chiyomatsu’s *Minshū shūkyō no genryū* (1983), which was written seemingly from memory and contains many errors and implausible anecdotes a century old.³¹

As noted, from 1874 to 1885 the Maruyama *kō* was under the legal control of a larger Fuji organization, today called Fusōkyō. A hagiography of Fusōkyō’s founder Shishino Nakaba, Ozawa Hikochi’s “Fukkyō nenpu,” provides a completely different window on this time period, offering minute details about internal

³¹ Motoki, “Kikigaki;” Katagiri, “Takinosha;” Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*.

disputes inside the administrative offices. It is interesting to see Rokurōbei depicted as an administrator and a subordinate rather than as a founder and a saint. However, this source is biased to the point of absurdity. Shishino Nakaba was a highly controversial figure—many Fuji religionists considered his leadership oppressive and corrupt, and the union of the Maruyama *kō* and Fusōkyō was collapsing even as Shishino lay on his deathbed in 1884. Ozawa Hikochi was an extreme partisan who wrote the hagiography to defend Shishino from multiple attackers. Like *Ichidaiki*, this text omits important events and details, but unlike *Ichidaiki*, its distortions are blatant and sometimes malicious, as has been observed by Ōtani Masayuki.³²

Ozawa views the Maruyama movement as misguided souls. He displays condescending sympathy for his former coworker Rokurōbei,³³ but he is deeply bitter about the 1885 split between Maruyama and Fusōkyō and especially detests a staff member named Takaoka Koreyoshi who seems to have engineered the split. Ozawa's white-hot grudge towards splittists tinges the latter half of the book. For instance, his discussion of Shishino's final hours is dominated by an accusation that Takaoka abandoned Shishino on his deathbed, which Ozawa describes as a final act of betrayal and cowardice. However, Ozawa is concealing the fact that Shishino's wife Tsuyako was mentally ill and demanded many impossible things of Shishino's

³² Ōtani M., *Kakugyō-kei*, 228.

³³ Ozawa depicts Shishino's relationship with Rokurōbei as one of teacher and student. In fact, as will be seen in great detail in the coming chapters, each learned from the other.

caretakers.³⁴ Shishino's own dying words showed only regret for Takaoka's absence, not anger.³⁵ It is likely that the scene at Shishino's bedside was unpleasant, and one can imagine Takaoka suffering a mental breakdown, but in this case as well as others, we can only speculate. Ozawa's manuscript was revised for private publication in 1981, at which time it was severely abridged.³⁶ I judge Ozawa's "Fukkyō nenpu" as useful for the unique facts it offers but completely useless for understanding the motivations of key players, either on Shishino's side or Rokurōbei's side. In Chapter Four I have attempted to reinterpret the facts presented by Ozawa with the assistance of other texts, and the reader will have to be the judge of my success.

Finally, I must mention my use of the 1895 book *Shintō no fuhai: dai ippen: Maruyama Kyōkai no bu* ("The Rot of Shinto: Part One: Maruyama Kyōkai") by Nanba Tōhatsu. Nanba was a muckraking journalist on the religion beat in 1894–6. He also wrote books attacking fortune tellers and Tenrikyō. The origins of Nanba's book on Maruyamakyō appear obvious to me. Many writers of this time period considered Japan's new religious movements as a stain on Shinto grounded in embarrassing superstition. Nanba likely talked to Fusōkyō leaders, who had a very

³⁴ A document found by Shirosaki Yōko ("Sono 7") describes Tsuyako demanding to be referred to as the director of Fusōkyō and instructs church leaders to avoid placing her too close to men or having long conversations in her presence, alongside many other demands. A document in the Tokyo Metropolitan Archives shows that Takaoka sponsored Tsuyako's teaching license after Shishino's death. Tsuyako's name does not appear in the published redaction of Ozawa's text. For other such fascinating omissions by Ozawa, see Chapter Four.

³⁵ Takahashi, "Fusōkyō," 1016.

³⁶ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 11. The nature of the redaction is not explained but is easy to imagine from the remaining text, which I judge to still reflect Ozawa's thoughts (Otani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 231, has an example of the sort of minor edits Fukuda introduces).

deep grudge against Maruyamakyō at this time, and perhaps also to disaffected Maruyamakyō members. He obtained internal documents, which are reprinted apparently verbatim, and learned from his sources what sort of accusations would be legal to print. (Maruyamakyō had been highly litigious through 1891 and many newspaper articles about it were formally retracted, but Nanba seems to have had no issues.) I place no value on the pages he devotes to generic personal attacks and innuendoes, but I believe the documents he supplies are authentic. I have attempted to balance Nanba's obvious selection bias against other sources.

There are other curious sources I could highlight here, but none are so problematic as these.³⁷ Any of my source texts, taken alone, has important omissions. As I compared them together with close attention to the chronology of events, I discovered that one tended to explain the omissions in the other, and collectively they provided a coherent and logical narrative. Chronology, rather than any specific interpretative technique, has guided my attempt to make sense of this movement and chart its rise and fall.

³⁷ In Chapter Three, we will briefly meet with one Kinoshita Hirotaka, a Buddhist apologist who believes that roly-poly bugs and songbirds are useless to humanity because they produce no economic value. In Chapter Six, a text by Ujihara Shinpei is cited in which Urushibara Shika, the source of the modified diary described above, relates a story of a deceased child who reincarnated as a newborn with a Maruyama talisman in its mouth. Incidentally, a much later source reports that Shika was initially illiterate but became able to write because Rokurōbei prayed for the spirit of calligrapher Kanō Motonobu to descend into her (Takahashi, *Reiteki seikatsu*, 96–7). I cannot find a place for such stories in this already overloaded narrative...

CHAPTER ONE:
A PILGRIMAGE AND ITS *KŌ*,
1854–1870

As a child in the 1830s, Itō Rokuzō (later Rokurōbei¹) would play and climb on a miniature reproduction of Mount Fuji near his home. The small, artificial hill of dirt and stone had been built just a few decades earlier, scooped by hand onto a mud flat around a lazy river. This Fuji mound, Fujizuka in Japanese, served as a place for a group of would-be mountain pilgrims to gather, to renew their vows to the mountain and the moral values which it taught them, and to celebrate their community. A little stone altar to Mount Fuji stood at the top of the hill, and the boy Rokuzō and his brother would pick flowers to offer to the altar and develop their own rituals. They dropped leaves, grasses and little shells into cups of water, and Rokuzō planted branches of pine and sacred *sakaki* in the ground.²

Just a few hours away on foot was the great city of Edo, home of the shogun and residence of all the daimyo families of Japan. For many people passing by here on their way to the city, Edo was the center of power, but Rokuzō had his own

¹ Rokuzō's childhood name was Kiyomiya Yonekichi. Upon his adoption into the Itō family in 1852 at the age of 24, he took the name Itō Rokuzō. To reduce confusion over the course of this dissertation, I will use "Rokuzō" in this chapter, dealing with his life before his salvation mission began, and "Rokurōbei" in future chapters.

² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 12.

center. His neighborhood of Fujizuka was named after the mound where he played, and his family, the Kiyomiyas, had been the ones to build it. In other words, Rokuzō's childhood was shaped by Fuji, both inside and outside his home. Fuji had made his family different, and his reverent attitude towards the Fuji mound, according to his brother, marked the boy as different from other children.³ As an adult, Rokuzō frequently rode to Edo on business, but as Edo underwent rapid change, both his Fujizuka and Fuji itself assumed ever greater importance to him.

The story of the Maruyama movement, which would come to involve the lives of hundreds of thousands of others, begins with Rokuzō's encounter with Mount Fuji. This encounter was mediated by a self-sustaining communal organization called a *kō*. The special values and beliefs taught by Japan's Fuji pilgrimage *kō* are the only way to explain Rokuzō's unique reaction to the 1868 Meiji Restoration. They will also help us understand why Rokuzō's subsequent activities were so appealing and convincing to other farmers and merchants who shared his faith in Fuji (*Fuji shinjin*).

This chapter therefore has two tasks. First, I will introduce the form of the Fuji pilgrimage that took place on the northern Yoshida route, as experienced by a commoner in the mid-19th century. Second, I will try to interpret the belief system of the Fuji *kō* as something that arose in tandem with this pilgrimage. Why would worldly merchants in a suburb of Edo feel any need to make offerings to a geological

³ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 12.

feature? Why would someone choose to revere Mount Fuji rather than a more humanoid divinity or Buddha, and how could a mountain reflect any specific system of moral values? All of these questions are part of the puzzle of the Fuji *kō*, and by answering them, we can understand the motivations we will see emerge in the coming chapters.

A Fuji mound in Kanagawa and its patron Itō Rokuzō

The Fuji mound still sits today in the region called Noborito in Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture, on the same mud flat where a small group of local farmers and merchants assembled it over two centuries ago. On top of the mound, a small, old stone altar contributed by the Maruyama movement and marked with their logo sits neglected behind a newer, unmarked wooden altar, and from time to time, visitors walk up the steps and pay their respects to Mount Fuji before the wooden altar (Figure 1). Off to the side, a small stone shrine, undisturbed for centuries, bears the date 1809 and the name Kiyomiya Denzaemon, a member of the main line of the Kiyomiya family,



Figure 1: Present state of the Fujizuka in Noborito. Author's photo, May 2024.

of which Itō Rokuzō's birth parents were a branch. This date, which is likely the year the mound was built, provides the earliest hard evidence of the Maruyama *kō*.⁴

At the bottom of the mound is a small carving of Shōmen Kongō, an East Asian Buddhist guardian deity. Drawn standing, he is flanked by the sun and moon above him, and by the Three Wise Monkeys (Speak No Evil, Hear No Evil, See No Evil) below him. He is the protector of the *kōshin* ritual, a sexagenary night vigil aiming to prevent evil and preserve health by restraining three worms said to inhabit the body. Below the image of Shōmen Kongō, an inscription records the names of those who commissioned the carving. The letters are virtually illegible due to centuries of wear, and the Maruyama community never bothered to record them in print, but again, one can barely make out the surname Kiyomiya.

The Fuji pilgrimage *kō* in Noborito was called Maruyama (“Circle Mountain”), which describes its logo: the Chinese character for mountain inscribed in a circle, which was (and is) stamped on pilgrimage outfits to identify its members. The circle implied completeness, distinguishing the perfection of Fuji from other mountains. Unlike some other Fuji *kō*, which can be traced back to an individual founder, the Maruyama *kō*'s origins are obscure. An Itō family record claimed the *kō* was founded in the 1750s, but the earliest actual record of it is the 1809 inscription, and the Fuji mound itself was likely built at this time, with dirt fill moved from the bed of the nearby Tama River to an empty plot near the

⁴ Yuri, “Maruyama *kō*,” 4–5.

Kiyomiya house.⁵ After 1809, the record is silent, excepting the murky childhood memory of Rokuzō himself playing on the mound in the 1830s.

Even assuming the Maruyama *kō* was dormant, the young adult Rokuzō was probably quite close to other *kō* in his neighborhood. These regular neighborhood functions were part of the ordinary cycles of village life and were operated with a common horizontal, congregation-based structure. We know the Kiyomiya family also co-sponsored the local *kōshin kō*, the members of which would stay up all night once every two months to preserve their life force. His adoptive Itō family were members of the Haruna *kō*, which placed monthly contributions in a common fund. In times of drought, a later local source reports, the Haruna *kō* would use the fund to send representatives to Mount Haruna, two days away far to the northwest of Edo, to appease the god of the mountain and pray for rain.⁶

Monthly or bimonthly *kō* meetings were self-organized by villagers and required no outside leadership or official authorization. The most popular *kō* in Noborito—the Fuji *kō*, Haruna *kō*, Ōyama *kō*, Mitake *kō*, Ise *kō*, and so on—were those which allowed the neighborhood’s farmers to save up for group pilgrimages to one of Japan’s many sacred sites.⁷ Pilgrimage was permitted by legal authorities as a rare exception to the restrictions on travel by non-samurai between the countries

⁵ Yuri, “Maruyama *kō*,” 3, 4n1. This mound was recognized by a larger Fuji *kō* called Yamatomi, headquartered on the banks of the Tama River, along with several other Fuji mounds belonging to their group, but there is no direct evidence of relation in traditions, beliefs, or practices with the Yamatomi *kō* or any other *kō* lineage (Itō Mutsuo, “Kigen”). The Yamatomi *kō* had members in Noborito at one point, but the exact dates of this are unknown (Masuda, *Kawasaki*, 80).

⁶ Nagashima Tamotsu, *Nikaryō*, 108; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 107.

⁷ Itō Iten, “Mandō biraki.”

of the Japanese archipelago. Even when the pilgrimage was not imminent, attendance at the *kō* ensured regular contributions to the community fund, offering a demonstration of trust and an opportunity for socialization across neighborhood and career divisions. Pilgrimage *kō* therefore combined shared interests in regular parties, faith, travel, and leisure, while also pooling neighborhood funds. From these pleasant associations arose natural opportunities for mutual aid and community care.

The young Itō Rokuzō is remembered as an active, if not particularly boisterous, participant in these friendly cycles of village life. The Maruyama movement paints him as an exceptionally gentle youth, seeing traces of the saintly figure he would later become; they recall him being mocked as “Rokuzō the Willow” (*yanagi no Rokuzō*).⁸ His hagiographers describe his diligent labor and temperance, but those who later came to oppose the movement remembered him as a lush; they claim he had the name *Gozaroku*, that is, Sleepy Roku, or even *Nomuroku*, Drunkard Roku.⁹ At the very least, as an active participant in the Haruna *kō* and Fuji *kō*, Rokuzō would have enjoyed the massive drinking parties held to celebrate successful pilgrimages.¹⁰

His most well-attested nickname, *Bamanroku* or Horse Manroku, speaks to his love of horses and concern for their wellbeing. He scolded those who mistreated

⁸ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 4; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 24.

⁹ Nanba, *Fuhai*, 8.

¹⁰ Itō Iten, “Mandō biraki.”

horses, and he refused to eat the meat of horses or cattle.¹¹ In 1852, Rokuzō was adopted into the Itō family, another merchant household. His work selling charcoal for the family business frequently took him on horseback rides to Edo. On these occasions, he and his friends took pleasure in singing various riding songs to make each other laugh. However, Rokuzō would often repeat a single popular verse over and over: “Fish live in the lakes / Birds live in the trees / But men live only at / Another’s mercy.” His frequent repetition of this oddly Biblical-sounding tune (Matthew 8:20) grated on the ears of his companions, who requested that he try singing a different song. According to the legend, Rokuzō only smiled and said, “I like this song. When I’m out on a walk singing it, it’s new each time I hear it.”¹²

After some decades of apparent dormancy, in the early 1850s the Maruyama *kō* was revived by a blacksmith named Yoshida Kinpei.¹³ Now, once again, the villagers were regularly contributing money with the intent of organizing pilgrimages. Kinpei would bring together the neighborhood for a ceremony called *takiage*, where incense and firewood was arranged in the shape of Fuji, covered with

¹¹ A memory reported by Ogiwara, “Konjaku (6),” 23, and separately by hagiographers including Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 21. Cattle were used for farm labor at this time, not primarily for meat.

¹² Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 9; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 47.

¹³ Yuri (“Maruyama *kō*,” 5–7, and *Kyōsoden*, 32n5) provides only the vaguest information about Yoshida Kinpei. Only the Maruyama critic Nanba (*Fuhai*, 8) remarks that he was originally a blacksmith (confirmed a century later by Ogiwara, “Konjaku (5),” 37). Researcher Ōtani Masayuki (*Kakugyō-kei*, 255–6) thinks it odd that all information about the pre-1872 Maruyama *kō* seems to have been lost, even though its early leadership lived into old age—Kinpei in particular was later a church leader. Some early *kō* figures had internal interviews recorded by Maruyamakyō’s second president Kuniyoshi. Perhaps Kinpei was not considered worth interviewing because Maruyamakyō considered its own origins unremarkable prior to the beginning of Rokuzō’s (Rokurōbei’s) divine mission in 1870. Kinpei’s faith may have been Buddhistic and may have met with opposition from Rokurōbei; see footnote below.

folded paper, and burned to cure illness.¹⁴ Kinpei called himself a *sendatsu*, the name for a mountain guide versed in the rituals and powers of the mountain. As he joined his ancestral Fuji *kō*, Rokuzō was also being introduced to a different way of thinking about the landscape around him.

Shortly after Rokuzō was adopted into the Itō family, in spring 1853, he fell ill. Kinpei prayed over him, reading from a weathered manuscript entitled *Fuji nankyō*, which he explained was an *otsutae*, a transmission received from past generations of Fuji *kō*. Kinpei rubbed the *Fuji nankyō* on Rokuzō's body to heal him. He also taught Rokuzō how to pronounce mysterious, indecipherable Chinese-like characters written on the front of the document. Kinpei explained that *Fuji nankyō* contained deep meanings beyond what Kinpei was capable of ascertaining for himself; to really understand these texts required contemplating their origin in Mount Fuji and receiving revelations from the Fuji deity Sengen, a task to which Rokuzō now applied himself.¹⁵

The Haruna *kō* and *kōshin kō*, while they offered certain connections to invisible forces, did not use these kinds of documents. The Maruyama *kō* operated in a lineage said to have originated with Kakugyō Tōbutsu (1541–1646) and Jikigyō Miroku (1671–1733), two laypeople who had labored to bring the blessings of Fuji to the public. Both men were named after their most famous *shugyō* or ascetic practice: Kakugyō, whose name means the “block practitioner,” stood on bent toes

¹⁴ General information on meetings and *takiage* from Earhart, *Fuji*, 90. Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 36–7, seems to attest to the form that *takiage* took in these early years.

¹⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 29–30.

on a block, while Jikigyō, the “food practitioner,” starved himself to death. Kakugyō and Jikigyō had given new meaning and popularity to the preexisting Fuji pilgrimage and associated practices of granting wishes and healing. Rather than keeping the blessings of Fuji a secret for a few initiated mountain masters, the texts attributed to Kakugyō and Jikigyō encourage pilgrimage to the mountain by all, describe Fuji as the origin of the world, and explain how to use its powers for healing and restoring individuals and society.

By the early 1870s, Itō Rokuzō had become familiar with these teachings. According to the Maruyama community’s hagiographies, Rokuzō’s route to knowledge of Mount Fuji began with joining the mountain pilgrimage with his neighborhood *kō*. Let us therefore reconstruct this pilgrimage according to what Maruyama *kō* members would have experienced in the 1850s.

A model Fuji pilgrimage in 1854–60

In 1854, the year after his healing, Rokuzō set out on his first pilgrimage to Mount Fuji together with other participants in the Maruyama Fuji *kō*. He returned a changed man and told anyone who would listen of the revelations he had received.¹⁶ He made a second recorded pilgrimage in 1859, and a third in 1860; there may have been others.¹⁷ We have no reports about what he witnessed on these first trips, but the fact that Rokuzō took at least three pilgrimages in six years, at

¹⁶ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 30–31.

¹⁷ Yuri, “Maruyama *kō*,” 6.

no small expense, shows that the physical activity of traveling to and ascending Fuji was essential to his growing faith in the mountain. Period travelogues, maps, and Fuji *kō* scriptures allow us to reconstruct the experiences that Itō Rokuzō and Yoshida Kinpei might have shared during their first three Fuji pilgrimages.

A pilgrimage guide from 1847 opens with these words: “Mount Fuji is the national body [*kokutai*] of our mythical land [*fusō*], the origin of men, immortals [人仙 *shintai*], and all things.”¹⁸ This belief that Mount Fuji was the center of the world and the origin of living beings lay at the core of the Fuji *kō*’s unique devotion. Mount Fuji created rice and water, making life possible, as well as being the origin of all the gods and Buddhas.¹⁹ While Sengen shrines—both large ones with wooden buildings and small ones like Rokuzō’s Fuji mound—honored Fuji as the deity Sengen, Sengen could be associated with various other beings, such as the mountain protector Fudō Myōō, the cosmic buddha Dainichi, or the mythological figure Konohanasakuyahime.²⁰ The Fuji *kō* additionally acknowledged Sengen as the Original Father-Mother (*Moto-no-Chichihaha*). To climb Fuji was a chance to be reborn and meet with one’s own progenitor and the origin of the universe.

Fuji pilgrimages generally took place in the sixth and seventh months, when the snow on the mountain had receded and the dangers of the hike were somewhat less.²¹ The *kō* would use its own internal process to decide who would have the

¹⁸ Nagashima Taigyō, “Fujisan shinkei no zu,” 277.

¹⁹ Sawada, *Faith*, 98.

²⁰ Takeya, *Saijinron*, *passim*.

²¹ Miyazaki, “Female Pilgrims,” 374.

privilege of climbing. In some instances, boys would be sent to Fuji after turning fifteen as a rite of passage.²² In the early Tokugawa period, those preparing for the pilgrimage purified their bodies with water and refrained from eating meat and fish for one hundred days before beginning the climb. They were not permitted to handle objects that had been touched by women, and if they dreamed of a woman at night, they were required to do one thousand water ablutions.²³ Jikigyō attempted to relax these requirements, instructing “those faithful to Fuji” (*Fuji shinjin no gi*) to go about their business normally until the final night before the pilgrimage began, when they would begin to abstain from sex and limit their food. He permitted them to eat rice, but also some kinds of fish, which had been forbidden in earlier custom. Jikigyō also insisted that women were not impure and need not be avoided by pilgrims.²⁴ The Maruyama *kō* probably adhered to Jikigyō’s reforms.

On the morning of the pilgrimage, initial meeting places varied between the *kō*, but it was common to meet at a local monument inscribed with the characters *kōshin*. Many such stones stood in various places in Edo to commemorate the night-long *kōshin* vigils, but *kōshin kō* had no explicit relation to Fuji *kō*, and some Fuji *kō* erected their own *kōshin* inscriptions; the Maruyama *kō* inscribed a *kōshin* stone in 1870 which still stands today.²⁵ This linked the pilgrimage into traditional East Asian cycles of time, elements, and directions. The Maruyama *kō*’s *kōshin* stone was erected in the southwest corner of the town of Noborito, because the term *kōshin*

²² Iwashina, “Edo,” 27.

²³ Miyazaki, “Nyonin kinsei,” 63.

²⁴ Sawada, *Faith*, 103, 110.

²⁵ Itō Iten, *Image*, 165.

corresponds to the southwest in the cosmological cycles, although the pilgrims were actually about to walk north through the mountains to the town of Yoshida.²⁶

The pilgrims now donned white shirts, stamped with words and symbols marking past successful pilgrimages. The color white, which they shared with professional mountain ascetics, represented the purity they sought through their rituals. As the pilgrims came together, this uniform distinguished them from the public. As with many pilgrimages, the state of being in pilgrimage was cherished in itself. Allan Grapard comments regarding mountain pilgrimages in general that “as soon as the pilgrims set out on the road, they became foreigners: the pilgrims were and were not themselves as soon as they moved into a realm which transcended their former knowledge of the world.”²⁷ This idea of a temporary, liminal state is echoed several times on the course of the pilgrimage, as walking through the Fuji landscape or performing specific actions is meant to traverse boundaries.

The pilgrims would chant constantly as they marched to the mountain, tending to harmonize their voices. The original Maruyama *kō* alternated between *rokkon-shōjō*, an originally Buddhist vow to protect the purity of one’s six senses, and *namu-amida-butsu*, a phrase originally used to call on Amida Buddha for salvation and rebirth in the Western Pure Land.²⁸ Both of these chants were also popular in Shugendō and in other mountain *kō*, but they carried new meanings for

²⁶ For further details on Fuji *kō* and *kōshin* see Kawai, “Seichi shinkō to eto.”

²⁷ Grapard, “Flying Mountains,” 206.

²⁸ A newer phrase derived from Kakugyō’s *ominuki*, *kōkū-taisoku*, was introduced as a chant by Jikigyō: Endō, “Kōsō,” 3. It came to be endorsed as a chant in the 1870s by Fusōkyō (see next chapter). None of these phrases is used by Maruyamakyō today (see Chapter Four).

the Fuji *kō*. The *rokkon-shōjō* chant kept purity in the consciousness of pilgrims at many mountains, but according to Jikigyō and the Fuji *kō*, bodily taboos were less important to purification than realizing one's pure heart through moral behavior.²⁹ As for the Pure Land, the Fuji *kō* understood it to be located within Fuji itself. Jikigyō criticized those who would face west to pray towards lands far distant from Fuji, and a poem ascribed to him identifies Fuji's Hitoana cave as the true "Pure Land of Namu Amida Butsu."³⁰ For Jikigyō, the much-repeated phrase *namu-amida-butsu* became separated from its etymological origin in the Buddha Amida, creating a new, customary interpretation which would become important to the Maruyama *kō* in particular.

After winding through tall, forested mountains for a day or two, the trail opened onto a majestic view of Fuji. Before the pilgrims lay the town of Yoshida, their final stop before the mountain itself. With soil too poor to sustain fields, but plenty of water for cooking and ablutions, the economy of this town was devoted mainly to offering lodging to pilgrims and preparing them for their journey with ritual purification. Unlike the twenty-first century, when many Fuji hikers breeze through town on their way up the mountain, it was a requirement for pilgrims from Edo to spend at least one night at the base of the mountain to spiritually prepare themselves for the ascent.

²⁹ Sawada, *Faith*, 110–112.

³⁰ Jikigyō, "Ichiji fusetsu no maki," 505; Iwashina, *Rekishi*, 72; see also Sawada, *Faith*, 125.

The lodging houses, called *shukubō*, were run by specialists called *oshi* or “prayer masters,” who developed patron-client relationships with specific *kō*. The 1850s Maruyama *kō*, for instance, may have stayed in Yoshida with the heirs to Jikigyō’s loyal disciple Tanabe Jūroemon.³¹ In the off-season, when Fuji was too cold to climb, *oshi* would ride on horseback to villages throughout southeastern Japan, where they would distribute talismans imbued with the healing power of Fuji and arrange for villagers to stay at their lodgings during their pilgrimages. Fuji was just one of several sacred mountains in Japan where *oshi* were granted monopolies to house and feed their client pilgrims and *kō*.³²

After a day of purification rituals at local shrines, temples, or caves, the pilgrims would begin their climb by passing beneath a *torii* gate into a forested shrine called Kitaguchi Sengen-sha. On the austere approach to the shrine, statues of the Buddhist protector deity Niō stared down at them. Around the main building of the shrine, a stone fence was inscribed with circular logos of Fuji *kō* like their own which had donated for its upkeep, although the Maruyama *kō* was too small to afford such a marker. After offering a prayer to Sengen Daigongen, the pilgrims would proceed behind the shrine onto a gently sloping, forested path.

At the “first station,” that is, one-tenth of the way up the mountain, was Suzuhara Dainichi-sha, which enshrined a golden statue of Dainichi. Earlier pilgrims would have understood the word “Dainichi” to be the cosmic Buddha

³¹ Itō Iten, *Inage*, 168. This is supposition, as records have not survived.

³² Ambros, *Emplacing*, 96.

Vairocana which was said to be the true form of the mountain deity Sengen, but for the Fuji *kō*, the word Dainichi could literally be read as the meanings of its *kanji*, “Great Sun,” which also suggested a dimension of the “great, dual-gendered Parent” who constituted the ultimate form of Fuji.³³

The 1847 guidebook additionally identifies Suzuhara Dainichi with the sun goddess and imperial ancestress Amaterasu Ōmikami.³⁴ The Shinto pantheon was a late addition to Fuji *kō* beliefs, but this did not stop later editors from going back and inserting references to Amaterasu into Jikigyō’s own writings.³⁵ For instance, a little further up the mountain was another Sengen Shrine featuring a hole called *okama*, which Jikigyō compared to female genitals. Jikigyō believed that it was wrong to bar menstruating women from the mountain or its shrines, as Fuji was itself a place of fertility and home of the Original Father-Mother.³⁶ A nineteenth-century manuscript of Jikigyō’s text here equated the *okama* with the mythological Rock-Cave, where Amaterasu hid herself—such an abrupt shift in tone that it seems to be an interpolation.³⁷ By the time Rokuzō began his first Fuji climb, Shinto stories were being mixed into the language of the pilgrimage, although it is unclear if he heard any of these in the 1850s.

At the second station, there was a semi-official checkpoint, built in 1839. Here, *kō* climbers associated with Yoshida *oshi* had to pay a fee for the maintenance

³³ Sawada, *Faith*, 94, 211n6.

³⁴ Nagashima Taigyō, “Fujisan shinkei no zu,” 289.

³⁵ Miyazaki, review of *Faith*, 105.

³⁶ Jikigyō, “Sanjūichinichi no otsutae,” 549.

³⁷ Jikigyō, “Sanjūichinichi no onmaki,” 448, 449n.

of the mountain. The legal purpose of the checkpoint, mandated by the local magistrate, was to prevent women from climbing any further. According to popular belief, women's bodies were too impure to summit the holy mountain, and although the *oshi* did not particularly like this superstition and tried to make allowances for their female patrons, secular authorities fearing unrest forced them to uphold it at this checkpoint.³⁸

This meant that Fuji pilgrims were, traditionally, men. The scholar Yasumaru Yoshio described the Fuji *kō* as endorsing a popular morality (*tsūzoku dōtoku*), independent of elite hierarchies but reenforcing village social order such as gender roles. Women were dissuaded from joining pilgrimages and encouraged to stay in the home.³⁹ When we look closely at Jikigyō's teachings on gender, however, we see some departure from village norms. Fuji itself seems to include the feminine, and female fertility is considered sacred. For this reason, Jikigyō rejected traditional taboos associated with pregnancy and menstruation.⁴⁰ The cycles and correspondences of East Asian cosmology encouraged Jikigyō's followers to seek out a yin-yang balance between men and women.⁴¹

By the time of Rokuzō's first pilgrimages, some Fuji *kō* subscribed to an additional precept: "the woman should be above, the man below." This new movement, called Fujidō by scholars, had reached the conclusion that men had too

³⁸ Miyazaki, "Female Pilgrims," 365–371. To some extent, superstition surrounding female climbers has persisted into the twenty-first century: Kobayashi N., "Case Study," 267.

³⁹ Yasumaru, *Minshū shisō*, 54, 104.

⁴⁰ Sawada, *Faith*, 101–3.

⁴¹ Miyazaki, "Networks of Believers," 150.

much power in society, leading to an imbalance of yin and yang. Fujidō believers insisted that women should be allowed to pray at Sengen shrines and climb mountains, including Fuji.⁴² In 1860, citing the special nature of the *kōshin* year, the Yoshida *oshi* applied for and received permission from Edo to let women climb to the summit for the first time.⁴³ In Fujidō pilgrim groups, women climbed in front of the men, who sang songs encouraging harmony.⁴⁴ This seems to reflect changing attitudes about the makeup of the pilgrimage. If Rokuzō saw and took note of such groups when he joined the 1860 climb, he left no record of it.

Halfway up the mountain was Sutra Rock, a crag where a tradition of the local *oshi* held that the medieval Buddhist monk Nichiren (1222–1282) did austerities for a hundred days. Nichiren himself attributed his success in life to the Lotus Sutra, but the Fuji *kō*'s *Book of Great Practice*, compiled by disciples of the legendary ascetic Kakugyō, asserted that Nichiren's blessings came from Fuji.⁴⁵ Here, we can see the basic logic of the Fuji *kō*: faced with the claim that the mountain was sanctified by a Buddhist leader famous for his assertion of the ultimate superiority of his own teaching, they did not reject the legend but simply inverted the narrative to give the mountain agency over Nichiren.

At this point, the pilgrims had passed the boundary between Earth and Heaven and now entered the final stage of the mountain, called “burnt mountain”

⁴² Miyazaki, “Networks of Believers,” 150.

⁴³ Miyazaki, “Female Pilgrims,” 365–371.

⁴⁴ Miyazaki, “Networks of Believers,” 151.

⁴⁵ “Kakugyō tōbutsu kūki,” 459.

(*yakeyama*) or “sand mountain” (*sunayama*) due to its lack of vegetation. One of the attractions here was Black Hat Rock (*Eboshi-iwa*), identified as the place where Jikigyō had purposefully fasted to death while delivering a month’s worth of final teachings compiled in his *Book of Thirty-One Days* (“Sanjūichinichi no maki”). According to Jikigyō, a new age for humanity in which the blessings of Fuji were accessible to all began in 1688 when the Original Father-Mother bound together the male and female energies at Shaka’s Split Stone, a rock at the peak of the mountain.⁴⁶

At the summit, the lip of the mountain was dotted with Buddha statues, pagodas, and temple bells. Around the crater, the volcanic rock naturally curves up and down, forming peaks and valleys. Since at least the 1100s CE, visitors had compared these peaks to eight petals of a massive lotus flower on which the great Buddhas sit, and Jikigyō affirmed this tradition.⁴⁷ Most of the peaks themselves were named after specific Buddhas: Manjusri (Manju) Peak, Bhaisajyaguru (Yakushi) Peak, Shakyamuni (Shaka) Peak, Amitābha (Amida) Peak, Sutra (Kyō) Peak, Vairocana (Dainichi) Peak. Sutra Peak was so named because one of the Yoshida *oshi* households, faithful to the Nichiren school, had carved the name of the Lotus Sutra into it.⁴⁸ Some of the valleys were also named for Buddhas: Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Seishi) Valley, Avalokiteśvara (Kannon) Valley. As Itō Rokuzō and the other pilgrims traversed the massive summit, they were not only

⁴⁶ Sawada, *Faith*, 144.

⁴⁷ Fujiyoshida-shi, *Fujisan o noboru*, 90–1; Jikigyō, “Sanjūichinichi no onmaki,” 425n.

⁴⁸ Iwashina, *Rekishi*, 367; Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 188

surrounded by Buddha statues and names but also walking up and down the petals of the lotus flower seat of a massive Buddha, the cosmic Dainichi, seated above the “inner sanctum” of the volcanic crater.

Consider how this pilgrimage unified variant worldviews and hermeneutics. For those with a profound faith in some form of Buddhism, the mountain offered multiple types of Buddhist imagery—Amida, Nichiren, and/or Dainichi. For those who thrilled at stories of ancient Japanese figures, the mountain brimmed with connections to Prince Shōtoku, Yamato Takeru, and Amaterasu, among others. For those who showed up as part of their neighborhood pilgrimage with some skepticism towards traditional cosmology, the strenuous experience of the climb and the constant presence of the other *kō* members climbing alongside you carried its own inherent meanings. And finally, for those who felt the mountain itself had a unique message, there were the healing traditions of the Fuji *kō*, and the possibility of becoming a *sendatsu* to draw closer to the mountain.

Itō Rokuzō was within the last of these groups, and we can see how the Fuji *kō* was able to offer their own interpretations of these overlapping symbolic worlds, generally showing how these various beliefs and practices had their ultimate origin in the mountain itself. Through this travelogue we have showcased some of the popular beliefs about the mountain, shared by various *kō* lineages as well as other pilgrims. But there are additional aspects to the Maruyama *kō*’s traditional beliefs that did not originate with the pilgrimage itself.

Beliefs and practices of mountain cults and Fuji *kō*

While the Fuji pilgrimage drew on a rich tapestry woven from stories of India, China, and Japan, Itō Rokuzō connected it all back to his experience being healed by the transmission text *Fuji nankyō*. The first page of *Fuji nankyō*, called *ominuki*, was an arrangement of Chinese-like characters meant to embody the Fuji deity. During his first visit in 1854, when he reached the peak of the mountain, Rokuzō suddenly had a revelation that the Amida triad, being *three (san)* Buddhas, was the true meaning of the first syllable of the central line of the *ominuki*, SAN-MYŌ-TŌ-KAI-SAN. The Pure Land and Fuji were one. Now, when he rode to Edo on horseback, rather than his old ditty about fish living in the seas, he chanted *namu-amida-butsu*, or sometimes lines from the *ominuki*.⁴⁹

Where some might have viewed the pilgrimage as entertainment, Rokuzō saw how the experience was imbued with the power of the mountain. The Fuji *kō* was not just a pilgrimage association, but also a tradition of healing and prayer. Its uniqueness among the many pilgrimage *kō* of the Tokugawa period lay in its ability to center all the eclectic cosmology of the Edo period within a single mountain and, in the Jikigyō lineage, to connect it to a vision of utopian order. Let us now consider how the *kō* turned a pilgrimage custom into an independent Fuji faith.

⁴⁹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 30. Fuji faith texts sometimes contain compounds of Chinese characters which are not meant to be easily understood and are not fully comprehensible even to initiated readers. In this dissertation, I will translate these phrases using small capital letters, to indicate the unusual writing style.

The origin of the Fuji healing tradition is murky, but we can trace it to general Japanese beliefs about mountains. From very early on, East Asian and Buddhist beliefs about mountains merged with local Japanese customs, creating mountain cults (*sangaku shinkō*). In the 800s and 900s CE, we have records of ascetics “cultivating special powers” (*shugen*) in the mountains and “lying down” (*yamabushi*) or sleeping overnight in mountains, which in later centuries were formalized as semi-institutional Shugendō.⁵⁰ At Fuji in particular, the semi-legendary figure En no Gyōja was believed to be the first ascetic on the mountain, and one of the halls on the Yoshida route was dedicated to him.

Having accumulated special powers, *shugen* ascetics conveyed them through handwritten documents to provide healing, rainmaking and other needs of rural and urban communities. Some of these talismans were meant to be read aloud, and others were meant to be visualized and contemplated. They were referred to by various terms, sometimes used interchangeably, such as *mamori*, *yurushi*, *fū*, *fusegi*.⁵¹ In the Fuji context, these talismans were often associated with water, used to purify and heal. Water from the mountain might be brought to one’s home village as medicine, or paper talismans could be consumed by mixing them into a cup of water.⁵²

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, many mountains, including Ōyama, Ontake, Kōya and Togakushi as well as Fuji, developed networks of *oshi* who

⁵⁰ Carter, *Mountains*, 70.

⁵¹ Sawada, *Faith*, 67, 72.

⁵² Sawada, *Faith*, 129–130.

distributed these talismans throughout the country, and patron *kō* whose members received and used the talismans and often arranged pilgrimages.⁵³ Fuji pilgrimage mandalas surviving from this period can help us envision how the pilgrimage would have been sold to local villages: an “uplifting and salvific experience,” but one replete with “semirecreational activities” such as music and animal shows.⁵⁴ In the Tokugawa period as well, lay pilgrims not particularly familiar with the beliefs of their Fuji *kō* might have experienced the mountain in this way.

The Mount Fuji network was unique in the Copernican revolution instituted by the likes of Kakugyō and Jikigyō. Their countless followers declared that the power of Shugendō and *oshi* came from the mountain itself, not from any expert practitioners. In addition to terms like *mamori* and *fusegi*, they specifically invoked the power of the mountain in their terminology: *ominuki* referred to how words revealed by the Fuji deity were extracted from the bodies of Kakugyō and other founders, while *otsutae* referred to incantations and hermeneutics that were transmitted from *kō* elder to novice.⁵⁵

Shaped by the ideas of Kakugyō and Jikigyō, a unique, independent faith defined the Fuji *kō* of which the Maruyama *kō* was a representative example. Local Fuji *kō* practitioners, such as the Maruyama *kō*’s *sendatsu* Yoshida Kinpei, copied out prayers and symbolic documents by hand. With multiple prayers invoking diverse forms of power independent of institutional religion, these manuscripts

⁵³ Carter, *Mountains*, 111.

⁵⁴ Sawada, *Faith*, 47.

⁵⁵ Sawada, *Faith*, 57–60.

somewhat resemble European or Islamic grimoires. But the Fuji *kō* were not practicing solitary, individualistic “magic” according to Durkheim’s definition. The practices of pilgrimage and prayer healing were structured by the *kō* collectives and reenforced community values. Jikigyō’s *Book of Thirty-One Days* and a few other texts offered the *kō* moral teachings and rational reforms. Two of these in particular deserve our attention, since they redefined Fuji pilgrimage and devotion.

First, Jikigyō gave the *kō* the idea of Fuji as a unifying center behind the various Buddhas and deities invoked in their prayers and talismans. Although the *sendatsu* might name powerful figures such as Sengen, Fudō Myōō, Konohanasakuyahime, or the Original Father-Mother, these were all understood as representations of Mount Fuji. The word “syncretism” is insufficient, since the pilgrimage prior to the rise of the Fuji *kō*, as we saw above, already contained concepts from many sources. But there are conflicts between these sources: Buddhist concepts from India, systems of correspondences from China, and Japanese deities and human masters of the mountain. The Fuji *kō* resolved these conflicts by prioritizing Fuji as the source of these competing worlds. The multivalent tour of dissonant images on the pilgrimage could be explained as the mountain’s varied expressions of itself. I see the revelation of the mountain’s divine agency as one reason why Tokugawa period writers began to call Fuji the “first mountain among the three nations,” meaning India, China and Japan.

Second, Jikigyō reformed the purification practices associated with the Fuji pilgrimage. Lengthy austerities such as the hundred days of abstinence had served

to gatekeep the power of the mountain and demarcate true mountain masters as professional ritualists whose knowledge was unobtainable by the general public. Jikigyō relaxed the purification requirements. He advised the Fuji faithful that they should not pay professionals to conduct prayers and that true prayers came from a sense of reverence, compassion, and pure-mindedness cultivated within one's own heart.⁵⁶ The idea that effective prayer came from the heart, rather than from professional ritual expertise, repositioned prayers to Fuji within the horizontal world of mutual aid and collective care which sustained all village *kō*.

To explain why the power of Fuji had been previously unknown, Jikigyō offered a vision of human history in which diverse ideas had been built up on the mountain like geological strata. Fuji had been created by the Original Father and Mother, a deity (or pair of deities) identified in a paradoxical way with the mountain itself. The true origin of the mountain's power was therefore in the Original Father and Mother. However, in ancient times, power had been given to the myriad gods. Later, the Buddha (Shakyamuni) was born near the mountain and came to visit it and receive knowledge and wisdom from it; his later disciples like Nichiren did the same. Finally, in 1688 a new age had begun in which all the temporary ideas of gods and buddhas were now returned to the mountain. In that Year of the Dragon, on the day of the dragon in the sixth month, on the hour of the dragon, at Shaka's Split Stone at the peak of the mountain, "the man-rope and the woman-rope were tied together," combining the forces of the universe into

⁵⁶ Sawada, *Faith*, 128–9.

equilibrium. This was the Age of Miroku, a phrase originating in the concept of the future Maitreya Buddha who will renew the dharma for coming ages, modified in the pragmatic worldview of the rural farmer into “a deity of future plenty.”⁵⁷

Jikigyō intended the Age of Miroku to be an era of relief from disease and food insecurity, and in this sense his mission was closely tied to the social mission of his followers. The Tokugawa period had no national system of public welfare or health insurance. It is easy to understand how Fuji *kō* provisions for mutual aid and healing could serve as a literal lifeline in times of economic depression, pandemic, or famine. Jikigyō desired for this neighborly spirit of care, cultivated through the heart, to be implemented by the government as a public welfare system. For this reason, he linked his decision to end his life atop Mount Fuji to a fierce critique of what he saw as the shogunate hoarding rice in a time of famine.⁵⁸

Some scholars have described Jikigyō’s Age of Miroku as “millenarian.”⁵⁹ Sawada clarifies that Jikigyō was not awaiting salvation from any future messiah or king. The Age of Miroku had already begun through the return of all spiritual power to Fuji. Its realization on earth awaited only recognition by the people themselves and their legitimate leaders, that is, the emperor and shogun, who now had the power to create utopia by righting their own minds and coming to the aid of

⁵⁷ Sawada, *Faith*, 107–8, 218n84; Tyler, “Popular Religion,” 110.

⁵⁸ Sawada, *Faith*, 142.

⁵⁹ Hardacre, “Millennial Movements.”

the general public.⁶⁰ We shall have more to say about the healing traditions of the Fuji *kō* in Chapter Three, and about “millenarianism” in Chapter Four.

Political interventions by Fuji *kō* and Maruyama *kō* from the late Tokugawa period through the Boshin War

Even before Jikigyō gave the Fuji faith a distinct political dimension, its leaders may have been aware that Kakugyō’s idea of Fuji as cosmic creator and source of energy and power was a novel one that lacked a firm place in Tokugawa conceptions of education and order. The *Book of Great Practice* claims that Kakugyō himself was investigated by Edo magistrates in 1620. More reliable sources indicate that his successor Getsugan was interrogated in 1684 and defended his Fuji faith by presenting it as an orthodox activity adapting Buddhist traditions.⁶¹ The novelty of Fuji *kō* beliefs was always a cause for suspicion. According to Iwashina Koichirō, from 1742 to 1850 officials in the Edo area attempted to outlaw some or all Fuji *kō* no fewer than 12 times.⁶² The Fuji *oshi* saw these half-hearted prohibitions as opportunities to assert an ancestral right to their custom of talisman distribution and a parental role over the *kō*. As a result of *oshi* interference, no one was ever arrested or punished as a result of these prohibitions.⁶³

⁶⁰ Sawada, *Faith*, 109.

⁶¹ Sawada, *Faith*, 136–7.

⁶² Iwashina, “Edo,” 38–9.

⁶³ Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 104–5.

For instance, in 1789, a woman named Nagai Soyo petitioned the famed councilor Matsudaira Sadanobu to acknowledge the Age of Miroku revealed by Jikigyō. Because she had no right to petition, she illegally thrust a document written by her husband into the councilor's passing palanquin, while her husband sat on Black Hat Rock at the eighth stage of Fuji, chanting prayers for her success. The document pleaded with Matsudaira to read Jikigyō's *Book of Thirty-One Days* and to "bring about the opening of the Age of Miroku."⁶⁴ As above, Jikigyō had considered the Age of Miroku something realizable by secular government, through "restoring ethical norms, justice, and material balance to society."⁶⁵ The government retaliated by banning talisman distribution, but the Yoshida *oshi* interpreted this ban as limited to the general public, so that the *oshi* could continue their activities, and the *kō* could continue to rely on them.⁶⁶

As Kiri Paramore and Janine Sawada have observed, Tokugawa society displayed some amount of flexibility for popular activities. Shogunal, Buddhist, and domain authorities often accepted the development of new, popular forms of education, worship, and ritual celebration, as long as they had some loosely connection to older institutions. For example, street preachers like Masuho Zankō and Sekimon Shingaku teachers argued for new configurations of popular morality.⁶⁷ Institutionally authorized vagrants such as *Kōya hijiri*, *oshi*, *Kumano*

⁶⁴ (何卒みろくの御世を御開き被遊候様に奉願候). Sawato, "Fuji shinkō," 151–4.

⁶⁵ Sawada, *Faith*, 157.

⁶⁶ Sawato, "Fuji shinkō," Iwashina, "Edo," 40.

⁶⁷ Paramore, "Premodern Secularism;" Sawada, *Practical Pursuits*, 6–7. Of course, the Tokugawa authorities strictly outlawed Christianity, and local domain authorities banned some Buddhist sects as well.

bikuni, and *gannin* preached the virtues of specific temples or shrines while entertaining crowds and selling wares.⁶⁸ Self-organized pilgrimages to temples or mountains were one of the permitted forms of travel even when they became chaotic mass phenomena.⁶⁹

However, by the mid-nineteenth century, Edo society was experiencing a narrowing of horizons. Popular practices received increasing scrutiny over their teachings, sometimes leading to arrest and punishment of practitioners.⁷⁰ In this context, Fuji pilgrimages and Fuji *kō* were increasingly considered unbecoming of well-born individuals. When the British consul general Rutherford Alcock requested to climb Mount Fuji with his own team in 1860, he was told that “it is not considered consistent with the dignity of a Daimio or even an officer of any rank to the pilgrimage, perhaps because too many of the mob must unavoidably come in close contact with them.”⁷¹ Alcock thought the officials might be particularly concerned by bringing commoners within dangerous proximity to Europeans and Christianity; perhaps they were also concerned over the perception of foreigners polluting a sacred mountain, which caused unrest at Mount Unzen in Nagasaki in 1867.⁷² But by this time, we can also see a new generation of social planners constructing the Fuji *kō* as a source of disorder. In 1825, Aizawa Seishisai described the Fuji *kō* as “pseudo-Buddhistic miscreancy” and attributed its popularity to “the

⁶⁸ Groemer, “Short History.”

⁶⁹ Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 206.

⁷⁰ Sawada, *Practical Pursuits*, 66–67.

⁷¹ Alcock, *Capital of the Tycoon*, vol. 1, 396.

⁷² Maruyama M., *Sakura-den*, 44. We shall meet the person behind this unrest in Chapter Six.

people's fear of spirits," warning that this kind of uneducated faith could be exploited by foreigners like the corrupting force of Christianity.⁷³

In 1847, after the fast-spreading Fujidō branch of the faith thrust another petition into a palanquin, the Edo magistrate judged that the *kō* were born from "ignorance" and that the few samurai who joined were "forgetting their station." The crux of the issue was that "they are not one of the Shinto or Buddhist sects recognized by the authorities, but believe in teachings spoken by laypeople and preach strange things."⁷⁴ Recalling this situation decades later, Itō Rokuzō remembered the Fuji *kō* being slandered as "the black art of foxes" or the highly illegal "*kirishitan*" by those around him.⁷⁵ The Fuji faith, which Rokuzō felt to be the source of healing and truth, was now in danger.

The 1847 incident set a troubling precedent for the Fuji *kō*. As the shogunate's investigation revealed that Fujidō believers were known for hard work and acts of charity, the shogunate did not go so far as to suppress the Fujidō group at the level of the *kō*. Instead, individual *kō* members were asked to throw away their *ominuki* scrolls and *otsutae* transmission texts, and the Kakugyō shrine was ordered removed from Kitaguchi Sengen-sha. None of these orders were enforced.⁷⁶ Even so, historian Koizumi Masahiro regards the shogunate's orders as having

⁷³ (或因淫祠、或假佛説; 因其畏鬼成). Miyazaki, "Female Pilgrims," 378–9; Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism*, 212, with reference to Aizawa, *Shinron*, vol. 1, 43r.

⁷⁴ (愚昧; 身分を不顧; 公儀ニおゐて御立被置候神道并諸宗門の外、俗人之申教を信用いたし、異様之儀等相唱). Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 103, 151, 163, with reference to Kinsei shiryō kenkyūkai, *Edo machibure shūsei*, vol. 15, 445.

⁷⁵ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 30.

⁷⁶ Miyazaki, "Longing," 168–171; Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 168–9.

damaged the public image of the *kō* and the economic stability of the Yoshida *oshi* they patronized, giving the *oshi* an impetus to organize anti-state paramilitaries in the 1860s.⁷⁷ As instability gave rise to civil war in 1868, the Fuji *oshi* traveled to Edo and attacked the shogunate forces with the support of several of their *kō*. When the battles were over, Prince Arisugawa awarded Kitaguchi Sengen-sha the new name Fujitake Jinja.⁷⁸

At this time, Itō Rokuzō ran a flourishing trade in charcoal, frequently bringing him to Edo with a team of pack horses.⁷⁹ As the breadwinner for his extended family, he had taken on the ancestral name of the heads of the Itō household, Itō Rokurōbei.⁸⁰ In spring 1868, however, Rokurōbei was conscripted by unnamed pro-imperial fighters and forced to travel to the torn battlefields of Edo.⁸¹ It is possible he may have been conscripted by the Fuji *oshi* themselves, who passed through his home city of Kawasaki on May 6 on their way to join the imperial forces and sack the city of Edo. It is known that some Fuji *kō* assisted the *oshi* rebellion.⁸²

Unlike the Fuji *oshi*, Rokurōbei was shocked by the devastation in Edo. In an interview that went unpublished until after World War II, he described witnessing “the world in disarray and the nation and common people pushed to the limits of

⁷⁷ Koizumi, “Sōryūtai,” 48.

⁷⁸ Koizumi, “Sōryūtai,” 43.

⁷⁹ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 9.

⁸⁰ Itō Iten, *Inage kyōdoshi*, 179; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 25. The family ancestor Itō Roku was allegedly a servant of Emperor Sutoku. Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 7.

⁸¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 62.

⁸² Koizumi, “Sōryūtai,” 31.

suffering.”⁸³ Hundreds of thousands fled the city over the course of 1868. At around the time of Rokurōbei’s conscription, the military commander Katsu Kaishū described what he was seeing:

More than 370,000 men are starving. Because of this, the 300,000 merchants of the capital [Edo] have also lost their means of livelihood. At night thieves wander about and cut down the unfortunate, the aged are left to die on the streets, and bands of young men gather in the outskirts of the city to pillage and plunder.⁸⁴

It must be noted, then, that Rokurōbei’s first encounter with the new nation of Japan, which he was now meant to serve obediently, was being marshalled into an army against his will and witnessing the imperial army engulf the city of his youth in violence and chaos.

After returning to Noborito, Rokurōbei unbound his topknot, letting his hair loose like Jikigyō, and began praying fervently for the salvation of the people. Outside his house he hung a white flag on which he had painted a red sun, representing the god of Fuji.⁸⁵ In his own recollection, at this time he heard Japan described as the “land of the gods,” common Shinto rhetoric connected to the overthrow of the shogunate and the destruction of institutional Buddhism. He recalled becoming occupied by the meaning of this novel phrase: “I had learned that

⁸³ (天下は乱れ、国家平民は途端の苦しみをなす). Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 62. The reliability of this interview is strong; see Introduction.

⁸⁴ Steele, “Edo,” 145.

⁸⁵ Yuri (*Kyōsoden*, 71–3) records that Rokurōbei’s use of this flag predates the Meiji government’s adoption of the rising sun flag, and Kuniyoshi, second leader of the Maruyama movement, even recalls Rokuzō prophesizing that the flag would soon be widely displayed. There is no evidence of this in surviving period documents.

Japan is the land of the gods, [so] it seems that the gods are real, and I was thinking about that every day.”⁸⁶

In late 1870, an unnamed medium (perhaps the *sendatsu* Yoshida Kinpei) came to Rokurōbei’s house to pray over his wife, who had become severely ill. The belief was that the medium could intervene and take on the sufferings of the sick individual. The ascetic, a patron of the Buddhist guardian deity Fudō Myōō, was instead possessed by Sengen, and Rokurōbei’s wife was healed.⁸⁷ After this, Rokurōbei, overcome with gratitude towards Sengen, himself became possessed and received visions and messages from Sengen. A new phrase was revealed as a special mission for him: *tenka-taihei*, a common phrase for “world peace” found among other places in the *Book of Great Practice*.⁸⁸ The implications of Rokurōbei’s “world peace,” however, were slightly different from the modern English phrase. *Taihei* implied proper response from the authorities to provide relief from suffering. In 1866, a peasant revolt had adopted the similar slogan *shokoku taihei* to indicate what Yasumaru Yoshio describes as a novel solidarity with other peasants throughout Japan.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 35.

⁸⁷ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 36–7; Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 254. While it’s possible this unnamed ascetic was a *yamabushi* called in for special exorcism, as often happened at the time (e.g. with Nakayama Miki in Tenrikyō), I think it is also possible that it was Yoshida Kinpei. We do not know how Kinpei originally articulated his devotion to Fuji, and Fudō Myōō was one of the many forms of Sengen (Takeya, *Saijinron*, 75). Rokurōbei describes revelations from Sengen telling him to remove decorations from the *takiage* and having a “battle with Fudō” (*Fudō to tataikai*), the meaning of which is unclear if the Fudō ascetic was not also his *sendatsu* Kinpei who was doing the *takiage*.

⁸⁸ “Kakugyō tōbutsu kū ki,” 478. The full phrase *tenkai-taihei*, *kokudo-annon* seems reminiscent of Nichiren’s famous *Rishō ankoku ron*.

⁸⁹ Yasumaru, *Minshū shisō*, 172.

At the end of 1870, the Maruyama *kō* built a *kōshin* monument at the southwestern edge of the Noborito neighborhood, engraved with the name of its *sendatsu* Yoshida Kinpei, the revealed words *tenka-taihei*, and twenty *sewanin* financial sponsors. One of these twenty *sewanin* is given the strange name “Esteemed Master Itō” (Itō Sonshi). This would seem to refer to Rokurōbei, but it is the only name on the monument called an “Esteemed Master” and with only a family name and no surname. Perhaps Rokurōbei’s new revelations were becoming uncomfortable to Kinpei, who retaliated by naming him as an “Esteemed Master” *sewanin* rather than a fellow *sendatsu*.⁹⁰ Within just a few years, Rokurōbei would become the sole *sendatsu*, and Kinpei would leave the *kō* entirely.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the figure of Itō Rokuzō/Rokurōbei and aspects of the nineteenth century Fuji faith common in large parts of eastern Japan, which Rokuzō came to know as a faithful member of his hometown Fuji *kō* in the 1850s and 60s. From my description of the pilgrimage and the devotional practices and ideas that had come to be associated with it, two main points should be drawn. First, the Fuji pilgrimage was deeply embedded in the context of the lived religion of eastern Japan in the Edo period. The imagery and symbolism of the Yoshida route pilgrimage relied not only on Buddhist cosmology and Japanese mythology,

⁹⁰ Like everything else from the pre-1873 *kō*, the intent of this engraving was long forgotten by the twentieth century: Itō Iten, *Inage kyōdoshi*, 166. Iten believes that this monument names the long-dead Itō Jikigyō Miroku as a financial sponsor of the *kō*, which seems illogical to me.

but also on knowledge of mountain religion and asceticism, folk practices such as healing talismans and *kōshin*, and classical Sinosphere cycles of time and space. Beginning in the year 1868, a new approach to education and tradition would begin to alienate the people of the Japanese archipelago from nearly all of these things.

Second, I have shown how the Fuji *kō* tradition gave a unique clarity to this pilgrimage for those who took it seriously. The Fuji faith was independent of established Buddhist knowledge, Confucian academies, and the various lineages of Shinto available in the Tokugawa period. Its congregationalist *kō* structure, and the pragmatic focus of the *kō* on neighborhood prayers and pilgrimages, meant that there were many beliefs circulating among them, but we know that its members had a collective identity and an awareness that their group's understanding of Fuji as the *axis mundi* and creator deity was unique to them. Despite decades of hostility from Tokugawa bureaucrats, the Fuji *kō* maintained their independence.

This chapter has therefore served to demarcate a certain distinct space within the Tokugawa religious world. However, I do not mean by this that the Fuji *kō* faith rejected the Buddhas and deities of the Tokugawa world, nor that it held debates with Buddhists, nor that it regarded other teachings as heresy or idolatry. The Fuji *kō* faith was an endorsement of the eclectic Yoshida route pilgrimage and all the folklore associated with it through a new cosmological lens.

As Miyazaki Fumiko observes, the gradual loosening of traditional taboos, culminating with opening the mountain to women during the 1860 season,

demonstrates that the climb was losing its social particularity.⁹¹ As for the local Fuji *kō*, they relied so heavily on early modern social norms that one historian has suggested that their fate was sealed by the rapid technological, socioeconomic, and educational changes which followed from the 1868 Meiji Restoration.⁹² One might accordingly expect the story I am writing to be a Weberian tale of disenchantment, stagnation, and eventual decline. But this is not at all what happened to the Maruyama *kō*. Instead, Itō Rokuzō, now known as Rokurōbei, developed his neighborhood's *kō* in an entirely unexpected direction and caught the eye of elite, educated revolutionaries searching for a national teaching for Japan. We now turn our attention to how this search originated and how it first conflicted, and then compromised, with Rokurōbei's deep Fuji faith.

⁹¹ Miyazaki, "Female Pilgrims," 384.

⁹² Kawai, "Fujikō."

CHAPTER TWO:
MOUNT FUJI AND THE NATIONAL TEACHING,
1869–1875

On July 26, 1874, a 29-year-old bureaucrat named Shishino Nakaba (1844–1884) ascended Mount Fuji with a few confederates and destroyed, vandalized, or removed all the Buddhist symbolism there. The Buddhist temples on the peak were dismantled. The engraved name of the Lotus Sutra was scratched off Sutra Peak, which was soon renamed to Completion Peak (Jōjudake).¹ All Buddhist-inspired names got similar treatment: Manju Peak became Mishima Peak, Yakushi Peak became Kusushi Peak, Kannon Peak became Izu Peak, and so on, so that all eight petals of the lotus flower were erased and replaced with seemingly generic place names from elsewhere in Japan.² Even the Sai-no-Kawara, the real-world depiction of the classic legend of deceased children rescued by the bodhisattva Jizō, was artlessly renamed to Yasu-no-Kawara, the name it continues to bear today.

Born in Japan’s southernmost province of Satsuma, Shishino had never seen Mount Fuji before about 1869, and did not climb it until 1873, when he pledged to take control of the mountain, its shrines, and its *kō* for the sake of what he called

¹ This recalls the phrase “completion of a great vow” (*daigan-jōju* 大願成就) used among the Fuji *kō* to mean the completion of the pilgrimage. Ironically, this phrase is simply a modification of the Pure Land Buddhist “completion of the original vow” (*hongan-jōju* 本願成就).

² Suzuki Masafumi, “Fujisan chōjō,” 56. Shishino’s intention was to find obscure Shinto deities which corresponded to the Buddhas, but the result is unrecognizable as Shinto.

the “National Teaching.” He derived his authority from his post as a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Doctrine. For some Yoshida *oshi*, Shishino was completing a purification of Fuji which they had begun, but others blamed him for the destruction of their traditions. What is not remembered by anyone, though, because no one thought fit to record it, is a remarkable coincidence of timing. Shishino submitted the request to remove Buddha statues on the same day that Itō Rokurōbei’s rapidly growing Maruyama *kō* began climbing the mountain under police surveillance, and a month later Shishino assembled a team to physically remove the statues just as the Maruyama *kō* was initiating another climb. A month after that, he sent porters to the mountain to rescue Rokurōbei from suicide, changing the direction and fate of the Maruyama *kō*.

Twentieth-century Japanese scholars of new religions were struck by the 1873–4 encounter between Itō Rokurōbei and Shishino Nakaba, with Rokurōbei representing as they saw it the self-actualizing spirit of popular religions, and Shishino an agent of state-directed, compulsory “State Shinto.” Notably, these events are central to the narrative of Murakami Shigeyoshi’s 1982 *Kokka Shintō to minshū shūkyō*.³ Twentieth-century political context encouraged writers to depict liberal individualism confronting authoritarian collectivism. Recent scholarship encourages acknowledging the persistence of traditional beliefs and the agency of multiple actors.⁴ It has also been emphasized that there was no single ideological

³ Murakami, *Kokka Shintō*, 139–157.

⁴ Sawada, *Faith*, 20.

plan constituting “State Shinto;” this term lends an anachronistic idea of coherence to the rapid change of the 1870s.⁵ I intend to nuance the story accordingly. First, we will survey the deep ideological and economic motivations driving Shishino’s policy decisions. Second, we will examine the Maruyama *kō* beyond Rokurōbei as an individual, to show how he imagined a community of *gyōja*, or devoted practitioners, who had a role to play in Meiji government. Finally, we will consider evidence that Rokurōbei transformed Shishino’s understanding of the National Teaching. We may be able to conclude that a single individual changed the course of Meiji religious policy, not by asserting his own agency, but acting as an agent of the mountain deity Sengen.

Steam power and Kokugaku

The arrival of Commodore Perry’s “black ships” in 1853 placed a new urgency on reconfiguring governance across the Japanese archipelago. They were the first steamships ever seen in Japan, and the black coal belched from their engines was symbolic of an approach to resource extraction and industrial production that the shogunate lacked. To match the military capacity of the West, the peoples of the Japanese archipelago would need to reimagine their relations to identity, personality, education, geography, and capital. Where the shogunate treated the

⁵ As was first demonstrated by Nitta, *Arahitogami* (partially available in English online). For historical analysis of how the “State Shinto” scholarly/legal paradigm came into being, see Thomas, *Faking Liberties*, 141–165, 237–240; Morrow, “Holtom;” and Yamaguchi T., *Sengoshi* (which has a chapter on Murakami Shigeyoshi in particular). I will return to this subject in the Epilogue.

beliefs of the masses with benign neglect, the succeeding Meiji government would treat the minds of the masses as objects of cultivation and surveillance towards national ends. The government's mission required a new secularization, by which I do not mean an attack on spaces deemed religious, but a new way of knowing what is non-religious and how to put it in order—the production of a secularism—with the ends of exploiting natural and human resources.

Emperor Meiji's 1868 proclamation of the “renovat[ion of] all things” opened up new ways of making the world legible. From 1871 onward, Emperor Meiji's tutor used a single textbook to instruct the young emperor in “Western education”: *Self-Help* by Samuel Smiles, which describes a technological progress made possible by inventions like the steam engine and the strong-willed inventors who perfected them and profited from them. The emperor's eyes were guided to see coal as the driver of progress; he would later write Japanese poetry in praise of the coal smoke clouding his empire's cities.⁶ As some accounts of technological change became visible, others became invisible. Domestic opposition to the steam engine appears in *Self-Help* not as a legitimate concern to be resolved through listening and discussion but as ignorant Luddism. Anti-steam sentiment is a barrier to progress whose sympathetic treatment by local officials is said to evoke “the disgust of right-minded people.”⁷ The disruption of agrarian life which forced men and women into the

⁶ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 171, 587.

⁷ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 31.

factories at starvation wages, and the disruption to the environment caused by the mining of coal and the emission of carbon dioxide, do not appear at all.

As recent scholarship by Andreas Malm and Adam Hanieh has emphasized, this completely new approach to natural resources did not arise out of economic hardship or scarcity of resources; it was produced by the vision of a world controlled by capital, and needed to be imagined before it could be implemented.⁸ To make this new narrative plausible, not only preexisting economic interests but also preexisting imaginal landscapes had to be localized and delegitimized. Mohamed Amer Meziane remarks on a Vietnamese governor who objected to French resource extraction on the grounds that digging too deep would disrupt dragons who live beneath the earth and upend the stability of earthly government. The colonialists perceived this not as a difference of perception, but as the superstitious fears of a localized, colonized subject which would be overcome through secular, imperial knowledge. Meziane concludes: “The fossil economy implied a profane readability of the underground world, liberated from all ‘superstition’. Dragons had to cease to exist so that underground empires could unfold.”⁹

In the Japanese case, the class system had to cease to exist so that unlimited exploitation could unfold. In the Tokugawa regime, the legal system imagined four classes of feudal subject, and each class had a certain, limited use. The samurai (*bushi*) were used to fight, while farmers and merchants were used for their labor.

⁸ Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 255–278; Hanieh, *Crude Capitalism*, *passim*.

⁹ Meziane, *States of the Earth*, 163–5.

Mobility between these classes remained rare until the late Tokugawa period. European liberalism presented a new possibility. The former peasant class could now be conscripted or taken off their farms and put into factories. The health and welfare of the farmer, which Jikigyō had seen as part of a divinely ordained social contract with the nation's rulers, was now a matter of state interest for very different reasons.

The rigid class divisions of the Edo period were insufficient for these ends. Those who wished to adopt Europe's vast elimination of barriers needed a justification for doing so, a new secularism which could reject the metaphysical bedrock of traditional knowledge and yet somehow meet with a degree of acceptance by all classes. In a stroke of remarkable fortune, in the mid-nineteenth century such a revolutionary plan had already arisen. It combined sanctification of the archipelago as a single nation, and all its inhabitants as equally noble beings, with conveniently vague outlines of a program for anti-Buddhist, anti-Confucian reeducation. This was Hirata Atsutane's school of Kokugaku, a term often translated as "national learning" or "nativism".

The term Kokugaku rose to prominence only in the 1860s; increasingly, its advocates wished to emphasize the idea of *koku* or nation, rather than older terms like *hongaku* "original learning" or *kogaku* "ancient learning."¹⁰ During Atsutane's lifetime, his school of thought had been condemned and castigated, but Kokugaku

¹⁰ Wachutka, *Kokugaku*, 1.

was a secure fit for steam-powered secularization in several ways. First, it proposed to sanctify the territory of the nation. It was not enough that a space merely be emptied of prior associations; the idea that the space was a matter of national interest had to be broadly acknowledged and legitimated. Second, it proposed a means by which preexisting truth claims could all be delegitimated, by re-designating them as mistaken, late-developing, foreign or foreign-influenced ideas.

Third and finally, as it rendered local concepts foreign, Kokugaku also proposed to render foreign concepts local. European science and technology, treated with caution in the middle Edo period due to their association with Christianity, were represented by Hirata as forgotten echoes of ancient Japanese knowledge. European theology, surprisingly, also had a positive reception. John Breen observes “strikingly little anti-Christian venom in Hirata’s writings;” in fact, Hirata secretly drew on banned Christian texts.¹¹ Kokugaku did not carefully apply specific lineages of knowledge but instead integrated useful symbols into the national idea, creating a broader secular space for free action.

Crucial to the success of this secularization was that the Kokugaku project of purification, restoration, and liberation be found credible and persuasive at the local level. A final benefit of this new secularism, then, was that even before its adoption by the Meiji regime, it was eagerly taken up by local specialists as a means of reforming their communities. Barbara Ambros has documented how the *oshi* at the

¹¹ Breen, “Shinto and Christianity.”

sacred mountain of Ōyama published criticism of Buddhist traditions and “dissected” ancient legends to reorient mountain worship around orthodox Shinto deities.¹² While we have no such written treatises from the Fuji *oshi*, we saw in Chapter One how they inserted references to Amaterasu into Jikigyō’s writings. On top of this, some replaced the Amida triad on their talismans with Konohanasakuyahime (the Shinto analogue for Sengen) and two other Shinto deities.¹³ Kokugaku reforms to local practices had already begun in the 1850s and 60s, but the Meiji Restoration would bring an entirely new, more systemic level of regulation.

***Kō* in the age of biopolitics**

The majority of those who formed the Meiji government saw no value in prayer rituals or popular healing practices. Hirata Atsutane had endorsed popular healing practices in later life,¹⁴ but early Meiji authorities, informed by *rangaku* scholars of Western medicine, sought to switch entirely to a new biomedical regime and outlawed nearly all alternatives to it. For instance, the Kurozumi *kō*, a popular group spreading moral teachings and healing, was banned in 1871.¹⁵ Local healing practice impeded the state’s expression of its interests in maintaining the bodies of its citizens: this idea, called “hygiene” in English, was rendered in Japanese as *eisei*

¹² Ambros, *Emplacing*, 201.

¹³ Takeya, *Saijinron*, 237.

¹⁴ Hansen, “Dao.”

¹⁵ Toyoda, *Shūkyō seidoshi*, 198.

(conserving life). Misuse of money and mingling of the sexes in *kō*-like meetings were also frequently cited as dangers.¹⁶

This harsh persecution, however, was accompanied by a lifeline for certain *kō*. This was the result of a reconceptualization of the Meiji government's civil propaganda program in 1872. The initial version of this program, running from 1869 to 1872, employed Confucian and Hirata school intellectuals called *senkyōshi* to propagate the Great Way of the Universe to the Japanese public, meaning the identity of the creator deities and the mission they had given the imperial ancestors. When these government evangelists were sent to convert the exiled Japanese Christians of Urakami, it resulted in confused theological discussions about the name of God and the ability of the emperors to provide salvation, which in turn raised doubts about the *senkyōshi* program.¹⁷

Although the program was staunchly defended into early 1871, by late 1871 most of the government wanted it wrapped up. The confluence of interests which ended the *senkyōshi* program has been summarized by Trent Maxey and is not within the scope of this dissertation.¹⁸ What is important to note, though, is that the program was ended by opening an entirely new ministry, the Ministry of Doctrine

¹⁶ Murakami, *Kindai minshū shūkyō*, 152.

¹⁷ Maxey, "Greatest Problem," 45–49. Additional causes of failure for the Urakami theology debates are discussed in Tokoyo, "Shinkyō soshiki monogatari," 378.

¹⁸ Maxey, "Greatest Problem," 50. Maxey summarizes many important factors but one should additionally note the deaths of Ōkuni Takamasa and Hirata Nobutane, the departure of their ally Iwakura Tomomi, and the treason convictions of Yano Harumichi and Maruyama Sakura (see Chapter Six).

(Kyōbushō). Satsuma men in the Ministry of the Left, led by Saigō Takamori and Ijichi Masaharu, took charge of planning this replacement program.¹⁹

The Satsuma clique in particular had seen the *senkyōshi* as ineffective because they were rootless intellectuals preaching as representatives of the state to a disinterested public.²⁰ Acting on a suggestion by Shin Buddhist intellectual Shimaji Mokurai, they reoriented the program so that teachings about the divine imperial ancestors and respect for the state would become embedded in Buddhist institutions and other preexisting social gathering sites, led by accredited instructors called *kyōdōshoku*.²¹ The *kyōdōshoku* would subordinate themselves in an ambiguous way to a newly built Temple of the Great Teaching, or Daikyōin, and would inform the public about Three Articles of Instruction. These were purposefully generic principles, to wit:

1. To embody reverence for the deities and love of the country
2. To clarify the principles of heaven and the way of humanity
3. To revere and assist the emperor and obey the will of the court²²

It is well-known that Buddhist critics attacked this emphasis on “reverence for the deities” and the Daikyōin as a place of worship for them.²³ The primary objective of the switch in educational format, however, was not quite about redirecting worship. Where the *senkyōshi* program had leaned on dispatching

¹⁹ Nitta, “Shimaji Mokurai,” 152 (note that Meiji 5 should read Meiji 4 on the cited page).

²⁰ Ketelaar, *Heretics*, 98. See as well the “Early life of Shishino Nakaba” section, below.

²¹ Zhong, *Origin*, 149. Shimaji Mokurai would of course become the chief critic of the *kyōdōshoku* program as implemented by the Satsuma clique.

²² Krämer, *Shimaji Mokurai*, 53.

²³ Krämer, *Shimaji Mokurai*.

theologically trained outsiders, which seems to have alienated many audiences, the *kyōdōshoku* system aimed to mobilize familiar institutions to legitimize a new knowledge.²⁴ That is to say, the Ministry of Doctrine was grasping towards what Eric Hobsbawm has called “invented tradition,” putting traditions to work for a new paradigm in which imperial knowledge stood above religious divisions as an irrefutable truth. Many Buddhist writers accepted this responsibility and attempted to harmonize it with their own traditions.²⁵

The Ministry of Doctrine also permitted certain preexisting *kō* such as Kurozumi, Nenbutsu, Daimoku, etc. to be licensed as sites of national propaganda.²⁶ Understanding that Buddhism was not fully harmonious with the divinities in the Daikyōin, government officials focused their efforts on non-Buddhist *kō*, ensuring that they accepted theological and ritual reforms and adhered to the government’s political objectives. In Japanese-language scholarship, the transformation of non-Buddhist *kō* to obtain *kyōdōshoku* licensing is often called “Shintoization” (*Shintōka*). The term seems to imply that popular groups were conforming to a preset ideology, or at best creatively adapting it. One may picture the Japanese public as test subjects in the laboratory of Shinto science, and the civil propaganda program as the story of several experiments. A close read of period sources,

²⁴ The idea of a “Great Promulgation Campaign” initiated by imperial edict in 1870 (Josephson, *Invention*, 152; Hardacre, *Shinto*, 376) only muddles together these two very different initiatives.

²⁵ Krämer, *Shimaji Mokurai*, 54.

²⁶ Yasumaru, *Kindai tennōzō*, 243.

however, shows that alterations to the *kyōdōshoku* program were driven not only by the “experimenters” but also by ordinary *kōsha* members.

Before the end of 1873, a local bureaucrat in charge of regulating the Hyōgo Prefecture branch of the popular Kurozumi *kō* complained that its practice of *majinai* (also called *kin'en*), a type of therapeutic touch, and distribution of “divine water” (*shinsui*) were “deluding the common people.” The Ministry of Doctrine in Tokyo replied that therapeutic touch was “a legacy of the age of the gods”, as the word *majinai* appears in the ancient history *Nihon shoki*, and that Kurozumi’s “divine water” taught respect for the gods. Regardless, this same biopolitical concern was registered by various administrators in Aichi, Shimane, and Myōdō Prefectures over the course of 1873–4, with local bureaucrats successfully calling for the Kurozumi *kō* to cease performing moxibustion and limit the practice of *majinai* to those specifically licensed by its authorized leadership.²⁷

The Ministry of Doctrine pushed back against the complaints of local authorities because they recognized that *kō* were not schools for abstract doctrine, but communities of care brought about by desire for mutual aid. Many *kō* were popular with the common people because they provided relief from bodily illness, as well as other forms of salvation from the sufferings of life. In contrast to the *senkyōshi* program, the administrators of the *kyōdōshoku* system acknowledged Kurozumi’s healing practice as both essential to the lifeworld of the *kō* and

²⁷ Inoue N., *Keisei*, 350–1, 353. For a description of *majinai*, see Hardacre, *Kurozumikyō*, 94–5.

legitimated by ancient Japanese texts. This tolerant attitude appears to have been born out of the Kurozumi *kōsha*'s ability to limit its healing activities and control its membership.

The Ministry of Doctrine was unclear of the extent of their prerogative and extended *kyōdōshoku* licensure haphazardly, based on loose ideas of risk and reward. The Kurozumi *kō*, which was founded by a samurai with a shrine priest background,²⁸ was licensed instantly in 1873; the Tohokami *kō*, safely administered by literate samurai, was practically preapproved.²⁹ In contrast, the Maruyama *kō*, founded by farmers and merchants, was outside the *kyōdōshoku* system entirely until 1875, and Itō Rokurōbei was monitored and sometimes accosted by police through 1876. The groups later known as Konkōkyō and Tenrikyō had no *kyōdōshoku* in their communities until 1880.³⁰ Clearly this system did not automatically result in legitimacy for healing practitioners and community organizations; each case required negotiation between specific individuals, who had their own standards and beliefs.

Of these negotiations, the best-documented seem to be those involving the Tenri community, the Konkō community, and the Maruyama *kō*, and only the last case involves complex interactions between a specific *kō* leader and a specific Ministry of Doctrine bureaucrat.³¹ The remainder of this chapter will treat the

²⁸ Hardacre, *Kurozumikyō*, 59.

²⁹ Sawada, *Practical Pursuits*, 194.

³⁰ Hardacre, "Creating State Shintō," 61.

³¹ For the case of Tenrikyō, see Morrow, "Tenrikyō." For Konkōkyō, see Hardacre, "Creating State Shintō," 59–61.

negotiation between the Maruyama *kō* and Shishino Nakaba, one of the principal architects of the *kyōdōshoku* system. We will first locate Shishino's position within the larger worlds of Kokugaku and imperial secularization. Next, we will reconstruct the early Maruyama *kō* community of 1873–4. Finally, we will consider the results of the lengthy and bitter dispute between Shishino and Maruyama *kō* leader Itō Rokurōbei.

Early life of Shishino Nakaba, 1859–1869

Around 1859, the teenage Shishino Nakaba, scion of a middle-rank samurai clan in Satsuma, enrolled in school. The official account of his life incorrectly names a domain school founded later, in 1868.³² Since it is clear that he studied Kokugaku, we should assume that he attended the Zōshikan, founded in 1858 by the order of the local daimyo. This would have made his teacher Godaiin Mihashira (1805–1879), a disciple of Hirata Atsutane whom contemporaries recognized as a specialist in Kokugaku.³³ Before Godaiin's appointment, there had been no Kokugaku school in Satsuma.³⁴

We do not know the content of Godaiin's lessons at the Zōshikan, but we have a period example of his thought entitled "Writing on Mount Fuji" (*Fujisan no sho*),

³² Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 31.

³³ Takeda T., "Kokugakusha," 176–7.

³⁴ There had been another disciple of Hirata Atsutane in Satsuma, Katsuragi Hikoichi (葛城彦一, 1818–1880), but before he was able to found a school, he was forced to flee the domain in 1849 due to his involvement in the famous "Oyura Disturbance" (*Oyura sōdō* お由羅騒動). After this, it seems no one dared utter Atsutane's name in Satsuma for some time.

composed for the daimyo in 1858. In this one-page document, Godaiin describes Fuji as “tall, noble, taking the sky for its hat, taking a thousand years of snow for its coat.” This Japanese-language description imitates Chinese poetry, using a style common among Tokugawa literati.³⁵ “Above, it surpasses Heaven,” Godaiin continues, “reflecting the Utmost Authority of the Rising Sun, and below, it penetrates foreign lands, becoming the foundation of the many domains. The ancient cherry trees cast shadows on Great Tang [China], and great birds beat their feathers from the south to rest their wings here.”³⁶ The poem’s geography is generalized to Japan in general: cherry blossoms are not unique to Fuji, and large migratory birds like cranes do not rest on its dry, windy slopes as they do in Japanese lowlands.

The brief “Writing on Mount Fuji” follows Tokugawa elite artistic depictions of the mountain, which praise Fuji for towering over non-Japanese polities.³⁷ It parallels an open letter which Emperor Meiji released alongside his 1868 Charter Oath, explaining the need to “proclaim the glory of our country to the world and bring to the land the unshakable security of Mount Fuji.”³⁸ Instead of an *axis mundi* which unites the imaginaries of China, India and Japan by including multiple symbolic worlds within it, Godaiin’s Fuji is a symbol of the Utmost Authority (*miitsu*), a term associated with the divine origin of the emperors and the permanence of their legitimacy. Rather than the real nature and culture around the

³⁵ Sawada, *Faith*, 99.

³⁶ Godaiin, *Mihashira sensei den*, 65–6, 355–6.

³⁷ Matsushima, “Mount Fuji,” 83.

³⁸ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 141.

mountain, Godaiin associates it with generic, stereotypical markers of the Japanese archipelago. There is no mention of the Fuji deity Sengen, the common belief in the mountain as creator, or the male and female aspects of the mountain. The Chinese-style metaphorical description lacks the Fuji *kō*'s veneration of the mountain as the origin of the universe or as a source of natural resources for local people.³⁹ Needless to say, the revelations of Kakugyō and Jikigyō are absent from this text as well.

“Writing on Mount Fuji” may be compared to the work of Hirata disciples elsewhere in Japan. Gideon Fujiwara relates how the Hirata network of Tsugaru Domain, as represented by Tsuruya Ariyo, reconstituted the mountain faith of Mount Iwaki. Ariyo rejects centuries of Buddhist accounts of Mount Iwaki as unreliable and describes “imperial gods ... defending [it] against enemies from foreign countries,” but he also relates accounts linking the mountain to the “hidden world” of Hirata theology, affirming local accounts of it as a spiritual place akin to other sacred mountains in both China and Japan. Ariyo suggests that the central deity of Mount Iwaki is Ōkununushi, who has the power to direct dead souls and influence living humans in Hirata theology, and sees himself as restoring local legends of a “spirit realm of gods” by disentangling them from accumulated foreign doctrines.⁴⁰ Similarly, a Hirata disciple writing about Mount Zōzu in Takamatsu Domain described the Buddhas enshrined there as simply other names for the

³⁹ Sawada, *Faith*, 99.

⁴⁰ Fujiwara, *From Country to Nation*, 156–162.

Shinto kami Ōkuninushi.⁴¹ Neither writer shows a desire to completely erase local experience, as Godaiin does in “Writing on Mount Fuji.”

Godaiin’s differences from Ariyo emerged from a radical implementation of Kokugaku requested by the final two daimyo of the Shimazu clan, Nariakira (1809–1858) and Tadayoshi (1840–1897), as well as Tadayoshi’s father and regent Hisamitsu (1817–1887). It was Nariakira who requested that Godaiin write about Mount Fuji.⁴² Reversing their ancestors’ close links to Buddhism and initial hostility to Kokugaku, these three lords pursued the elimination of Buddhist power in their domain, and eventually the destruction of all Buddhist temples, which were turned into firewood, bullets, and cannons. For a domain intending to unite its entire population behind the cause of “wealthy nation, strong army,” Buddhist activities and practitioners were viewed as unproductive.⁴³ The grassroots activities of Tsugaru Domain’s Hirata school, including preserving local folklore, recording spiritual apparitions, and reviving legends of local gods, were notably absent in Satsuma’s daimyo-sponsored Kokugaku.⁴⁴ “Writing on Mount Fuji,” which praises a faraway mountain irrelevant to the daily lives of the people of Satsuma, suggests a reaction against Kokugaku as a method of recording and legitimizing local beliefs, and towards Kokugaku as a political imposition of emperor-centric thinking.

⁴¹ Thal, *Rearranging*, 124.

⁴² Godaiin, *Mihashira sensei den*, 356.

⁴³ Ketelaar, *Heretics*, 55–57.

⁴⁴ For Tsugaru, see Fujiwara, *From Country to Nation*, 123–150. For Satsuma, see Kubo, *Meiji ishin to jindai sanryō*. The chief philological interest of Satsuma Kokugaku scholars was the “three tombs of the divine age,” purportedly the resting place of divine imperial ancestors. Outside of this, local legends went unrecorded in their writings.

By 1867, both of Shishino Nakaba's parents and one of his brothers were dead. Without strong family ties to his hometown, it seems safe to assume that his prospects and loyalties were closely tied to his studies at the Zōshikan.⁴⁵ In the ninth month of 1868, Godaiin was called to Kyoto to participate in the formation of the new Meiji government. By 1869 both Godaiin and his Zōshikan pupils had arrived in the ancient capital, but in fact there were no jobs available for any of them. The work of writing new state rituals and rationalizing shrine worship had been monopolized by Ōkuni Takamasa's clique from Tsuwano domain, and there were no openings for Satsuma men. Meanwhile, in the interests of training a new group of civil servants, the Meiji government had opened a school called the Kōgakusho ("Hall for Imperial Studies"). In mid-July, Godaiin's pupils were admitted to this Kōgakusho—Shishino, Fukami Hayao (1841–1886), and a few others—while Godaiin himself was given an administrative post there.⁴⁶

In surviving sources, the earliest mention of Shishino himself dates to July 22, 1869 (Meiji 2/VI/14), when he and his schoolmate Fukami Hayao disrupted a Kōgakusho lecture by wearing European-style military uniforms instead of ceremonial court wear.⁴⁷ Where the Kōgakusho professors stuck to old feudal concepts of education which saw the "divine classics" as something conveyed in stiff ceremonial settings, Shishino and Fukami imagined reformed educational methods to bring the message of imperial divinity to the masses, just as their Satsuma

⁴⁵ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 31.

⁴⁶ Takeda T., "Kokugakusha," 181–3.

⁴⁷ Takeda T., "Kokugakusha," 183–4; Sakamoto Koremaru, *Meiji ishin*, 223.

countryman Saigō Takamori had brought new methods to war. Foreign dress brought out the hidden contradictions in the Kōgakusho's approach and signaled Shishino's reformist intentions for what he would soon be calling the National Teaching.

There is, of course, a more paradoxical way to read this first mention of Shishino. In the course of an educational program to strengthen Japanese identity against the West, Shishino and Fukami chose to dress as Westerners. How much of Japanese culture were they willing to abandon in the name of this “national” teaching? We can only guess how Shishino's peers reacted to this, but the next section will show that his conscious impetus for building a National Teaching was to construct a parallel to Christian churches.

Shishino's initial imposition on the Fuji *kō*, 1873–4

As mentioned above, the Kōgakusho/Ōkuni/Tsuwano idea for civic propaganda, the *senkyōshi* program, met with failure, and the Satsuma clique who replaced it envisioned an entirely new system which would include Buddhists and others and subordinate them all to the Daikyōin institute. Shishino and Fukami, who had been attending the Hirata school in Kyoto following the closure of the Kōgakusho, lacked any shrine priest experience, but the forthcoming *kyōdōshoku* system was precisely the change they had desired. Fukami was sent to Kotohira Jinja in Shikoku, a former shrine-temple complex, with a promise that he would

send back its wealth to the Daikyōin.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Shishino worked on integrating the popular *kō* into the *kyōdōshoku* program.⁴⁹

According to prewar scholar Inobe Shigeo, Shishino took charge of surveying what Inobe described as “popular religions” (*minkan shūkyō*). He gathered information about various Ontake *kō* and Fuji *kō* and argued that their power was “not to be scorned.”⁵⁰ Inobe presented him as saying as early as 1872: “Shrines are for the national rites, while Shinto is for the National Teaching [*kokka no kyō*]. To fulfill the teaching also fulfills the rites.”⁵¹ Here, shrines are distinguished from “Shinto,” with the latter term seeming to include more private practices of diverse origin. The implication, however, is clear: Fuji *kō* could fulfill a parallel function to shrines by becoming aligned with a “National Teaching”—a term not universally used, but seemingly preferred by Shishino.⁵²

Acting on this abstract policy decision, in early 1873 Shishino attempted to take control of all Fuji *kō* across the country. He obtained support from Shinto-inclined Yoshida *oshi* and used his bureaucratic rank to name himself head priest of the Sengen shrines at every major entrance to the mountain. He immediately ran

⁴⁸ Tokoyo, “Shinkyō soshiki monogatari,” 386.

⁴⁹ Toyoda, *Shūkyō seido shi*, 369.

⁵⁰ Inobe, *Fuji no shinkō*, 365–6; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 148n2, citing Inobe and unnamed other sources. (See also Hardacre, “Creating State Shintō,” 52n102.) This phrase “popular religions” (Hardacre’s “folk cults”) is of course anachronistic for 1873. But we can confirm that the “survey” was real: see the Maruyama section below.

⁵¹ Inobe, *Fuji no shinkō*, 380. Inobe offers no source for this quotation, which rings of either anachronism or impressive foresight on Shishino’s part.

⁵² *Kokka no kyō* or *kokkyō* could also be translated “state religion.” I use “national” to emphasize Shishino’s distinction between state-run shrines and popular *kō*, and “teaching” to emphasize his distinction between ritual and doctrine.

into problems: Yoshida's Fujitake Jinja (the former Kitaguchi Sengen-sha) refused him, as Yamanashi Prefecture had already certified its head priest. Shishino's ally Tokoyo Nagatane made some sort of backroom arrangement with the prefecture to transfer the existing head priest to Sengen Jinja in Fuefuki, and, on July 1, 1873, Shishino was appointed as the new head priest of Fujitake Jinja as well. Following his appointment, he quickly traveled to Yoshida and climbed Fuji.⁵³ He had never climbed Fuji before, nor had he ever been to Yoshida. Upon his return, he again worked through back channels at the Ministry of Doctrine to secure legal hold over the nation's *kō* as well.⁵⁴

As he did so, Shishino issued his first extant writing, establishing Fuji Issan Kōsha, the One-Mountain Fuji *Kō* Association; the name refers to the fact that he was personally uniting all the major Sengen shrines surrounding the mountain, their *oshi*, and their patron *kō*. It opens with an explanation of what he intends to accomplish, which encapsulates all the ideas that have so far been associated with him:

The religions [*kyōhō*] of Western countries flourish or fail according to the efforts of their churches [*kyōkai*]. Although our National Teaching [*kokkyō*] does not aim to take after them, we fear that through [continued] relations, they will gradually shackle the people of our nation to their churches, so the purpose of the new Daikyōin is to establish a method for churches through our National Teaching. Accordingly, grounded in the Constitution of the Daikyōin Churches, we unite the churches of every side of Mount Fuji and dedicate them to our great work, so that a century from now, our church may reach even into foreign realms.⁵⁵

⁵³ Tokoyo, "Shinkyō soshiki monogatari," 387.

⁵⁴ Iwashina, "Fuji kō," 91.

⁵⁵ Hirano, *Fuji shinkō*, 206.

This is an excellent example of what Inoue Nobutaka describes as a characteristic impulse to “globalize” Shinto as a sect or “religion.” Inoue sees late nineteenth-century Shintoists as envisioning a global marketplace of ideas, where worldviews and traditions are reimagined as religious groups in global competition.⁵⁶ Shishino’s announcement accordingly begins and ends with not with a statement of devotion to Fuji, but with the ideological problem of foreign countries and foreign teachings, imagined here not as divine messages but as institutions that rise and fall based on social appeal. European imperial power demanded that such churches be permitted to operate in Japan and disrupt local knowledge of the legitimacy and supremacy of the emperors, a topic of concern to nearly all Kokugaku theorists of this period. Shishino’s response is to turn Fuji *kō* into National Teaching “churches” to counter Christianity.

We can see here that *kyōkai*, which during the Meiji period became widely used for Sect Shinto institutions, is first introduced by Shishino to translate the word “church,” and then reused to explain the analogous nature of his objectives. Where Hirata Atsutane made strategic use of Christian doctrine, Shishino makes strategic use of Christian organizational structure. This, again, follows a generational pattern: both Hirata and his Meiji successors were deeply concerned with the global concept of religion, but where Atsutane’s writings focused on myth and doctrine, his successors focused on the situation on the ground.⁵⁷ Perhaps a

⁵⁶ Inoue N., *Keisei*, 361–366.

⁵⁷ Inoue N., *Keisei*, 365.

month or so after Shishino's announcement, his allies at the Daikyōin introduced the legal term *kyōkai* to define both the Daikyōin itself and its branch institutions.⁵⁸

Notably missing in Shishino's manifesto is the original purpose which these communities served. It is unclear whether Shishino studied Godaiin's "Writing on Mount Fuji," but in this text he takes after Godaiin in his complete disinterest in the invisible realm. Acting within the ideology of Satsuma Kokugaku, he erases the Fuji *kō*'s overlapping contexts of geography, geology, cosmology, prophecy, history, community, and healing, replacing them with a vision of ideologically purified "churches" competing over an international mission field. It is irrelevant that he has no prior connection to Fuji, no knowledge of its *kō*, and no priesthood experience, and indeed that he had to overcome local resistance to obtain his appointment as chief priest, because his new churches would represent neither preexisting Fuji practice nor Shinto ritual, but a "National Teaching" which might one day bring the Japanese message to foreign lands. Formulating such a teaching was Shishino's self-appointed area of expertise.

Shishino's 1873/4 charter for Fuji Issan Kōsha makes fundamental alterations to the very structure of the Fuji *kō*, their object of worship, their basic objectives, and their prayer practices. Front and center is a prohibition on the use of *majinai* and healing water and on "recklessly preaching revelations" (*midari ni shintaku toku nakare*), i.e. revelations from Fuji.⁵⁹ Instead of these activities, *kō*

⁵⁸ Yoshimura, "Kyūseido," 28.

⁵⁹ Iwashina, *Rekishi*, 370. Iwashina quotes from a 10-article charter entitled *Fuji Issan Kōsha seiyaku*. I have been unable to locate this document. I found several copies of a 12-article 1874

members were instructed to pray at Shinto shrines, to honor their father, mother, and superiors, and to perform newly approved ceremonies.⁶⁰ These ceremonies included monthly worship of the legendary first emperor Jimmu, prostrations towards the imperial shrine Ise Jingū, commemoration of the founding of Japan (*kigensetsu*), and celebrations of the reigning emperor's birthday and of one's own birthday. Members were also ordered to use the *kō* for their weddings and funerals, as one might do at a Christian church.⁶¹ All of this was Shishino's innovation and had no relation to prior Fuji *kō* traditions. This ambitious charter was unveiled during the height of the Meiji attempt to decouple the populace from Buddhist power. Nationwide reforms included the unwinding of monastic rules and a nationwide ban on Buddhist cremation, the latter of which lasted only a year.⁶²

Accompanying this redefinition of the *kō* was a new chain of command. Instead of the Tokugawa-era congregationalist *kō* structure, Fuji Issan Kōsha enforced a nationwide hierarchy, modeled on the strict hierarchies of the Ministry of Doctrine and other early Meiji ministries, in which Shishino himself sat at the top, followed by various subordinates, followed by six separate divisions of *sendatsu*

booklet entitled *Fuji Issan Kyōkai Kōsha kisoku* (富士一山教會講社規則, ID 2200444092, Kanagawa Prefectural Archives) which makes no mention of prayer healing or prophecies. However, *in situ* at the Kanagawa Prefectural Archives, this *Kisoku* document was preserved alongside a large sheet of single-sided, high-quality paper presumably meant for public display, which repeats the exact prohibitions quoted by Iwashina ("Kyōkai" 教誡, ID 2200444093, Kanagawa Prefectural Archives). Both texts presumably date to late 1874, as they both use this short-lived name "Kyōkai Kōsha" which seems to have been related to the Daikyōin project; Shishino changed the name of his group to Fuji Issan Kyōkai in 1875 following the abolition of the Daikyōin. By this logic, the lost *Seiyaku* document might date to late 1873 or early 1874.

⁶⁰ Fuji Issan Kyōkai Kōsha, "Kyōkai."

⁶¹ Fuji Issan Kyōkai Kōsha, *Kisoku*.

⁶² Bernstein, *Modern Passings*, 67–90.

from *daisendatsu* (great *sendatsu*) down to *gonshōsendatsu* (provisional small *sendatsu*), and *sewanin* community organizers at the bottom. This hierarchy was also Shishino's innovation, and it existed independent of *kyōdōshoku* licensure, meaning Fuji Issan Kōsha officers were being ranked by two separate systems.⁶³

A charter for a *kō* called Marushō in Saitama Prefecture, issued in February 1874 by two Yoshida *oshi* in Shishino's employ, gives a few additional details on what Fuji Issan Kōsha intended its local groups to accomplish. The name of the Marushō *kō* was changed to Shinjin Kyōkai ("Faithful Heart Church"). Many things were prohibited: *majinai* talismans, other "wrongheaded ideas" (*itan jasetsu*), drunkenness, freeloading, fighting, and overindulgence in luxuries, food, or sex. The *kō* was ordered to revere the emperor and deities (as ordered in the Three Articles of Instruction), to care for the elderly and for their households, and—added to the bottom of the page as an afterthought—to provide mutual aid in times of illness or emergency.⁶⁴

In essence the *kyōkai* "church" was a technology to transform local, autonomous community institutions into licensed branches of a centralized program for policing and normalizing the behavior of members. The fact that some traditional teachings and practices of the Fuji *kō* were prohibited and others sidelined was not an oversight but part of this agenda: in the face of the Western threat, Shishino had no patience for the traditions of the *kō*. Japan's success in the

⁶³ Iwashina, *Rekishi*, 370.

⁶⁴ Ozawa and Takeya, "Fuji Shinjin kyōkai."

new era required a fully disciplined, maximally productive body politic. Just as steam engines drove the public to factory labor, churches could drive the public to social order.

Such was Shishino's conception of his life's mission and the uses of Mount Fuji from 1873–4. Meanwhile, in late 1873, Shishino's wife visited Itō Rokurōbei and was healed of an illness.⁶⁵ In these few years since the beginning of his salvation mission in 1870, Rokurōbei had quickly become known as an authority on Fuji of a completely different type, one which attracted precisely the devout Fuji *kō* members which Shishino would now have to win over. But this would present a puzzle to Shishino: we will see in the following section that rather than Rokurōbei using Mount Fuji, it appeared that Mount Fuji was using Rokurōbei.

The Maruyama *kō* in 1873: a battle begins

Hagiographies tell us that beginning in 1870, the deity of Fuji commanded Itō Rokurōbei to undergo trials or austerities (*shugyō*) for the sake of the salvation of the people. He is said to have fasted for weeks on end and kept his hair loosened. Even when not fasting, he generally ate only one meal per day. He reportedly would enter a state of possession in which he walked painfully bending his toes under his feet (*tsumadate*), transforming the stylite practice of the legendary Kakugyō, and in

⁶⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 146–7, itself quoting Rokurōbei's memory in Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 27–8. See below for why I, like Yuri, accept the plausibility of Rokurōbei's memory here.

1871, he circumambulated Mount Fuji in this state.⁶⁶ His wife and relatives urged him to concern himself with the Itō family's merchant business, which he had abandoned, plunging his family and septuagenarian parents into poverty.⁶⁷ A common use of a medium in this time was to assume the suffering of a sick or possessed person, as had been the case for the Fudō practitioner who healed Rokurōbei's wife, so a close relative, Koide Shūgorō, sought out a medium who might take on Rokurōbei's salvation mission.⁶⁸ However, Rokurōbei felt that this mission was intended for him and that it overruled the worldly concerns of his household and business ventures.

The sublimation of his worldly life into persistent asceticism brought Rokurōbei notoriety in west Kanagawa Prefecture. He appears to have become the most prominent figure in the Maruyama *kō* sometime around 1871–2. We do not know of any formal event which deposed Yoshida Kinpei as *sendatsu*, but if we accept the hagiographies, Rokurōbei's constant asceticism would have marked him as a *gyōja*, a devoted mountain practitioner, and within the Fuji *kō* there could be no better person to repair the cosmic cycles and administer effective healing than a dedicated *gyōja*.⁶⁹ By May 1873, Yoshida Kinpei had apparently left the Maruyama *kō* entirely, but with Rokurōbei at its head it was now among the five largest Fuji *kō* in the Tokyo-Kanagawa region, attracting dedicated believers and *sewanin* financial

⁶⁶ Earhart, *Fuji*, 144, 200n9.

⁶⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 175.

⁶⁸ Shirosaki, "Koide."

⁶⁹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 99.

sponsors from the nearby villages of Kurokawa and Shimoasao as well as Noborito.⁷⁰

This brings us to the earliest written record of the Maruyama *kō*, an administrative survey which was unknown to Rokurōbei's hagiographers.⁷¹ In spring 1873, in preparation for the creation of Fuji Issan Kōsha, one of Shishino's subordinates Andō Katsushige ranked dozens of active Fuji *kō* members in Tokyo and Kanagawa within Shishino's prospective hierarchy. Andō's work presumably involved visiting or communicating with all the *kō* to ascertain members' levels of knowledge—although, notably, Andō only listed men in his report. On May 5, Andō added the Maruyama *kō* and made a special note that the *kō* boasted over twenty *sewanin*.⁷² He assigned ranks to one *chūsendatsu* (middle *sendatsu*) and six *shōsendatsu* and observed that some were residents of distant villages. Itō Rokurōbei stood at the head of the list, but uniquely, only his name was given, and

⁷⁰ Andō Katsushige 安藤勝重, "Fuji Issan Kōsha sendatsu menkyo namae hikae" 富士一山講社先達免許名前控, manuscript, April–May 1873, Yokohama National University Library. Former collection of Shingaku researcher Ishikawa Ken. The surprising date of this document can helpfully be confirmed by the Earthly Branch *tori* 酉 below the year. This is the earliest manuscript record of the Maruyama *kō*. For some reason the Maruyama *kō* was Andō's last stop. One might hypothesize the entry was appended in 1874, but I rule this out for three reasons: (1) most of the "eight deities" of the September 1873 ceremony are missing in Andō's list, including Ichikawa Chūjiro, who had become a core member by July 1873 and remained so through 1875, (2) conversely several men in Andō's list were absent in September 1873, and (3) by January 1874 the Maruyama *kō* had grown to include six villages.

⁷¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 148n2, seems to be aware that this survey was taken but unaware that it had survived.

⁷² Andō, "Fuji Issan Kōsha." (講口入二十人以上…) This information may have come from an interview, or from reading the 1870 *kōshin* marker which lists twenty *sewanin*. But this marker was of course outdated by 1873.

no ranking. No other person in the entire survey received this treatment from Andō.⁷³

A few weeks later, on May 25, police officers from the nearby town of Mizonokuchi entered Rokurōbei's house during a three-week fast, tied him with ropes, and carried him off to prison, the first of what would be many times. This arrest came without any prior warning, and the police refused to tell the people of Noborito where he was being taken.⁷⁴ We have no proof that Andō or Shishino reported Rokurōbei to police—the aforementioned relative Koide Shūgorō later remembered his behaviors as deserving of police attention⁷⁵—but his unique exclusion from Shishino's *sendatsu* ranking shows that even before the official creation of Fuji Issan Kōsha, Rokurōbei was being seen as a potential problem as well as a potential ally. After his release, Rokurōbei came under intense police surveillance which reportedly produced reams of paperwork.⁷⁶

In the villages of west Kanagawa, though, Rokurōbei's asceticism provided an example to be imitated. His postwar biography *Kyōsoden* shows that his early followers in 1873–4 believed themselves to be forming a new community informed by his special revelations. Particularly of note is Urushibara Shika (1837/8–1920), a woman who studied the Maruyama *kō*'s transmission text *Fuji nankyō* until its

⁷³ Andō, “Fuji Issan Kōsha.” The few other unranked members appear at the end of lists—presumably *sewanin* or other men who were not particularly important to their *kō*.

⁷⁴ Shirosaki, “Koide.” Koide searched fervently and located Rokurōbei three days later in Yokohama, still tied up in a private inn.

⁷⁵ Shirosaki, “Koide.”

⁷⁶ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 166.

wisdom was revealed to her, at which point her hair unbound itself, giving her the instant appearance of a *gyōja*. Now she became able to read the *Fuji nankyō* on tiptoe, in a booming voice not resembling her own, which caused her family to believe she had been possessed by a fox. Shika's written account of her own practice serves as a unique source for these years.⁷⁷

Shika's story is noteworthy because of its relationship to Fuji *kō* traditions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jikigyō had loosened some of the gendered taboos of the Fuji pilgrimage, and the late-developing Fujidō subsect moved towards full gender equality among participants. In Fujidō *kō*, women and men alike were encouraged to read from sacred texts and could practice (*shu*)gyō austerities through small acts such as skipping a meal, abstaining from alcohol, or dousing themselves in cold water.⁷⁸ Rokurōbei never mentioned Fujidō texts, although he could have witnessed women making Fujidō pilgrimages in 1860.

According to the hagiographies, Itō Rokurōbei's bent-toe (*tsuma-date*) ascetic trials revealed to him that his *kō* must honor “wives” (*tsuma*), or women, and that they should be permitted to join pilgrimages. It was additionally revealed that his wife was an incarnation of the female Shinto deity Konohanasakuyahime (identified with Sengen), and himself the goddess' husband—paralleling the Fujidō teaching of “woman above and man below.”⁷⁹ Shika's asceticism is additional evidence that,

⁷⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 139–140. Shika's “training diary” is a deep source for Rokurōbei's biography, although it is not wholly period-accurate; see Introduction.

⁷⁸ Miyazaki, “Networks of Believers,” 158.

⁷⁹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 90–1. Mount Fuji was legally opened to women in 1872.

without any direct Fujidō influence, the Maruyama *kō* was developing on similar lines in its emphasis on women's involvement beyond what institutional Buddhism or shrines allowed. The main difference appears to be the intensity and length of the asceticism, here involving standing on tiptoe and physically changing Shika's hair and voice. Rather than a temporary act of abstinence or ablution, the Maruyama *kō* seemingly transformed some of its members into *gyōja* similar to Rokurōbei himself.

In September 1873, Rokurōbei held a ceremony at the Fuji mound near his family home to symbolically bury his worldly soul and commemorate his rebirth as a vessel of Sengen. He chose seven of his closest followers to become gods with him and called their group the “eight ancestral gods”: this group consisted of seven men and one woman, and a second woman (who was perhaps blocked from attending by her family) was appended to their ranks in community memory.⁸⁰ As we have seen, this inclusion of women was incompatible with the “reformed” *sendatsu* hierarchy desired by Shishino at this time, and turning men and women into gods was utterly antithetical to the purpose of Fuji Issan Kōsha.

This was just one of various adventures which Sengen provided to Rokurōbei over the course of 1873. In winter, he went to Gunma Prefecture, where he chanted from the *Nankyō* to tame the dragon of Ikaho Swamp—an echo of Kakugyō, who was said to have worshiped these water dragons.⁸¹ In spring, Rokurōbei correctly

⁸⁰ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 127. This group did not include Urushibara Shika or her family.

⁸¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 107–112. For Kakugyō, see Sawada, *Faith*, 214n33.

predicted that one of the imperial palaces would burn down, recalling Jikigyō's gift of prophecy.⁸² In summer, he assembled a group of nine followers, who he called his "nine heavenly bodies" (*kuyōsei*, the Indian *navagraha*), and had them climb Mount Fuji during a ferocious rainstorm.⁸³ Throughout the year, we are told, his fame increased and more and more people came to him seeking healing and reassurance.

One of these adventures offered support for the well-being of the new government: In autumn 1873, Chancellor Sanjō Sanetomi fell ill, and two members of the Maruyama *kō* were dispatched to his house and gave him a flag blessed by Rokurōbei to heal him.⁸⁴ Following the tradition of Jikigyō, who upheld the legitimacy of the government while urging its leaders to aid the people and realize the Age of Miroku, the Maruyama *kō* was not antagonistic to the new Meiji authorities. Sengen revealed to Rokurōbei that the new order of Japan took the form of a marriage: the government would play the bridegroom, and the *gyōja* the bride.⁸⁵ But when a few of his followers switched to Shishino's side, Rokurōbei recalled feeling "unable to face them."⁸⁶

As we have seen, Shishino and Rokurōbei had entirely different views of the meaning of Fuji and the active, ongoing nature of revelation. Shishino's biography reads precisely like the kind of professional middleman whom Jikigyō had warned against. In the *Book of Thirty-One Days*, Jikigyō had written: "When faithless

⁸² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 115. For Jikigyō, see Sawada, *Faith*, 139, 141.

⁸³ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 123–5. It is not clear whether this *navagraha* included any women.

⁸⁴ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 141–2.

⁸⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 91.

⁸⁶ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 28.

laypeople take up shrine priest jobs as they please, there is bound to be strife.”⁸⁷

Shishino was not only a faithless layperson but a reckless spendthrift. In February 1874, aiming to secure a headquarters for Fuji Issan Kōsha, he put a down payment of 1,500 yen to buy a plot of Tokyo land for 4,000 yen (≈13 million USD in 2026). Despite having no means of securing the remainder, he promised to surrender all 1,500 yen as a penalty if he failed to complete the payment by April, shocking the staff of Fuji Issan Kōsha. He then attempted to convince *zaibatsu* founder Yasuda Zenjirō to obtain the remaining 2,500 yen for him. When this gambit failed, Shishino somehow convinced the seller to accept an unsecured bond, while obtaining a 5,000-yen loan from Yasuda’s business partner.⁸⁸ Just a week or two after obtaining this massive loan, Shishino somehow was named as chief accountant of the Daikyōin. Within a year or two, he would be investigated by police on suspicion of embezzlement.⁸⁹ Rokurōbei’s own narrative could not be more at odds with Shishino. Rokurōbei had committed himself and his entire family not only to penniless asceticism but to an explicit salvation mission given to him by the god of Fuji.

Besides the divinely inspired critique, did Rokurōbei sense political injustice in his encounter with Shishino? He could have easily been inspired by Jikigyō’s writings. Like Rokurōbei, Jikigyō was a merchant by trade who sympathized more with farmers than with samurai. He wrote, for instance, that government officials

⁸⁷ Jikigyō, “Sanjūichinichi no onmaki,” 435.

⁸⁸ Takahashi, “Fusōkyō,” 1014–5.

⁸⁹ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 165–6 (entries for April and May 1875). There is an alibi on pp. 60–62.

“squeeze out the tears of the people and take their money,” and spoke of rice production as the greatest blessing of the Original Father-Mother.⁹⁰ For this reason, Miyazaki Fumiko opined that Jikigyō encouraged rulers to “listen to the voices of the lowly[.]”⁹¹ However, Jikigyō did not speak of his Age of Miroku as the result of rulers listening to farmers, but as a divine mandate to create an ideal world free of mistreatment for all classes.⁹²

There is a strange document, one of countless unsorted texts copied out by believers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which puts an even more political tinge on Rokurōbei’s early confrontation with Shishino. It claims that he said the following in 1873:

There is no one so precious as a farmer. No emperor or shogun would be able to eat without farmers. Even so, the samurai look down on farmers as if we were not human. From now on, farmers will have social rank. Hideyoshi and Ieyasu both started out as farmers. I am a farmer, too. If you don’t start from the bottom, you will have no pity for those below you. Those born from the top cannot comprehend it from books and materials.⁹³

Rather than a divine mission from Sengen, the Rokurōbei of this passage speaks bitterly of how his subjectivity originates from class-based experiences which he claims can never be understood by samurai. Although Rokurōbei’s actual income

⁹⁰ Jikigyō, “Osoegaki,” 530. (民の涙を搾り取らせ金銀を取り上げさせ)

⁹¹ Miyazaki, “Longing for the Ideal World,” 150.

⁹² As Miyazaki observes, Jikigyō was “looking at the situation from the perspective of the deity[.]” “Longing for the Ideal World,” 153.

⁹³ Aoki, “Chichibu jiken.” I doubt this text is Aoki’s invention. Its purported transcriber died around the 1920s. Unfortunately, it is unprovenanced beyond this. There is a slight chance it could have been forged by Itō Mutsuo, who dallied in anarchism and communism when he attended Waseda University from 1918–1923: Ōhata, “Itō Mutsuo,” 12–13. But the period language seems hard to forge.

came from driving horses and selling charcoal, he places himself on the side of the farmers against book-learned bureaucrats like Shishino. While the provenance of this quotation is murky, it reflects a strain of thought which Rokurōbei adopted as a young man and maintained throughout his life. Such antagonism became visible in the 1860s as the social fabric of the Tokugawa shogunate decayed and some commoners saw their interests as at odds with the samurai; during the 1866 riots in Edo, some rioters even called for samurai to be killed on the spot.⁹⁴

Throughout Rokurōbei's salvation mission, he would reiterate similar messages. As Yasumaru Yoshio observes, Maruyama texts include phrases like "the people below will guide those above" and "to those below, go up! Go up!"⁹⁵ Praise for the self-sufficiency and labor of the farmer can be found throughout Rokurōbei's writings: "The Chinese character for *farmer* depicts a person with his head above the heavens." "There is no difference between the work of a farmer and the work of a saint." "Maruyama asceticism is like the diligent husbandry of farmers."⁹⁶ While none of these statements repeat the hermeneutic criticism of the poorly provenanced quotation, it does seem possible that the quotation is authentic and Rokurōbei's antagonism towards Shishino in 1873 was driven by class consciousness as well as Jikigyō's teachings.

Rokurōbei ended 1873 fleeing intensified police persecution by hiding himself in the Buddhist temple Kuhonbutsu Jōshinji in Setagaya. At the end of December,

⁹⁴ Walthall, "Edo Riots," 422.

⁹⁵ Yasumaru, *Minshū shisō*, 125.

⁹⁶ Yasumaru, *Minshū shisō*, 127.

the police located him and again arrested him. But his fame continued to grow unabated. On January 1, 1874, the Maruyama *kō* dedicated a new washbasin at the Fujizuka mound in Noborito. It was engraved with a proud announcement that the *kō* was now supported by six villages in the region.⁹⁷

April-September 1874: Crossing paths at Mount Fuji

On April 26, 1874, Rokurōbei's relationship with the Meiji state reached a nadir when he was imprisoned indefinitely on the charge of contradicting the state's teachings about the biomedical origins of disease and contagion.⁹⁸ Interpreting this as another trial from Sengen, Rokurōbei began fasting in prison, which apparently brought him close to death.⁹⁹ Kawamura Kunimitsu has observed how the Meiji state's punitive approach towards claims of possession and divine inspiration eventually developed into a legal and social discourse of rationality and mental illness which could completely delegitimize the statements of the possessed.¹⁰⁰ This internalization had not yet happened in 1874, and some sort of debate may have happened with the prison guards about the divine command to fast.¹⁰¹ By the end of the month, the problematic prisoner was released into house arrest under the care

⁹⁷ Kakuda, "Maruyama *kō*."

⁹⁸ This is the narrative of the police report (Inoue G., "Fuji *kō* toritadashi"). Yuri, in *Kyōsoden*, 167n2, says only that Rokurōbei was imprisoned on unspecified false charges due to the jealousy of an unnamed Noborito bureaucrat and the imperiled finances of the Itō household. Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 37, says Rokurōbei was accused of deceiving the public to believe in strange things.

⁹⁹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 163–6.

¹⁰⁰ Kawamura, *Genshi*, 122–130. Especially of note here is that common reasons given for confining the mentally ill to house arrest included a proclivity for wandering to distant places and "destruction of household finances," both of which certainly applied to Rokurōbei.

¹⁰¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 163–6. Regarding the authenticity and timing of this debate, see Introduction.

of family.¹⁰² Rokurōbei had effectively defeated the carceral state with a successful hunger strike, several years before the first documented use of this political tactic in Russia.¹⁰³ This extreme, life-threatening ascetic practice would soon force the hand of Shishino himself.

House arrest, of course, was insufficient to prevent the people of west Kanagawa from visiting Rokurōbei in his home for prayer healing. Police therefore constructed a bamboo fence around the Itō home and warned visitors against approaching.¹⁰⁴ This provided a perverse incentive for Rokurōbei to escape in order to continue his divine mission, in flagrant violation of court orders.¹⁰⁵ He was now taking on not only the karmic burden of his followers' diseases, but also the secular burden of legal persecution. Although the Maruyama *kō* had prayed for the health of a government official just a few months earlier, the court's action had made Rokurōbei into a martyr of the government.

Rokurōbei's flights from house arrest coincided with new developments at Fuji Issan Kōsha. As we have seen, Shishino Nakaba first climbed Fuji in July 1873, where he would have seen the "Shintoization" of the mountain initiated by unknown *oshi*. Already in 1868, a gazetteer had altered many names of Sengen shrines to eliminate Buddhist elements. In 1869, anonymous assailants smashed

¹⁰² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 172–8.

¹⁰³ Grant, "Russian Method." Shah, *Refusal to Eat*, 28, describes the further transformation of this method from a simple delegitimization of carceral regimes to a tool for democratic activism.

¹⁰⁴ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 36; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 117; Ogiwara, "Fujijo (6)," 23. Aoikawa placed the construction of the fence in 1873 but, as above, records of this time are murky. Based on the limited timeline in Inoue G., "Fuji kō toritadashi," I think it happened in 1874.

¹⁰⁵ Inoue G., "Fuji kō toritadashi."

Buddhist objects around the mountain.¹⁰⁶ By June 1871, someone had repurposed the mountaintop Dainichi Hall as a Sengen shrine, although the Yakushi Hall retained its Buddhist identity.¹⁰⁷ Shishino did nothing to rationalize this transformation in 1873, although it remained incomplete and demanded legal clarification.¹⁰⁸ Tokyo, not Yoshida, was the seat of Fuji Issan Kōsha's operations; after returning from Yoshida he busied himself with administrative work in Tokyo, appointing *sendatsu* and turning the *kō* into *kyōkai* "churches." On June 4, he suggested to Yamanashi Prefecture that they legally assign non-Buddhist names to the peaks on the summit and reassign ownership of the various Buddha halls on the mountain.¹⁰⁹ In early 1874, he dabbled in Tokyo real estate and accounting, as mentioned above, with no visible concern for Fuji's human geography.

Shishino's habit of keeping distance from Mount Fuji itself ended very quickly on June 28, 1874. On that day, two days after being commanded to do so by Sengen, Rokurōbei escaped from house arrest despite the watchful eye of police spies¹¹⁰ and began a climb with three male and three female *gyōja*. In Yoshida, the *oshi* whom the Maruyama *kō* had formerly patronized knew him to be a fugitive and shut him out, so he stayed with a less prestigious *oshi*.¹¹¹ As I endeavored to show

¹⁰⁶ Bernstein, *Fuji*, 156; Fujiyoshida-shi, *Fujiyoshida shishi tsūshihen*, vol. 3, 211–213.

¹⁰⁷ Suzuki Masafumi, "Fujisan chōjō," 58.

¹⁰⁸ The owners of the Dainichi hall seem to have demanded compensation (see below).

¹⁰⁹ Nagata, "Fujisan chōjō," 11–12.

¹¹⁰ As he was in 1873, Rokurōbei was under constant surveillance throughout 1874. Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 71; Inoue G., "Fuji kō toritadashi."

¹¹¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 180–2; Itō Iten, *Inage kyōdoshi*, 168. Incidentally, this daring escape seems to have become legendary in Maruyama movement memory. A believer in Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 110–11, recalls being told about it by his mother. Suzuki Tetsurō ("Kyōso gotozan") recalled Rokurōbei climbing with over a thousand followers on this date. This is impossible for 1874, notably because few *oshi* would be willing to house a thousand people being led by a fugitive. Suzuki seems

in Chapter One, every trip to Fuji was a ritual rebirth into a sacred space, a physical challenge, and for Fuji *kō*, a chance to encounter the grace of the Original Father-Mother. In this case, the *gyōja* were climbing in the off-season and feared that the lodges on the route would be closed to them. Rokurōbei, fearlessly scaling the volcanic rock in painful *geta* sandals while fasting, reduced the *gyōja* to tears by finding an open lodge for them.¹¹² The same day that Rokurōbei began his pilgrimage, Shishino suddenly announced to Yamaguchi Prefecture that he would personally climb Fuji to remove the Buddha statues there.¹¹³ He had not yet received a response to his petition to change the names of peaks and remove the halls (this would come in November).¹¹⁴ Neither Shishino's biography nor the diary of his loyal follower Ozawa Hikochi gives any explanation of the impetus behind Shishino's hasty decision to make the climb himself. Oddly, Shishino did not begin his climb after announcing it.

Almost a month later, around July 23 (and now within the proper climbing season), Rokurōbei again approached Mount Fuji with a much larger group of about 36 to 63 men and women.¹¹⁵ The size of the working-class group suddenly leaving their jobs and homes for a *shugyō* suggests that devotion to Rokurōbei was growing.

to be confusing this incident with a pilgrimage later in the 1870s; perhaps it loomed large in his memory.

¹¹² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 184.

¹¹³ Suzuki Masafumi, "Fujisan chōjō," 56; Nagata, "Fujisan chōjō," 6.

¹¹⁴ Shishino, "Fujisan chū sanmei," 17.

¹¹⁵ The sole source for the date is Shika's diary. Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol.1, 70–71, ranges from 36 to 42 participants. Inoue G., "Fuji kō toritadashi," 117, has an incorrect date (August 8, which conflicts with an event given in Shida M., *Takasago*, 2v) and 63 participants. Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 191n2, adds only that the climbers turned back at the eighth station, and that the most devoted *gyōja* continued with Rokurōbei to Mount Kintoki.

Meanwhile, on July 22, Shishino dispatched a crew of Yoshida *oshi* up the mountain and dashed off a letter to Yamanashi announcing that he was about to leave. He then quickly circled the mountain (about 50km) to recruit eighteen more *oshi* in Shizuoka, whence two days later he began climbing himself.¹¹⁶ It is notable that Shishino did not send the Shizuoka *oshi* a letter informing them of a date in advance but hastily went to summon them in person. Halfway up the mountain on the Omoteguchi trail, he decommissioned a shrine to Fumokiri Fudō, an epithet of Fudō Myōō, and thus a remnant of Shūgendō activities on the mountain.¹¹⁷ On July 26, Shishino and his Shizuoka *oshi* joined the Yoshida *oshi* atop Fuji to remove or smash Buddhist imagery. The remains of the Dainichi hall were purchased for 50 yen.¹¹⁸ This was explained to newspapers as cleansing the peak of “Buddhist ugliness” (*bussshū*) and restoring it to the hypothetical original purity of its “ancient” resident deity Konohanasakuyahime. Japanese *gagaku* music was played at 11 AM as the participating *oshi* descended with captured statuary.¹¹⁹

It is unclear if Shishino was directly responding to Rokurōbei in either of these incidents, since he was only completing the Shintoization that the *oshi* had left unfinished. But in the odd timing, we can see a growing sense of confrontation in their activities. Rokurōbei and his *gyōja* were receiving the power of the mountain and the grace of its creator deity through acts of devotion and prayer,

¹¹⁶ Suzuki Masafumi, “Fujisan chōjō,” 56; Nagata, “Fujisan chōjō,” 6, 25n34.

¹¹⁷ Shishino’s replacement shrine to Yamatotakeru has since reverted to a syncretic “Fumokiri Fudō Jinja,” which is empty. The Fudō statue is now held by Kōhō-ji in Murayama, Shizuoka.

¹¹⁸ Suzuki Masafumi, “Fujisan chōjō,” 56.

¹¹⁹ Nagata, “Fujisan chōjō,” 8–10. The identity of the musician(s) is unknown.

while Shishino saw himself as empowered through his institutional authority, and the mountain as the passive recipient of his purifying powers. With this change in tactics, Shishino assumed the burden of violating the sanctity of the mountain. This won him enemies as well as friends, and for over a century afterwards, some in Yoshida would blame him even for the initial wave of destruction in 1869–71.¹²⁰ There is a clear pivot from Shishino’s initial hands-off approach to this pomp and circumstance including the hiring of *gagaku* musicians. After these late July climbs, Shishino sent out feelers to the Maruyama *kō* for the first time: in August, he began reaching out to unnamed Maruyama *gyōja* offering to include their *kō* in Fuji Issan *Kōsha*.¹²¹

Through the summer of 1874, when he was not climbing Fuji, Rokurōbei engaged in “inhuman *gyō*”—the Japanese word for “inhuman” being *hinin*, which had been used in the Tokugawa period to indicate farmers in revolt or the *burakumin* outcaste. There is no indication that Rokurōbei was consciously adopting the deep politics of this term, but he did understand “inhuman” to have social implications. According to his hagiographers, Sengen told him to conceal himself in a cloak and hat. He hid from the public eye, wandered from temple to temple as a vagrant, slept in the rough, and quietly healed the sick. Shishino was offering to grant him power within the worlds of Fuji Issan *Kōsha* and the Daikyōin, but Rokurōbei saw that this power was not Shishino’s to give nor his to receive; the

¹²⁰ Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 246.

¹²¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 178–180.

power of Mount Fuji rightly belonged to all those with pure hearts, as Jikigyō had taught. Police spies tracked Rokurōbei during this “inhuman *gyō*,” but allegedly, seeing his voluntary poverty and healing, one took pity on him and helped him evade arrest.¹²²

A document entitled “Fuji *Kō* Inspection Report” (*Fuji kō toritadashi kakiage*), dated September 1874, shows the extent to which Rokurōbei’s group was now surveilled and the intent of that surveillance. It reports on each time, beginning May 1874, that Rokurōbei was able to sneak out of his house arrest,¹²³ and warns that at least one newspaper has written about him. It describes a community of 17 or 18 *gyōja* constantly burning incense at the Fujizuka Sengen-sha in Noborito and developing abilities to read *ominuki*, teach, and hold prayer rituals, and dozens of like-minded people from outside Noborito joining the *kō* on Fuji climbs—both men and women. In the eyes of the local authorities, the problem of the Maruyama *kō* could no longer be reduced to Rokurōbei as an individual but was now a communal issue. The authors’ recommendation to the Kawasaki city authorities was that the Fujizuka be closed off.¹²⁴

¹²² Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 71.

¹²³ All the dates differ from those given in *Kyōsoden*. The *Kyōsoden* dates are more likely to be accurate, as the police report’s dates also conflict with Shida M., *Takasago*.

¹²⁴ Inoue G., “Fuji *kō toritadashi*.” Unfortunately, I was not able to locate the cited newspaper report, but I found in the *Yokohama nichinichi shinbun* for 1874 several stories of a familiar type for this time, in which anecdotes are used to warn readers of the dangers of fraudulent healing prayers.

Showdown in the snows of Fuji, September 1874

The police crackdown against Rokurōbei, which had defined his *shugyō* for almost a year and a half, was now about to eliminate his worship site and possibly lead to the persecution of the dozen-odd *gyōja* who had gathered around him. Meanwhile, Shishino had reached out to these same *gyōja* in August with the promise of legitimizing the Maruyama *kō*.¹²⁵ In this moment of crisis for Rokurōbei's salvation mission, the example of Jikigyō must have been a source of clarity. As we saw in Chapter One, when Jikigyō saw the lives of ordinary people endangered, he climbed Mount Fuji and committed suicide there by deliberate starvation over the course of a month. On September 18, 1874, Rokurōbei announced that he would again climb Mount Fuji, which was by now covered in dangerous snow and ice, and do the same. Compared to his previous hunger strike in prison, this was more consciously in line with Fuji *kō* precedent. The parallel was obvious: Rokurōbei's suicide, like Jikigyō's, would be an ultimate rejection of any compromise with injustice, and a way for a seemingly powerless individual to have the last word in a debate.¹²⁶

Beyond the obvious imitation of Jikigyō, there was a deeper layer to Rokurōbei's decision. Altruistic suicide in medieval Japan had been a way of generating merit and easing the karmic burden of others. In the medieval Japanese context, suicides might be described as accompanied by purple clouds and falling

¹²⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 264.

¹²⁶ Sawada, *Faith*, 146–8.

flowers as they passed to the Pure Land.¹²⁷ Witnesses were not meant to feel sadness or guilt, but marvel at the act of faith. This perception of suicide stood in direct contradiction to later Confucian-influenced beliefs about life as a blessing from one's parents, as well as to the deep-seated perception of a dead body as inherently polluting to the place where it rests.¹²⁸ Although Jikigyō had explained his fast as a final austerity for the sake of the world, with an eye to the socioeconomic troubles of his time, and used it to pass on new revelations in the *Book of Thirty-One Days*, he, too, relied on the broader Buddhist understanding of ritual suicide as a beneficial act of faith. Rokurōbei, in turn, could be responding to the police attacks on his *kō* with a human sacrifice to reinvigorate faith in Sengen.

Up until this point, as we have seen, Shishino had no *direct* interaction with Rokurōbei. Instead, there is the May 1873 survey followed by extensive persecution and surveillance of the *kō*, indirect attempts to peel away the other *gyōja*, the odd footnote of Shishino's wife's healing, and coincidences surrounding the timing of their respective Fuji climbs. But on hearing of his mountaintop fast, Shishino apparently decided that he could no longer make a pretense of being personally unmoved by Rokurōbei's activities. Rokurōbei had successfully intruded on Shishino's pragmatism. Some in the government were already uncomfortable with Fuji Issan Kōsha's stated reliance on the non-Shinto teachings of Kakugyō and

¹²⁷ Moerman, "Passage to Fudaraku," 269–271.

¹²⁸ c.f. Bernstein, *Modern Passings*, 54, 62.

Jikigyō,¹²⁹ and a new suicide in imitation of Jikigyō would presumably dash Shishino's hopes for building a National Teaching out of the Fuji *kō*.

On September 21, Rokurōbei entered a stone hut at the eighth station of Mount Fuji with the most devoted *gyōja* and began fasting to death. After a week, the hut was covered in a massive snowdrift. His loyal *gyōja* gradually departed, with the last, Shika, staying until her body gave out on October 1.¹³⁰ On the twenty-first day of his fast, Rokurōbei saw a vision of the rising sun through the door of the snowbound hut and heard a message from Sengen, who told him that his mission was to save the people, not to die (Figure 2). He was told that someone would come to retrieve him the following day: this took the form of porters sent by his nemesis Shishino.¹³¹ Interestingly, this can be interpreted in three different ways. By accepting Shishino's offer, Rokurōbei could be seen as giving in to Fuji Issan Kōsha. By making the offer in the first place,

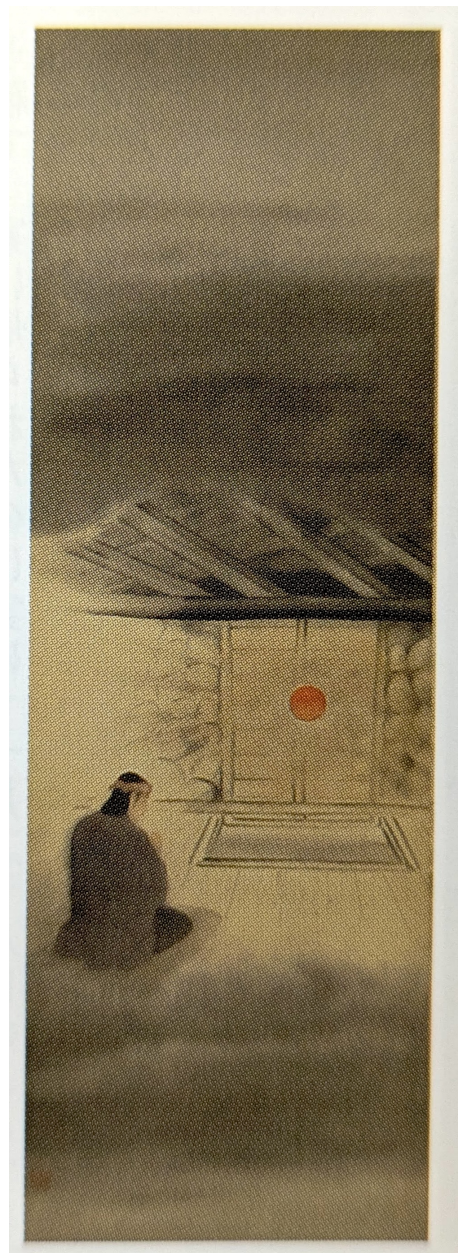


Figure 2: Itō Rokurōbei's vision of the rising sun. Undated emaki reprinted in *Kami no hikari*, April-May 2025.

¹²⁹ Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 231.

¹³⁰ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 201–211.

¹³¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 216–221.

Shishino could be admitting defeat. Or—if Rokurōbei's biographers are to be believed—both sides of the equation were part of a greater plan which Sengen had revealed to him.¹³²

In the town of Yoshida at the foot of the mountain, Shishino met directly with Rokurōbei for the first time. Shishino wore the court dress befitting a Shinto priest, while Rokurōbei is reported as barefoot, skin-and-bones after his fast, with his hair falling wildly to his shoulders.¹³³ According to Rokurōbei, Shishino praised his faith but told him to cease his *shugyō*.¹³⁴ In Maruyama lore, Shishino is alleged to have praised Rokurōbei to those around him, saying that out of the hundreds of *sendatsu* he had met, this was the first true *sendatsu*.¹³⁵ Shishino may have indeed said something like this as he tried to puzzle out how Rokurōbei had brought him to a position of compromise, but his actions speak far louder than his words. The newly discovered May 1873 survey shows that Shishino realized from the very beginning that Rokurōbei was qualitatively different from all the other Fuji *sendatsu*—and potentially disruptive to his project. This was borne out by all of his subsequent treatment of the Maruyama *kō*.

Accordingly, at this October 1874 meeting, Shishino offered Rokurōbei no further assistance or protection. Instead, immediately after the meeting, in the midst of being fêted by his overjoyed followers, Rokurōbei was again arrested on the

¹³² Rokurōbei's extant speeches and writings are, however, silent on this incident.

¹³³ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 93.

¹³⁴ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 28.

¹³⁵ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 1, 94; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 222.

charge of receiving a gift of pocket change¹³⁶ in exchange for healing. His new Yoshida *oshi* was interrogated, allegedly causing the *oshi*'s elderly father to die of shock, and he was ominously warned that continuing to heal without a *kyōdōshoku* license would result in further punishments. Despite the personal reassurance he had just received from the Original Father-Mother, Rokurōbei later said that this police harassment threw him into a state of anxiety.¹³⁷

Betrayal and compromise, 1875

Fuji Issan Kōsha's pressure on the Maruyama *kō* did not let up after the Fuji encounter. In January 1875, three core Maruyama *gyōja* solicited donations from members without permission during Rokurōbei's two-month *shugyō*. They claimed that Shishino would use the money to build a shrine for the *kō*.¹³⁸ This was a deep betrayal by Rokurōbei's oldest and closest allies, including Yajima Kyūbei, the highest ranked *sendatsu* in the May 1873 report, and Ichikawa Chūjiro, named in the September 1874 police report as Rokurōbei's most loyal follower and the "ringleader" of the *gyōja*.¹³⁹ These men had even received semi-divine ranks within the *kō*. Yajima and Ichikawa had joined the July 1873 "*navagraha*" Fuji climb, and all three renegades had joined the September 1873 ceremony where they were named among the "eight deities" of the Fujizuka.¹⁴⁰ After Rokurōbei finished his

¹³⁶ 200 mon, equivalent to 2 sen or 0.02 yen.

¹³⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 264–5.

¹³⁸ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 224–7.

¹³⁹ Inoue G., "Fuji *kō* toritadashi."

¹⁴⁰ Yuri, "Sono 24."

shugyō, he quickly received and donated 300 yen to Shishino, after which Yajima and Ichikawa vanished like thieves in the night with 74 yen; the other embezzler's house was burned down.¹⁴¹

The exact cause of this incident is perplexing. First, why did these devoted members subvert Rokurōbei's leadership after years of sacrifice? Second, why did they think they would get away with this scheme? Weren't most *kō* members personally loyal to Rokurōbei? Rokurōbei's biographers called the three *gyōja* "con men" (*yamashi*) and said that they wanted to "curry favor with" Shishino and make Rokurōbei an "outcast" (*nokemono*), implying they conceived of this plan for personal power, but it was also mentioned that they obtained an illustration of a Fuji Issan Kōsha shrine which they showed off to various *sewanin* and *kō* supporters to demonstrate how the money would be used.¹⁴² Where did this illustration come from? The simplest answer would seem to be that Shishino or a lackey had given them the illustration, and that the plan was therefore conceived on Shishino's end, with a promise of security for the Maruyama *kō* and its *gyōja* if funds were obtained.¹⁴³ This suggests that there might have been some misunderstanding among these men, where Shishino had convinced them to overcome Rokurōbei's resistance to collecting donations for the sake of the *kō* rather

¹⁴¹ Another source gives 200 yen, collected from 120 *kō* members living in four regions around Noborito. Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 264, 269n5.

¹⁴² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 264; Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 29–30.

¹⁴³ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 29, states that the three *gyōja* feared the police, despite the fact that police had only targeted Rokurōbei. The three *gyōja* all vanished in 1875 and never returned to the community. How could Aoikawa, who joined Maruyamakyō in 1890, have possibly known the thoughts of these three men? But Aoikawa had been close with Shishino.

than for their personal profit. Since they had been core figures in several of Rokurōbei's rituals, they may have felt that they already had the authority to make these decisions on behalf of the *kō*. It also seems plausible that Rokurōbei was enraged at the *gyōja* for breaking the rule on accepting donations, especially to enrich the menacing Shishino, and expelled them for a violation of communal trust, but that their negotiation was exaggerated in later years into a traitorous and selfish conspiracy, because Rokurōbei shortly thereafter made the same compromise.¹⁴⁴

Rokurōbei had gone years without collecting money. He had plunged his family into poverty and had suffered police interrogation over the question of a measly 0.02-yen donation. The question of finances clearly carried great moral and spiritual consequences for him. This may be seen as faithfulness to Jikigyō and other Fuji leaders' policy of not accepting payments for healing rituals.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, it seems to have been well-known by this point that Shishino was not to be trusted with money. But at the same time, the conclusion could not be avoided that the combination of police persecution and Shishino's quest for funds was making the faithful extremely eager to volunteer their funds to pursue normalization—374 yen being an enormous sum at the time, especially for cash-poor farmers. The apparent conclusion Rokurōbei had reached was that the promises of freedom from persecution, and of rewards such as a shrine building,

¹⁴⁴ Yuri, in "Sono 24," describes his frustration seeking out the truth of this incident. With much difficulty he extracted the three names above from Maruyamakyō elders, but his description of January 1875 still relies on Aoikawa (see Introduction and Chapter Six) and on Shika's diary.

¹⁴⁵ Sawada, *Faith*, 119–128.

were deeply desired by his community, so he had best start collecting funds for Shishino, at least for the time being. This important decision instantly made the Maruyama *kō* the largest financial sponsor of Shishino's sect and ended the financial difficulties of the Itō household.¹⁴⁶

Once again, this incident had no single victor. The original scheme had been halted by Rokurōbei's charisma, but the moral integrity of the *kō* had been undermined by Shishino's venality. Once again, the necessity of compromise was clear, and this time it was finalized. About a month later Rokurōbei sat down with Shishino at a neutral location—a tea house in Setagaya, Tokyo—and Shishino appointed him “*daisendatsu*,” the highest *sendatsu* rank in Fuji Issan Kōsha and equivalent to other large *kō* leaders.¹⁴⁷ There is a bitter contrast between the Jikigyō-inspired, divinely guided fast on the sacred slopes of Fuji and this thoroughly worldly meeting which surrendered the moral high ground in exchange for minimal protections. Rokurōbei was now freer to conduct prayers and rituals, but unlike most Fuji Issan Kōsha *sendatsu*, he was not granted any rank in the *kyōdōshoku* system and thus remained at risk of arrest. By the end of the year, Rokurōbei would be promoted to “minor branch vice-chief,” which designated the Maruyama *kō* a “minor branch” although it was actually the biggest and wealthiest branch of Shishino's sect, and which left it ambiguous who the “chief” of this branch was.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 265–6.

¹⁴⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 266. The extant appointment record is dated March 1875 (Shirosaki, “Sono 3”).

¹⁴⁸ Shirosaki, “Sono 3.”

Shishino was using every tool at his disposal to minimize Rokurōbei's role in his organization and depict the Maruyama *kō*'s independent value system as minor and irrelevant. But unexplained changes to his own doctrine and behavior expose how his vision of Fuji devotion was drawing closer to Rokurōbei's. Fuji Issan Kōsha's late 1874 regulations had explicitly forbidden prayer healing, but in May 1875, a Kokugaku-educated *kyōdōshoku* who worked with Shishino performed a prayer at Suyama Sengen Shrine in Shizuoka to heal a patron.¹⁴⁹ A few years after that, two of the sect's texts endorse such prayers. The first is *Fuji shindōki*, an 1877 publication which serves as the official catechism for Shishino's sect:

The Heavenly Ancestors formed the heavens and the earth, and together with the heavens and earth created deities to rule over all things, so if you pray with all your heart, there can be no doubt that it will assuredly assist medicine, and illness will come to be cured.¹⁵⁰

This shows a compromise position, where the divine will of the Heavenly Ancestors is depicted as supporting biomedicine as well as prayer. Such theological labor by Kokugaku adherents, harmonizing Shintoized deities with biomedical practice, was common throughout the 1860s to 1880s.¹⁵¹ In Shishino's unsigned book of *norito* prayers completed the previous year, the text of the prayer itself urges use of the Westernized medical system:

Take the appropriate medicine which doctors prescribe for natural illness, then be blessed by the divine power of the hidden world, and your illness is healed.

¹⁴⁹ Sakamoto Noriko, *Meiji zenki*, 98.

¹⁵⁰ Shishino, *Fuji shinjin*, leaves 10-11.

¹⁵¹ Josephson, *Invention*, 146-7.

*Kusuri wa kusurishi no onozukara yamai ni. Aikanaeru kusuri o. Ataemu koto o. Kakuriyo no miwaza mote. Nashi sakiwae tamaite. Yamai o iyashi.*¹⁵²

We can see that a shift in attitude occurred between 1874 and 1876, and that even in 1876 Shishino did not wholeheartedly endorse Rokurōbei's position on the agency of healing, instead loading the text of official prayers with medical qualifications. But even this qualified change is significant. Shishino's initial idea for Fuji Issan Kōsha was to completely remake the Fuji *kō* into a National Teaching. Could this teaching truly remain national, now that specific deities were being called on for healing? We will continue to follow the vicissitudes of the National Teaching in Chapter Three.

Where these texts attempt to retain biopolitical priorities, Shishino's actions are more ambiguous. In August 1875, he obtained a sacred mirror from one of the Yoshida *oshi* and placed it in a box which he labeled *mikanzane*, the “holy of holies.”¹⁵³ He then began a long march through traditional Fuji *kō* regions of Japan, at the massive expense of 2000 yen (presumably funded by the Maruyama *kō*), performing a ritual called *tenpaishiki* in which the *mikanzane* was held over the head of believers as a blessing. This march turned out to be the first of several

¹⁵² Ōtani M., “Ayase Inari Jinja,” 121.

¹⁵³ Ōtani M., *Kakugyō-kei*, 229. The mechanics of *tenpaishiki* are not described in Fusōkyō publications, but Ōtani is writing from experience as he underwent the ritual as a young man (communication with Ōtani Masayuki, October 14, 2024). The *mikanzane* continues to be used in Fusōkyō ritual today.

which Shishino conducted, under the name of “missionary tours” or “circuit teaching” (*junkyō*).¹⁵⁴

The origin of the *tenpaishiki* is murky, and it is possible that it was developed out of an older Fuji ritual in consultation with the Yoshida *oshi*. It provided a generic blessing, bestowed on individuals without explicit healing purpose.¹⁵⁵ But it needs be observed that all of these early missionary tours were presided over by Shishino himself, although it would have been much more efficient and pragmatic to send Yoshida *oshi* back to some of their old routes. Another change we can see from 1874 through 1877 is Shishino taking greater interest in personally administering rituals for the general public. It seems plausible that Shishino witnessed Rokurōbei’s growing influence among Kanagawa-area Fuji *kō* and wanted to deploy Fusōkyō’s resources to depict himself as a dynamic leader also fulfilling the needs of local *kō*. In Chapter Four we will see that if this was Shishino’s intent for the missionary tours, he failed miserably.

Conclusion: the miracle and dilemma of legalization

This chapter has provided an overview of the world which produced Shishino Nakaba, a very different personality from Itō Rokurōbei. I have made a case for the

¹⁵⁴ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 46.

¹⁵⁵ Communication with Ōtani Masayuki, October 14, 2024. It is in any case unlikely that the Fuji *kō* had been very devoted to the mirror which became the *mikanzane*, said to have been bestowed by Kakugyō on the Fuji *oshi* household of Tanabe-Iga and which they granted to Shishino in August 1875. The Tanabe-Iga were unpopular with the Fuji *kō* because they had expelled Jikigyō from their lodgings: Sawato, “Miroku-ha shishoku,” 258–9.

direct impact of Rokurōbei on Shishino's beliefs and strategy. We have seen that Shishino had strong ideas about how to include the Japanese public in his National Teaching, and that he unilaterally imposed these ideas on the Fuji *kō* throughout 1873 and 1874. We have also seen that Shishino was aware of Rokurōbei as early as May 1873 and attempted to drive a wedge between him and his followers in 1874. Finally, after blocking Rokurōbei from suicide in September 1874 and partially licensing the Maruyama *kō* in March 1875, Shishino rapidly changed his approach to prayer healing.

Shishino's statement that Rokurōbei needed to cease his *shugyō* derives from a line of thinking which can be recognized in empires around the world. Mohamed Amer Meziane observes, following Talal Asad, that self-injury has come to be denigrated as superstitious, barbaric or illogical because it threatens state order. In modernity, violence is not only monopolized by the state but is meant to be perceived as useful, or at least inevitable and necessary.¹⁵⁶ The sacrificial values underlying Rokurōbei's persistent *shugyō* flipped the script, rendering the state irrational and Rokurōbei a martyr. Naturally Shishino could not accept the Maruyama *kō* as long as this state of affairs persisted.

And yet, somehow, Shishino was forced to recognize the Maruyama *kō* after Rokurōbei's attempt to die on Mount Fuji. This unexpected reversal by Shishino, which Rokurōbei saw as supernatural in origin, tied together two individuals with

¹⁵⁶ Meziane, *States of the Earth*, 207.

radically different goals and methods. It is no wonder that Shishino responded with a final attack, turning Rokurōbei's oldest allies against him and forcing him to not only expel them from the *kō* but also compromise his moral convictions and collect massive donations for Fuji Issan Kōsha. This enforced subordination, though, did not resolve the double bind that had now been created.

Shishino understood his task to be obtaining personal control over the Fuji *kō* for the needs of the state. But Rokurōbei saw himself as having proven through various trials including the “inhuman *gyō*” that he desired no personal power, and he even offered to lose his life for Fuji. Only then did Sengen reveal to him the next stage of his mission. Although he was now allied with Shishino, the ultimate goal of salvation and peace remained unchanged. What's more, the *shugyō* that Shishino despised was now Rokurōbei's proven means to obtain encounters with the Ultimate.

A new secularization brought a new way of thinking about Mount Fuji to the Maruyama *kō*, and Rokurōbei responded with a new way of articulating and responding to these changes. But the resolution of this crisis raised new questions. Was the new form of the *kō* a tool by which the emperor might harness the masses and triumph over Christianity, or was it the next stage in an unfolding divine plan, knowledge of which was accessible principally to Rokurōbei and other *gyōja*? The Maruyama *kō* would now have to deal with the dilemma of having two masters giving contradictory answers to such questions.

CHAPTER THREE:
BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN THE MARUYAMA MOVEMENT,
1875–1884

This chapter investigates a largely unexplored and unexplained phenomenon: how the Maruyama movement became a prominent new face of Fuji worship near Tokyo in a period of rapid transformation. The Maruyama *kō* (confraternity) grew rapidly from 1875 to 1884 and took on an independent and distinct identity. Past studies of the movement have focused on the appeal of its founder Itō Rokurōbei's teachings to rural farmers in Shizuoka. By the time the Maruyama *kō* expanded into Shizuoka in the mid-1880s, however, it already had an enthusiastic base in the semi-urbanized Tokyo-Kawasaki-Yokohama area and was able to mobilize thousands for Fuji pilgrimages, mass prayer ceremonies, and educational lectures. These mass mobilizations accord with a large-scale restructuring which was taking place across several new religious groups in this period of Japanese history.

In the new religious groups that emerged in Meiji Japan, members seem to have initially sought to rise towards the same level of connection to the divine as their founders. Nagaoka Takashi has referred to early Tenrikyō as an “Oyagami community” with multiple living deities (*ikigami*).¹ Tenrikyō founder Nakayama

¹ Nagaoka, *Shinshūkyō to sōryokusen*, 63–4.

Miki had named others as potential vessels of the group's deity, causing a crisis of authority after her death.² Katsurajima Nobuhiro similarly observes that early Konkokyō had several men and women who were called “Konjin,” the same name as the principal deity of the group, and who were believed to manifest the same divinity that inhabited the founder.³ Over time, however, all these groups eventually came to revere and respect the example of their founder without believing that others could achieve the founder's power.

In a formative 1977 article, Shimazono Susumu describes a general shift from community-based “*kō* ‘religion’” (*kōsha* ‘*shūkyō*’) or “folk ‘religion’” (*minzoku* ‘*shūkyō*’), in which self-appointed leaders served the needs of localities, to sect-based church “religion” (*kyōkai* ‘*shūkyō*’) in the late nineteenth century. The term “religion” is bracketed here because older folkways or customs were neither regulated nor strictly segregated from shrines and temples, and these “religions” may be described as ways of life linked to familiar mind-body practices and modes of knowledge. Shimazono explains that as government oversight aggressively dismantled these older social structures, ascetic training became “routinized,” and the community being imagined shifted from the entire locality to the church specifically. “In church ‘religion,’” he writes, “the numinous power [*reiki*] of traditional religious institutions, tools, and knowledge systems was substantially truncated.”⁴

² Forbes, “Schism,” 93, 104.

³ Katsurajima, *Shisōshi no jūkyūseiki*, 20, 55f.

⁴ Shimazono, “Shūkyō to minzoku II.”

Kozawa Hiroshi and Katsurajima Nobuhiro have described Konkōkyō's retreat from the idea of "living deities" as its members worked to obtain legal status. Negotiations with government bureaucrats from 1882 onwards required them to compile a written doctrine.⁵ Hatakama Kazuhiro depicts a similar transformation in Tenrikyō over the 1880s. Spiritual experiences were deemphasized, and the occasional writings of Nakayama Miki became a collected "doctrine." This process transformed the group from a "folk 'religion,'" a community with members seeking direct spiritual experience, to a "popular religion" (*minshū shūkyō*) in which accredited leaders conveyed doctrine to obedient masses. As Katsurajima observes, this shift also deemphasized the status of the individual practitioner as an inhabitant of a specific village; instead, members were now delocalized, national subjects.⁶

The Maruyama *kō*'s transformation into a mass movement fits well into these larger historical and social patterns. As we shall see in this chapter, though, some interesting issues specific to this group arise. First, the Maruyama *kō* is unique among Meiji religious movements in that its members adopted a visually distinctive appearance in everyday life, asserting their subjectivity against new social norms and purposefully rendering themselves separate from non-members. Reports from the early 1880s suggest that *kō* members were articulating their own new identities that did not necessarily concur with the Westernizing trends of the time. Second,

⁵ Isomae, *Religious Discourse*, 50–1; Katsurajima, "Minshū shūkyō."

⁶ Hatakama, "Tenrikyō;" Katsurajima, "Comment." Hatakama, like Shimazono, brackets the word *shūkyō* to identify it as post-facto, etic terminology.

the concept of “doctrine” (*kyōgi*), which is relatively easy to identify in the history of groups like Tenrikyō and Konkokyō, is exposed here as a construction which only makes sense in hindsight. The Maruyama *kō* did not possess any structured revelations that could be compiled as doctrine, and its parent organization Fusōkyō⁷ was therefore in search of an effective genre. Works of liturgy, cosmology, catechism, and church history appeared in rapid succession as Fusōkyō leaders attempted to regulate the Maruyama *kō* in specific ways.

Nagaoka Takashi has pointed to several research avenues which have been overlooked owing to scholars’ preoccupation with government manipulation of folk/popular/new religions. First, “founders” and secular authorities have been overemphasized as the sole sources of religious knowledge, while the agency of members, who were continually adapting to social circumstances, has been neglected. Second, the relationship between doctrine and physical practice has been under-analyzed, particularly the effects of religious practices on the body. Third, past studies have neglected the gendered aspects of religious transformation, focusing mostly on male subjects who were central to imperial-period narratives.⁸ This chapter will showcase materials from 1875–1884 which address issues of agency, body, and gender within the Maruyama *kō*, offering a portrait of a religious movement in rapid transition.

⁷ Fuji Issan Kōsha/Kyōkai changed its name to Shintō Fusō Kyōkai in February 1876, then went through several similar names. Fusō Kyōkai oversaw branch churches also called *kyōkai*. To prevent ambiguity, I will use the group’s present-day name Fusōkyō throughout this chapter.

⁸ Nagaoka, “Minshū shūkyō.”

The Maruyama *kō* is notable for its lack of centralization during this period, which puts extant publications of this time into a dynamic and interesting dialogue with memories recalled by members decades later. The published texts of this time might be seen as part of an ongoing conversation between Fusōkyō in Tokyo on one hand, Maruyama-aligned churches centered in neighboring Kanagawa Prefecture on another, and finally with ordinary *kō* members who may have disagreed but lacked the power to write for themselves. The story of negotiations among the diverging interests of these groups is unique among the new religious groups which emerged in Japan at this time and is crucial to understand the development of the Maruyama movement.

From ascetic feats to mass salvation

From 1875 to 1885, the umbrella organization Fusōkyō and its Maruyama *kō* (for short, “Fusōkyō-Maruyama”) produced a bewildering number of texts: apocryphal liturgies, cosmological excurses, epitomes of Rokurōbei’s lectures, doctrine textbooks for new *kyōdōshoku* lecturers, and even a Fusōkyō magazine, the earliest known newsletter by any Shinto sect.⁹ However, these normative texts say very little about the practices that were making the Maruyama *kō* unique at this time. We must therefore conceptually separate the ideal *kō* as it was being written about internally from the real *kō* as it was being practiced, an approach called “lived

⁹ *Fuji sōsetsu*, which had only one issue (Kimura and Ogihara, “Taiseikyō,” 38). A key article from it, which describes the Maruyama *kō* in careful terms, will be summarized below.

religion” by scholars of religion. For the purposes of this chapter, we will take a break from ongoing financial disputes at Fusōkyō headquarters and focus on ascertaining what sort of community ordinary Maruyama *kō* members saw themselves as creating.

Lived religion is a concept, not a theory or method, and does not in itself imply larger methodological goals. The lived religion concept is often realized through ethnography, with the intent of empathizing with living informants whose beliefs and needs may differ from the theology or norms of religious institutions.¹⁰ Our intention in this chapter is slightly different. There were no ethnographers which sympathetically documented the group at the time, and we lack period sources which directly discuss how Fusōkyō-Maruyama was growing and evolving. Instead, we must extract the key activities of the community from less focused, more incidental records, including outside criticism. Historical context can help us judge the accuracy of these materials and make sense of their claims.

In the Maruyama *kō*’s early period, Itō Rokurōbei represented the achievable ideal of a *gyōja*, an active male practitioner who engaged in bodily trials or asceticism (*shugyō*). In the Fuji *kō*, there had originally been about one *gyōja* per local community, who took on the role of *sendatsu* or spiritual guide for Fuji pilgrimages and practiced asceticism largely to purify himself before such pilgrimages. In the early Maruyama *kō*, Rokurōbei experimented with a more

¹⁰ Knibbe and Kupari, “Theorizing Lived Religion.”

committed ideal of *gyōja* and encouraged women to participate. We saw in Chapter Two that even prior to the merger with Fusōkyō, Rokurōbei had conducted many ceremonies to sanctify the bodies and encourage the ascetic practice of other *kō* members to encourage them as fellow *gyōja*. Police sources had characterized the Maruyama *kō* as a community of 17 or 18 *gyōja*, whose asceticism had become more frequent than just occasional preparation for pilgrimage. In 1876, after the Fusōkyō merger, Rokurōbei led groups of *gyōja* in more such group ceremonies. In one, he demonstrated to an audience of 300 the ability of four male and three female *gyōja* to inhale scalding air into their lungs.¹¹

Rokurōbei's ascetic trials continued throughout the decade, demonstrating his ongoing submission to Sengen and his healing power. His followers documented his activities, some notable examples of which will suffice here. In May 1876, he went 21 days without eating or speaking. In November 1876, he fasted for 28 days, with only a single cup of salt water as drink. In January 1878, he ate only a single chestnut or soybean a day for 100 days while repeatedly copying out the words NAMU-AMITA-USU, his new modification of the old Buddhist *nenbutsu* chant of Fuji pilgrims. In 1882, 10,000 Maruyama *kō* members watched him fast in front of Fusōkyō headquarters. Rokurōbei supposedly did not eat rice at all until 1884.¹² This type of prolonged fasting was common in Shugendō and is recognizable as a

¹¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 271.

¹² Aoki, "Shōden," 59–60; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 102 (drawing on Rokurōbei's own statement in the *Oshirabe*). See Introduction for my thoughts on these record fasts.

variant of the ancient Daoist life extension practice called *bigu*, which dates to the first century AD or earlier.¹³

Some especially pious individuals continued to imitate these long-term ascetic practices. For instance, Niikura Hachirōbei (1842–1901), who joined Fusōkyō-Maruyama in 1880, would refrain from eating salted foods (another common purification practice in Shugendō) while out on missionary work. When at home he ate only rice, and he also undertook 49-day ascetic stints during which he would not eat any grains, a more literal interpretation of *bigu*.¹⁴ A leader of 1,000 believers recalls frequently struggling to fast without food or water in the early 1880s.¹⁵ Over the course of 1875–1885, though, it became much less common to directly imitate Rokurōbei's example. For many, his feats were not physically possible. Saitō Fukutarō, a major leader inside the *kō*, attempted a 49-day fast, but eventually his body gave out.¹⁶ In December 1877, the *Kanayomi shinbun* reported on a follower of Rokurōbei named Sekiguchi Kyūbei who attempted a 100-day fast. Towards the end of the 100 days, he collapsed in his home, and Rokurōbei came to pray over him. The article does not report what became of Kyūbei, only claiming that his family ended up rejecting Rokurōbei's assistance and requesting a doctor instead.¹⁷

¹³ Miyake, *Shugendō*, 111; Eskilden, *Asceticism*, 43–4.

¹⁴ Itō Akiyoshi, *Niikura*, 25–36. For the definition of *bigu* see Eskilden, *Asceticism*, 43–4.

¹⁵ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 30. This is a book of short reminiscences by individual authors. For ease of understanding it will be cited as a single volume.

¹⁶ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 275.

¹⁷ “Namu Sengen Daigusatsu” 南無賤言大愚殺, *Kanayomi shinbun*, December 3, 1877, 2.

Rokurōbei, following his predecessor Jikigyō, taught that the purpose of ascetic practice was to bring about purity of heart and oneness with Sengen, and that this could be accomplished without intense fasting.¹⁸ As the Maruyama *kō* expanded beyond Noborito, we see that instead of becoming full-time *gyōja*, many *kō* members started to prefer temporary asceticism such as short-term fasting or changing hair and dress out of gratitude for healing, or as they felt was needed to train their hearts. In 1880, a villager joined the Maruyama *kō*, gave up liquor, and fasted for 20 days out of gratitude when his wife was seemingly saved from cholera by his prayers.¹⁹ Another member fasted for a week to pray for the healing of a sick person. At the end of his fast, dreaming of food, he traveled to Noborito, where Rokurōbei reminded him that “the works (*gyō*) of a human are lifelong; we work until death”—a sobering reminder that the soul’s commitment to salvation needed to last beyond these short-term fasts.²⁰

The switch from health-endangering ascetic vows to internal cultivation reflects wider shifts in Japanese society of the time, where citizens could demonstrate their usefulness through commitments to frugality and productivity. One female member stopped going to hairdressers, instead binding her own hair and sending the money saved to Maruyama headquarters in Noborito.²¹ Another believer convinced her husband to give up their gambling parlor business.²²

¹⁸ Sawada, *Faith*, 112–3.

¹⁹ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 17.

²⁰ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 258–9.

²¹ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 180.

²² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 276n4.

Starting in 1879, Rokurōbei encouraged members to put dice on their home altars instead of gambling with them and to accompany them with prayer beads representing the emperor and his subjects (Figure 3).²³ All of this recalls Shishino Nakaba's focus on prohibiting vice and luxury in his churches, promoting patriotism, and accumulating donations, but it also resembled Jikigyō's exhortations to use asceticism as a means to support life rather than to defy it.²⁴ Rokurōbei's teachings reenforced Shishino's and Jikigyō's messages. An 1880 synopsis of Rokurōbei's lectures reads, "Stay focused on your business, and if you have extra time, chant the *nenbutsu*."²⁵

This summary of everyday practices suggests that the Maruyama *kō* provided continuity between earlier Fuji *kō* ascetic traditions and new Meiji period ideals for citizen-subjects. As we saw in Chapter One, in the eighteenth century, Jikigyō had urged restraint in asceticism, telling pilgrims and *kō* members to focus on purity of mind rather than separating themselves from society or injuring their bodies. Over the course of 1875 to 1884, ascetic practices in the *kō* aligned this goal with the goals of Fusōkyō-

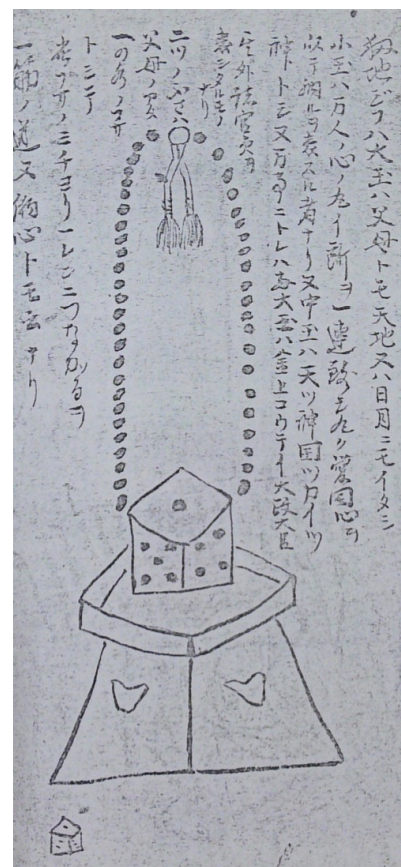


Figure 3: Depiction of dice and prayer beads being placed on an altar, from an 1879 compilation of Rokurōbei's lectures.

²³ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 293–5; Mori, "Fuji nankyō kindōki."

²⁴ Sawada, *Faith*, 110.

²⁵ Mori, "Fuji nankyō kindōki," unnumbered page.

Maruyama leadership and reformers in the Meiji state. Members looked to Rokurōbei to understand the symbolic meanings of these changes.

Purifying Japan in Rokurōbei's sermons

While members continued to understand Fuji pilgrimage and ascetic practice as means of generating personal merit, it was becoming more common to purify one's heart by traveling to Noborito and listening to Rokurōbei preach and bless the crowd, which he seems to have done daily. One member recalls obsessively traveling to Noborito every day, to the extent that he neglected both work and household chores, infuriating his wife. However, when he managed to convince his wife to come with him, upon hearing Rokurōbei's sermon she became just as fervent a believer as he and converted many of her friends.²⁶ Another young member walked from Yokohama to Noborito hundreds of times, often braving rain or snow.²⁷ One woman, hearing rumors of the "living god" Rokurōbei in her rural village in Shizuoka, walked over 180 kilometers (over 110 miles) to Noborito to see him, whereupon he allegedly recognized her as a visitor from afar and greeted her.²⁸ Local children often spent all day at Rokurōbei's house, especially during the planting and harvesting seasons when their parents could not watch them, and

²⁶ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 29–30.

²⁷ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 258.

²⁸ Taima, "Maruyama no mura."

were fed *senbei* crackers, which remained the custom even as the crowds grew large.²⁹

A major theme of Rokurōbei's sermons that attracted such crowds was demonstrating that Fuji *kō* and Shinto were both pure, original teachings and that Buddhism was a later corruption of them. Rokurōbei already had this purification idea on his mind in 1874, when he uncovered a eleven-faced Kannon statue (*jūichi-men Kannon*) on one of his hikes and reinterpreted it as an “earth-faced Kannō” (*tsuchi-men kannō*),³⁰ but harmonizing tradition with modernity would become a theme of his teachings after merging his cause with Shishino's in 1875. The familiar *nenbutsu* chant used on pilgrimages, invoking the name of Amida Buddha with *namu-amida-butsu*, was rewritten by Rokurōbei in 1878 as NAMU-AMITA-USU (as mentioned earlier), introducing new Chinese characters which, explained through lengthy exegesis, revealed the “true meaning” of the chant as locating the universe in the rice paddies of Japan's farmers. Since the word *namu* originated in Sanskrit, an additional revelation introduced new talismanic characters for NAMU, fully indigenizing the chant.³¹ Although the *nenbutsu* had not been a central teaching of Fuji leaders such as Jikigyō, affirming old Fuji *kō* traditions in this way gave them a new legitimacy for a new age.

Reinterpretation of tradition seems to have been a theme of Rokurōbei's sermons for many years. As above, an 1879 lecture reinterprets the Buddhist prayer

²⁹ Communication with Maruyamakyō staff, May 9, 2024; Ogiwara, “Fujijo (5),” 24.

³⁰ Shida M., *Takasago*, 2v. This is partly a visual rereading: 十一 is interpreted as 土.

³¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 281.

beads used by Fuji *gyōja* as representing the hearts of myriad people united in patriotism (*aikokushin*), with the large bead representing the gods, the emperor, or the prime minister.³² An 1883 transcript documents Rokurōbei attempting to explain the origin of all the sects of Japanese Buddhism in the divine phrases of Fuji. His logic is sometimes hard to follow, but for instance, the famous Pure Land peripatetic Ippen Shōnin is said to have grasped only the NA of NAMU-AMITA-USU, while the secrets of Shingon Buddhism, defined by Rokurōbei as worship of the Sun and Moon, are shown to originate in the character MYŌ (written Sun-Moon) from the *ominuki* line SAN-MYŌ-TŌ-KAI-SAN.³³ Rather than merely attacking Buddhism, Rokurōbei explained it as partial understanding of the complete message of Fuji.

In his lectures, Rokurōbei may have called on members to separate their own behaviors from mainstream society. Surviving lecture notes from 1879–80 are abstract and symbolic in content and contain little information about how to interpret rapid changes in Japanese society. Sharp contrast is provided by a scurrilous *Yomiuri shinbun* report from September 1880, which reads in full as follows:

Noborito village's Itō Rokurōbei, the packhorse driver-cum-*sendatsu* of the Maruyama *kō*, a organization well-known in Kanagawa Prefecture for its stubbornness for old customs, has established the following four rules for new members of the Maruyama *kō*: 1) not to associate with outsiders; 2) not to eat quadrupeds; 3) not to talk about other matters with *kō* members; 4) not to obtain medical treatment in case of illness, as any illness whatsoever can be

³² Miyazaki Shungorō 宮崎春五郎, comp., “Gohōden” 御宝伝, manuscript, 1879, collection of Maruyamakyō honcho, photocopy at Kanagawa Prefectural Archives.

³³ [Itō Rokurōbei], “Maruyama Kyōkai kaisan sonshi gosekkyō nikki,” 282. Similar descriptions can be found in “Shintō Fusō fusetsu no maki” 神道扶桑不説之巻, April 1884, Emura Eiichi Collection.

cured by crushing and eating dried mugwort (*yomogi*). This four-article contract was printed and sent to the over 10,000 members of the group and they have all been made to agree to it. In the Yokohama area there are about 1400–1500 people who joined the group and assented to the above without objection, and some have caused problems by walking [door to door] privately urging others to join the *kō*.³⁴

This “contract” sounds distorted and none of its four articles are attested by any internal sources, but some details of the report can be verified. Rokurōbei indeed drove horses before he became a *sendatsu*, and it is true that the *kō* spread “privately,” that is to say, by ordinary members recruiting others in their neighborhood without *kyōdōshoku* licensure. An 1885 report in the Buddhist magazine *Meikyō shinshi* describes an entire family soliciting door-to-door in their village for the Maruyama *kō*.³⁵ In the context of early Meiji Japan, where the *kyōdōshoku* system was meant to regulate any sort of message about the nature of Japan, propagation outside approved channels already implied unruly teachings possibly dangerous to the state.

We cannot conclude that a “four-article contract” was actually printed, but the report is based in the *Yomiuri* editor’s real perception that Rokurōbei’s teaching reinforced and hardened a “stubbornness for old customs.” Of particular interest is the reported ban on the consumption of quadrupeds, here meaning horses and cows. Again, internal Maruyama sources cannot attest to this ban, but we saw in Chapter One that Rokurōbei was a lifelong horse lover, and mountain religion such as

³⁴ “Kanagawa kenka de kyūhei ganko...” 神奈川県下で舊弊頑固, *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 2, 1880, 3.

³⁵ *Meikyō shinshi* no. 1827 (April 4, 1885), 4.

Shugendō had a centuries-old tradition of purifying the body through abstinence from certain foods. Animal meat had long been understood as an impure food in Buddhist practice; although this rule had sometimes been honored in the breach in rural Japan, it was especially important to mountain ascetics. But now Westernizers like Fukuzawa Yukichi condemned the taboo on meat as superstition. Thus, by 1880, meat consumption was a nascent point of contention between the forces of Westernization and an imagined “traditional” Japanese identity.³⁶

While it is unlikely that abstinence from red meat (or a ban on association with outsiders, etc.) was actively enforced within the Maruyama *kō*, the *Yomiuri* report does attest to some level of division between the *kō* and mainstream urban society. Where the newspapers of the time generally took the side of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Rokurōbei had a vision of a different kind of Japan, which bound the new conception of a united nation to the healing practices and folk traditions predominant in the Fuji *kō*. One *gyōja* explained in later decades that he switched from the Ontake *kō*, a more traditional mountain religion group, to the Maruyama *kō* because he could “heal with the power of the Rising Sun and employ the national essence.”³⁷ Maruyama members asserted that they were drawing on a powerful, indigenous Fuji teaching purified of foreign corruption, in an age in which mountain asceticism was so reviled as corrupt and Buddhist that Shugendō had been banned

³⁶ Krämer, “Our Divine Country.”

³⁷ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 53.

entirely. This new identity could be linked to Rokurōbei's salvation mission: the renewal of Japan was incomplete without the purification of the Japanese spirit.

This identification of Fuji pilgrimage and Fuji devotion with Japan had some pre-Meiji basis. Since the influential Fuji *gyōja* Jikigyō understood Mount Fuji to be the identity of the Original Father-Mother and the center of the world, he also felt that those who lived in the Japanese archipelago had been especially blessed. In one text, Jikigyō warned that those who hoarded rice for profit would be reborn as Chinese, that is to say, far away from Fuji.³⁸ This earlier belief in the Japanese as a chosen people now merged with the Meiji Kokugaku desire to “restore” the “original” form of Japanese traditions, although the taboo on meat-eating had its origins in Buddhist teachings which Kokugaku scholars had targeted as foreign.

Rather than creating *gyōja* who demonstrated their faith and impressed the public through bodily austerities, the Maruyama movement was now developing thousands of daily visitors whose practice generally involved listening to Rokurōbei, practicing healing, and cutting unproductive or harmful habits from their life. The Maruyama *kō* became more closely linked to new ideas of Japanese identity and the incipient image of the Rising Sun. Rokurōbei saw new, Shinto-friendly meanings in the preexisting practices of the Fuji *kō* and was thereby able to separate them from Buddhism. Because he was revitalizing and purifying the traditional faith in Fuji,

³⁸ Hirano, *Fuji shinkō*, 91.

Rokurōbei could demonstrate that he was capable of bringing salvation to Japan through healing power, peace, and prosperity.

Topknots and ponytails for women and men

This new class of followers of the Maruyama *kō* became infamous for the hairstyle adopted by their men. In the Tokugawa period, men had been legally required to shave their foreheads and grow out topknots (*mage*). As Western dress became common on the street in the first half of the 1870s, the topknot and shaved pate swiftly disappeared, replaced with short haircuts. But men in the Maruyama movement continued to grow out their hair and tie it into a large bun or chignon (*ōtabusa*) as Fuji *gyōja* had long done.³⁹ Other mountain *gyōja* were known for leaving their hair loosely bound or completely unbound and their clothes loose, but this was reportedly distasteful to Rokurōbei and was not imitated in the Maruyama *kō*.⁴⁰

In rural Maruyama *kō*, large buns persisted through the 1880s.⁴¹ In the Tokyo-Kawasaki area, though, the tied-off knot often became shorter, giving

³⁹ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 202.

⁴⁰ Shōrai-sei, “Chōhatsu.”

⁴¹ “Maruyama *kō*” 丸山講, *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, June 18, 1886.

Maruyama men the appearance of Tokugawa *rōnin*.⁴²

This is unlikely to have been coincidence, since the *rōnin* hairstyle had recently had political implications. A ditty published in 1871 read: “Rap a shaved head and hear the sound of old fashions; rap a ponytail head and hear the sound of restoration of Imperial rule; rap a Western-cut head and hear the sound of civilization and



Figure 4: A 1952 illustration idealizing the 19th-century Maruyama topknot as a short ponytail. From Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage.”

enlightenment.”⁴³ This “*gyōja* ponytail,” as it was called in a 1952 essay (Figure 4), visually resembled the hairstyle of samurai of the 1860s who took up the cause of imperial restoration, a cause which had been associated by some with relief for the suffering lower classes. It was visually distinct from the trend for imitating the West in behavior, food, and dress, which had germinated in the early 1870s.

We can get a sense of the mockery and concern the topknots provoked from outside critics and in later reflections. An 1898 poem in the magazine *Fūzoku gaho* recalls, “Even as the Maruyama *kō* bound their hair, so did their pride swell up.”⁴⁴ The topknot was perceived as not just a peculiarity but a reflection of the *kō*’s pride in their professed salvation mission. Nanba Tōhatsu, an 1890s critic, described “bound hair” (*keppatsu*) as universal among the licensed *kyōdōshoku* lecturers of the Maruyama movement, and accused them of wanting to return to the Tokugawa

⁴² Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage.” Yuri (*Kyōsoden*, 299) mentions that for his son’s wedding in 1879 Rokurōbei did not shave his forehead but pulled his ponytail forward and bound it, in the manner of a modern sumo wrestler.

⁴³ Shima, *Meiji hyakunen kyoikushi*, vol. 1, 293; Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*, 217.

⁴⁴ (頭さえ丸山講は丁髷を結って鼻さえ高くなしけり) “Fūzoku shosan shūi: yarō atama” 風俗書讀拾遺 野良頭, *Fūzoku gaho* 176 (November 1898).

shogunate.⁴⁵ Besides the associations with religious fervor and political motives, the hairstyle introduced absurd anachronism into everyday life in urban Japan. Honda Asakichi, later a Maruyama church leader, recalled drawing a mocking crowd as a young member in Yokohama when he sold the Western import sweet called “ice cream” on the street while sporting his retrograde hairstyle. Rokurōbei recommended that the young man cut his hair, but the spectacle attracted a local photographer, who had Honda pose in an exaggerated traditional scene staged for Western consumers, reportedly earning 25 yen per print.⁴⁶

The pride in revitalizing the Fuji tradition allowed the members to overlook public ridicule. This choice of style proved their loyalty to Rokurōbei and other Maruyama *gyōja*, who performed such healings in long hair and Shugendō-style costume such as a necklace of crystal balls.⁴⁷ One *kō* member of this time grew his hair out after a successful healing, weathering the mockery of those around him.⁴⁸ Ponytails and topknots thereby had multiple positive associations, symbolizing the bearer’s potential *gyōja* abilities, their faith in the power of Fuji, their pride in participating in the Maruyama movement, and their gratitude for success in healing. These distinctive haircuts gave the Maruyama movement public visibility as it grew and were remembered for decades as a symbol of allegiance to the group.

⁴⁵ Nanba, *Fuhai*, 4.

⁴⁶ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 259.

⁴⁷ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 134; Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage,” 14–15; Shōrai-sei, “Chōhatsu.”

⁴⁸ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 218.

They were even revived by some members around 1922, this time concealing them under caps outside of ritual settings.⁴⁹

As mentioned above, Rokurōbei made a point of empowering women within the early Maruyama *kō* and treating them as *gyōja* equal to men. This meant that female members, starting with the early *gyōja* Urushibara Shika, also adopted this simple ponytail.⁵⁰ For women, *gyōja* hair did not imply growing out the hair, but instead cutting it short to resemble the short ponytails of the men. For instance, one female member began cutting her hair short to demonstrate her commitment to using Maruyama methods to heal her son's rheumatism.⁵¹ This was especially offensive to Shishino Nakaba, and in November 1882, he made Rokurōbei condemn female members who broke with "ancient customs" through the "disgraceful behavior" (*shūtai*) of cutting their hair.⁵² It is revealing that although male *gyōja* haircuts were widely mocked on the streets, presumably disrupting Shishino's intent of cultivating model imperial subjects, he was content to remain silent about these expressions of faith and pride. It was the aspirations of women to the authority and power of *gyōja* that he ordered Rokurōbei to curtail, thereby gendering the concept of *gyōja*. In 1885, after Shishino's death, women would be explicitly forbidden from conducting healings.⁵³

⁴⁹ Shōrai-sei, "Chōhatsu."

⁵⁰ Itō Iten, "Gyōjamage," 15.

⁵¹ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 103.

⁵² "Gokyōhō" 御教法, 19 November 1882, manuscript, collection of Maruyamakyō honcho, photocopy in Kanagawa Prefectural Archives.

⁵³ Maruyama kyōkai, "Konpan kin'en kisoku..." 今般禁厭規則, 10 October 1885, Takahashi Family Collection, Zama City Board of Education.

It is worth noting that Fusōkyō-Maruyama was rather disorganized at this time, and grassroots members frequently ignored diktats from headquarters. This must have created an unusual situation where female participation in Maruyama *gyōja* activities after 1882 might have conveyed not only faith in the salvation mission but also distrust in the movement's administrators. We have stray reports that women in the Maruyama movement continued to see themselves as *gyōja* long after these bans: for instance, in 1899, a group of Maruyama women over the age of 50, including 93-year-old Yoshino Matsu, summited Fuji with a single ponytailed male *sendatsu*.⁵⁴ However, the only circumstantial evidence we have of a woman objecting to administrative orders is Urushibara Shika herself, who continued to wear *gyōja* hair and clothing at Rokurōbei's funeral, then eventually split from the group and founded her own church.⁵⁵

Home meetings, churches, and mass assemblies

The rapid growth of the Maruyama movement was a great boon to Fusōkyō, but also a great burden. The Fuji *kō* had been community associations, and Fusōkyō's founder Shishino Nakaba had hoped to reorganize them as neighborhood churches with physical gathering spaces. Instead, those converted to Rokurōbei's salvation cause self-organized in their homes. This was of course the normal way that Fuji *kō* had spread prior to the Meiji Restoration, but maintaining

⁵⁴ "93-sai no rōō Fuji ni noboru" 九十三歳の老嫗富士に登る *Zenkoku shinshokukai kaihō* 1 (August 1899), 43

⁵⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, photo insert (showing Urushibara Shika at Rokurōbei's funeral), 140.

administrative control over these *kō* meetings, for the sake of cultivating Shishino's National Teaching or just to avoid legal headaches surrounding preaching and healing without license, posed a challenge for Fusōkyō-Maruyama.

The extreme disorganization of Fusōkyō-Maruyama has not been ignored by past religious scholars. In 1956, Takagi Hiroo pointed out how simple it had been to resolve this in Tenrikyō, which had little external guidance on organizational strategy. Tenrikyō missionaries established “parent-child” (or teacher-student) relationships, in which local Tenrikyō *kō* meetings considered themselves indebted to the missionaries who had converted them and looked to those missionaries' affiliate churches for guidance. In Takagi's estimation, Tenrikyō *kō* meetings valued the accuracy of the doctrines they were receiving and put trust in their missionary superiors, while Maruyama *kō* maintained the “horizontal” nature of their Tokugawa period forebears.⁵⁶ To understand why the Maruyama *kō* did not develop an internal hierarchy, we must first consider how they formed as an *ad hoc* appendage to Rokurōbei's own dojos, followed by Fusōkyō's half-baked attempt to replace them with a different structure entirely.

In 1873–5, Rokurōbei had established four satellite sites for worship and ascetic practice, four *ri* ($\approx$ ten miles) in each compass direction from Noborito. These were called the “four dojos of the four directions” (*shihō shiden no dōjō*).⁵⁷ Rokurōbei

⁵⁶ Takagi Hiroo, “Shūkyōteki *kō*,” 234.

⁵⁷ Shida M., *Takasago*, 1r. The paucity of written records from this period is evidenced by the fact that Yuri (*Kyōsoden*, 271n3) learned this term only from Shida, although the operators of these important dojos went on to become leaders in Maruyamakyō (see Chapter Five, Table 2).

also spoke of “three great dojos” (*sandai dōjō*) located farther afield: the lodging of his new Fuji *oshi* in Yoshida where he had built an altar for himself and Maruyama pilgrims, an abandoned Shingon Buddhist temple in Yamanashi Prefecture, and Kuhonbutsu Jōshin-ji, a better-known Jōdo-shū temple in Tokyo.⁵⁸ In the early years of Rokurōbei’s mission, the “four dojos of the four directions” were used for asceticism, with smoke-inhaling ascetic displays being held at these dojos in 1876.⁵⁹ Later, they became local gathering spaces for *gyōja* and members in general.

As more and more people flocked to Rokurōbei for healing, they needed places to organize and discuss Maruyama ideas outside Noborito and the dojos and began meeting in their homes using the familiar congregationalist *kō* structure. It may be recalled from Chapter One that *kō* were originally used to organize and pool money for Fuji pilgrimages, but the more common activity of these new branch Maruyama *kō* in the Tokyo-Kanagawa area was walking to Noborito to receive teaching or healing from Rokurōbei, performing healings themselves, and disseminating his talismans and records of his teachings. This, and the Maruyama *kō*’s relationship to Fusōkyō, caused confusion as to whether *kō* should still be pooling money for pilgrimages, according to their prior function, and if not, how that money ought to be distributed. In 1878, Fusōkyō distributed a pamphlet to *kō* leadership to explain that *kō* contributions were now voluntary and would be sent to physical “churches” (*kyōkaijo*).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 182f, 193, 244.

⁵⁹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 271.

⁶⁰ Shirosaki, “Sono 33.”

As we saw in Chapter Two, Shishino was encouraging leaders of the Fuji *kō* to found “churches” (*kyōkai*), using a term he had introduced specifically as a translation for Christian churches. From 1873 he was already restructuring select *kō* as churches. Apparently, a dedicated building (*kyōkaijo*) resembling a shrine or temple was among the requirements to become a church. According to a 1955 retrospective by Maruyamakyō historian Yuri Jun’ichi, a church building required permission from the local authorities, which they were reluctant to give to a heterodox mass movement, so during the decade 1875–1884 the Maruyama movement only developed four or five churches.⁶¹

Besides the legal protection, Shishino’s church system offered practical benefits over Rokurōbei’s earlier dojos. Rokurōbei had founded his dojos as places for him and fellow *gyōja* to do ascetic practice—that is, fairly isolated places like the ruined temple in Yamanashi. He had not been thinking of nurturing a mass movement.⁶² With the boom in membership, Fusōkyō-Maruyama needed employees to manage the logistics of large-scale Fuji pilgrimages and the distribution of physical objects of worship, and with decreasing interest in full-time asceticism, it needed buildings located near the homes of these employees and other members.⁶³ Since Shishino and Rokurōbei were in strategic alliance, it makes sense that the

⁶¹ Yuri, “Shōzen,” 4.

⁶² Various memories collected in Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, attest that the word “dojo” for a gathering place persisted through 1885, since not all meeting spaces were certified by Fusōkyō and municipal authorities as churches. Following the Maruyama *kō*’s break from Fusōkyō, all of the remaining dojos owned by members were converted to churches; see Chapter Five.

⁶³ The distribution of calligraphic scrolls for home worship was done from Yamada Church rather than Noborito: Shirosaki, “Sono 17.”

church concept was slowly adopted as wealthier members capable of managing churches collaborated with Shishino.

However, the relationship between these legalized churches and self-organized home *kō* meetings was poorly planned. Unlike Tenrikyō's "parent-child" system, Maruyama churches did not train and dispatch missionaries; instead, ordinary men and women converted their neighbors and preached door-to-door without legal authorization. There were too many *kō* meetings in too many regions to attempt to organize them all under the auspices of the few urban churches. While arranging the 1,400-person Fuji pilgrimage for 1878, the *kō* were haphazardly assembled into divisions named with some reference to the 47-syllable *kana* alphabet for logistical reasons, and it appears that this loose division system quickly became the principal link between Noborito and the *kō*.⁶⁴ One division chief recalled overseeing 1,000 members in the 1880s.⁶⁵ Of course, this created a separate organizational structure from the churches, an issue which was not remedied for many years. Fusōkyō's main contribution to this logistics struggle was a printed membership card, issued to upwards of 50,000 members from 1882–1884, which allowed Fuji pilgrimage organizers to distinguish genuine Fusōkyō pilgrims from outsiders requesting aid on the pilgrimage route.⁶⁶ The membership cards, however, were issued to individuals and did nothing to identify them with a *kō*, division, or church, so they did not resolve organizational issues.

⁶⁴ Yuri, "Shōzen," 2.

⁶⁵ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 30.

⁶⁶ Fusō Kyōkai Honbu, "Kansatsu."

Despite this lack of organization, the decentralized Maruyama *kō* seem to have remained mostly coherent in their teachings into the early 1880s. Preaching and new revelations from Rokurōbei had led them to a special understanding of the relationship between Mount Fuji and Japaneseness, and they showed their collective devotion to this ideal by planning and organizing mass assemblies. On April 17, 1880, the Tokyo branch of Ise Jingū opened the first-ever shrine to worship the imperial ancestress Amaterasu Ōmikami in Tokyo, popularly called Hibiya Daijingū. This event was primarily of interest to Ise-faction shrine priests hoping to establish something like Shishino’s “National Teaching”—in this case, centering on Amaterasu rather than Mount Fuji. In attendance at this grand opening, however, were 1,500 members of the Maruyama *kō*. A journalist for the *Akebono shinbun*, surprised by this group, described their striking appearance: they stood in lines, wearing one-tooth *geta* wooden sandals, bamboo hats, Fuji hiking poles, and holding banners.⁶⁷ They probably also wore blue vestments bearing the kanji for “mountain” in a circle, the Maruyama mark. Rokurōbei had changed the color of pilgrimage wear from white to blue, explaining that blue represented the color of a clear sky, and white was a cloudy sky.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ “Migi ni tsuite wa kingō kinzai...” 右に付てハ近郷近在, *Tōkyō akebono shinbun*, April 19, 1880, 338. Disappointingly, the hairstyle of this crowd is not mentioned.

⁶⁸ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 110–111. Three months later in July 1880, 1,300 believers climbed Fuji in these blue vestments: Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 50. Blue vestments are still used on Maruyama pilgrimages today, as the author observed in August 2024. Oddly, an 1882 source describes the believers as wearing “pale yellow” (Ueda, *Nikki*, 77); if accurate, this alternative dress did not survive.

This assembly of local *kō* into one uniform mass seems to epitomize the transformation from villagers into national subjects discussed by historians of Japanese religion, and the endorsement of Hibiya Daijingū, an entirely new idea to bring Amaterasu to Tokyo, shows that the Maruyama *kō* identified with this larger Shinto movement, just as Shishino had desired. Regardless, the flood of new *kō* was not what Shishino had in mind when he attempted to reorganize the Fuji faith as a set of churches. These *kō* were by and large rallying to his cause, but their autonomy still raised issues. One 1879 text preserved at Yokohama National University and attributed to a so-called “Maruyama *kō*” records prayers to Dainichi Buddha and Sengen Daibosatsu, showing that a local *sendatsu* was using the names of the Maruyama *kō* and Fusōkyō as a cover for the continuation of Tokugawa period folk practices.⁶⁹ Some sort of norms would be needed to bring the Maruyama *kō* into line.

Liturgy and theology

In March 1877, Fusōkyō sent out a newsletter, *Fuji sōsetsu*, to distribute to local churches across eastern Japan with an article that highlighted a “true man of faith.” The author introduced Itō Rokurōbei, a pious believer in the Heavenly Ancestors who was inviting a Fusōkyō instructor to his village once a month for a lecture where no fewer than a hundred people took scrupulous notes.⁷⁰ Rokurōbei

⁶⁹ “Fuji issan kōsha” 富士一山講社, manuscript, 1879, document number 12690628, Yokohama National University Library.

⁷⁰ “Shinjin ni mo shushu...” 信心にも種々, *Fuji sōsetsu* 1 (March 1877).

was here highlighted for his piety, but his beliefs and practices were not necessarily beneficial to Fusōkyō's standing at this time. Just a few weeks earlier, Fusōkyō had apologized to the Home Ministry for "the strange teachings of Itō Rokurōbei," petitioning that his behavior be excused to allow Fusōkyō to register as an independent sect. In later years, Rokurōbei's onetime colleague at Fusōkyō headquarters, Ozawa Hikochi, would claim that Meiji founding father Ōkubo Toshimichi had personally complained about Rokurōbei when rejecting the petition.⁷¹ Fusōkyō set out Rokurōbei's strident faith as an example to others, but something had to be done to counter or relativize the fruits of that faith.

Some may assume that since Rokurōbei was producing "teachings," Shishino Nakaba would have turned to theology and catechism to shape the norms of the Maruyama *kō* over the period of 1875 to 1884. To some extent, this did happen. But the earliest texts of the group problematize the typical genres of religious writing. As Higashibaba Ikuo has observed in his work on early modern Japanese Christianity, practice has long been privileged over doctrine in Japanese religion; a text described as "Christian doctrine" in Latin was relabeled as a "translation of prayers" in Japanese.⁷² In this section, we will look closely at the specific types of text which were produced to guide the Maruyama *kō*, which have a similar focus on practical application.

⁷¹ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 68–72. The petition was formally rejected on February 3, 1877, at which point Ōkubo had other things to worry about—namely, the outbreak of the Satsuma Rebellion.

⁷² Higashibaba, "Revisiting Native Agency."

Fusōkyō-Maruyama produced a large number of texts in this decade which quickly faded in importance in the years thereafter and therefore have not been contextualized by later generations of believers or scholars. If we look closely at how these texts were used at the time, it paints a curious picture. In 1876, Rokurōbei accepted a Shintoized liturgy produced by Fusōkyō founder Shishino Nakaba. Later, Shishino radically changed Fusōkyō's theology, which was again accepted by the Maruyama *kō*. The Maruyama *kō* did not issue its own publications until 1879, even though Rokurōbei was preaching ongoing revelations throughout the 1870s. It appears that Maruyama *kō* members began compiling and distributing Rokurōbei's teachings not in objection to Fusōkyō, but in order to fill what they considered important lacunae in Fusōkyō-Maruyama epistemology.

In early 1876, Shishino Nakaba distributed two anonymous texts: a block-print text called *Direct Report from Hat Rock (Eboshi iwa chokuden)*, which reused the name of an older text attributed to Jikigyō,⁷³ and a handwritten prayer book called *Shintokukyō (Classic of the Deities and Their Virtues)*.⁷⁴ Fusōkyō sources offer no explanation why Shishino did not name himself as the author of either document, but in Maruyamakyō's postwar biography of Rokurōbei, we see that Shishino gave a copy of *Direct Report from Hat Rock* to Rokurōbei in April 1876, and that the postwar author believed it to be a work by Jikigyō.⁷⁵ This offers a likely

⁷³ A copy of the older text, dating to 1835, is held by Shinshu University and is unrelated in content. For the text of Shishino's version, see Ōtani M., "Ayase Inari Jinja."

⁷⁴ One copy dates to March 1876: Sakai Kakugyō 酒井角行, comp., "Miharai ōharai Shintokukyō shindensha" 身祓大祓神徳経新伝写, Sakai Family Collection, document 2200439794, Kanagawa Prefectural Archives.

⁷⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 273, 274n3.

explanation: Shishino was passing these documents off as transmissions from earlier generations.⁷⁶ However, it does not seem he was very successful in his forgery, as some of the contemporary copies of both texts name him as the author.⁷⁷ He would eventually acknowledge his authorship of *Shintokukyō*.⁷⁸

Besides the biomedicine-affirming prayer for healing the sick, which we dealt with in Chapter Two, the *Direct Report from Hat Rock* contains a prayer to praise one's parents, a prayer to praise the imperial regalia of Japan, and a prayer for healing ("body purification") which invokes Shinto *kami* such as Izanagi. Ōtani Masayuki observes a strong Shinto coloring throughout the document.⁷⁹ The *Shintokukyō* is more relaxed in theology. It praises the power of the Original Father-Mother to create the heavens and earth, and the deity's control over earthquakes, fires, floods, etc. References to imperial mythology, if any, are more obscure. It may be an attempt to extend Fuji *kō* theology into a generic monotheism, but this Sino-Japanese document seems to have been written as a liturgy for chanting rather than being understood.⁸⁰

Direct Report from Hat Rock eventually became obscure, but Shishino's *Shintokukyō* remains Fusōkyō's liturgy today and was used by Maruyama *kō* members as late as 1887, even though the Maruyama movement split from Fusōkyō

⁷⁶ The Saitama Prefectural Museum of History and Folklore holds an undated copy of the *Shintokukyō* (document SPM2009-0028-0244) with an attribution to Jikigyō.

⁷⁷ The Tenri Central Library copy of *Shintokukyō* names Shishino as the author. For *Hat Rock*, see Ōtani T., "Kanagawa-ken," 76.

⁷⁸ Ōtani M., *Kakugyō-kei*, 231. He is also named as author in an 1878 copyright registration.

⁷⁹ Ōtani M., "Ayase Inari Jinja."

⁸⁰ Sakuragi, *Shintokukyō*, provides a later exegesis, or rather a theologically motivated eisegesis.

in 1885.⁸¹ Some sources recalled it as the liturgy of a Maruyama *kō* in rural Kanagawa.⁸² One Maruyama *kō* member recalled setting its prayer to shamisen music around 1883.⁸³ In 1885, a Buddhist critic, Kinoshita Hirotaka, understood it as the sacred scripture of the Maruyama movement.⁸⁴ However, it was not intended as scripture, and neither Shishino nor Rokurōbei portrayed it as a divine revelation. Rokurōbei's postwar biographer rather indignantly insists that Rokurōbei refused to read from it even when appointed by Shishino to perform a ritual atop Mount Fuji in summer 1877 and claims that Rokurōbei described it as an “outside book” (*soto no shomotsu*).⁸⁵

If these two documents were not revealed texts and lay “outside” the Fuji faith tradition, then what were they? In Jikigyō's branch of the Fuji *kō*, the more devoted members of the *kō* who purified themselves and practiced healing would receive a manuscript called a transmission text (*otsutae*) from their teachers. The Maruyama transmission text, for instance, contained Jikigyō's five-line *ominuki*, a revealed arrangement of text used as an embodiment of the deity of Fuji,⁸⁶ as well as songs and divinely inspired prayer formulae for use in ritual, most of which were revealed by Rokurōbei. Importantly, transmission texts were not just liturgical but

⁸¹ A handwritten copy of *Shintokukyō* from Aichi Prefecture dates to May 25, 1887. Copy by Fujiwara Yasukichi, Emura Eiichi Collection.

⁸² Ōtani, “Kanagawa-ken,” 73.

⁸³ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 258.

⁸⁴ Kinoshita, *Hiiki*, 6–7.

⁸⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 293n. It is unlikely Rokurōbei ever publicly disapproved of *Shintokukyō* before 1885. One Shizuoka-area compilation of Fusōkyō-Maruyama teachings instructs believers to recite from *Shintokukyō* whenever they assemble. “Shintō Fusō fusetsu no maki” 神道扶桑不説之巻, May 1884, Emura Eiichi Collection.

⁸⁶ Sawada, *Faith*, 60.

served as a form of authentication, showing that the text's prior owner had recognized its current owner as a devoted *gyōja* worthy of being a *sendatsu*.⁸⁷ Portions of Shishino's *Direct Report from Hat Rock* were also chanted to demonstrate authority: during *takiage* fire ceremonies at certain *kōshin kō*, a Fusōkyō *gyōja* would be invited to chant a Shintoized *kōshin* prayer from this book, while the *kōshin kō* members listened quietly.⁸⁸

Shishino never claimed to have studied under a *sendatsu* or be a *gyōja* himself, and these texts were freely distributed rather than bestowed on initiates, so they could not have been intended as transmission texts.⁸⁹ Indeed, Rokurōbei continued to use the Maruyama *kō*'s preexisting transmission text *Fuji nankyō* throughout this period. Shishino's two texts therefore were an attempt to partially separate Fusōkyō-Maruyama from two longstanding Fuji *kō* traditions: the transmission texts and the collections of formulae called *tonaebumi* used in specific situations like illness.⁹⁰ *Direct Report from Cap Rock* fulfilled the same function as the *tonaebumi*, while *Shintokukyō*, a general-use affirmation of divinity, was meant to supplant transmission texts with an entirely new genre of ritual prayer.

In early 1877, Shishino switched genres and published an introduction to Fusōkyō doctrine, *Fuji shindōki* (or *Fuji shinjin no michibiki no fumi*, "Book to

⁸⁷ Sawada, *Faith*, 86.

⁸⁸ Kobanami, "Fujisan," 25.

⁸⁹ Ōtani (*Kakugyō-kei*, 231) agrees that *Shintokukyō* was not a transmission text and points out that it was included as part of the independence petition described below. Shishino apparently conceived that an "independent sect" needed a "scripture," although it is not evident that *Shintokukyō*, a simple prayer, was initially written for that purpose.

⁹⁰ Sawada, *Faith*, 77, 87.

Guide the Fuji Faith”). This book took the more familiar form of a catechism, explaining the Original Father-Mother’s creation of the world and (as noted in Chapter Two) how healing ritual should be practiced as complementary therapy alongside Western medicine. *Fuji shindōki* received a much larger distribution than *Direct Report from Hat Rock* or *Shintokukyō*: early researcher Frederick Starr reported that it was “the one text-book of the Fujiko that the prowler about old bookstores runs some chance of finding.”⁹¹ However, it is strange to think that Fuji *kō* required a “text-book” at all, as they were traditional institutions of their villages with preexisting beliefs. What made members interested in this text?

Here, the answer seems to lie in theology. Shishino’s original 1873 charter as well as *Direct Report from Hat Rock* and *Shintokukyō* all direct reverence towards Konohanasakuyahime (“blossoming cherry tree princess”), a Shinto deity which had been associated with Mount Fuji for a century or more by Kokugaku-influenced Fuji *oshi*. A July 1876 poster printed by Shishino uses the generic term Sengen to name Fuji’s deity.⁹² However, *Fuji shindōki*, in February 1877, informs us that Konohanasakuyahime originated in Amenominakanushi (“lord of the middle of heaven”), an ancient deity which some figures in early Meiji Kokugaku attempted to compare to the Christian God. Although some of these Amenominakanushi theorists had been Shishino’s teachers in Satsuma and Kyoto,⁹³ and although the

⁹¹ Starr, *Fujiyama*, 119.

⁹² Fusō Kyōkai Honbu, “Shoshin miei.”

⁹³ Specifically, Watanabe Ikarimaro, Shishino’s teacher in Kyoto who promoted Amenominakanushi specifically to students from Satsuma in 1871 (Saitō, “Hirata kokugaku,” 270; Katsurajima, *Shisōshi no jūkyūseiki*, 152–3), and Hatta Tominori, Shishino’s teacher at the Zōshikan in Satsuma, who

theology of Fuji had changed many times over the centuries, and although Shibata Hanamori had already converted his own Fuji sect Jikkōkyō to worship Amenominakanushi in 1870,⁹⁴ Shishino apparently did not think of making this alteration until five full years after he began planning his Fuji group.

This period of July 1876 through February 1877 is when Shishino's organization applied to the Home Ministry to become an independent sect, as mentioned above. In doing so, Shishino initially suggested the name "Nihonkyō," or Japanism, which he openly stated was an attempt to establish his own sect as the state religion or National Teaching of Japan. This apparently "provoked extreme complaints" from other sects.⁹⁵ Even the replacement name Shishino landed on, Fusōkyō, invokes a literary metonym for Japan. It would appear that like many of Shishino's decisions, the deity Amenominakanushi was introduced for administrative reasons, rendering his group's theology more universal in order to accommodate his Kokugaku allies by switching out a Fuji-linked deity with one that his Kokugaku teachers had frequently depicted as an originary creator.⁹⁶

Considering the multiple stakeholders within Fusōkyō can give us further insight into Shishino's strategy. Fusōkyō was founded with the support of Fuji *oshi* (mountain masters/pilgrimage organizers) who hoped to find a way to translate

insisted in 1871 that Amenominakanushi should be the sole object of worship for all Japan (Miyamoto, *Outadokoro*, 74–80).

⁹⁴ Miyazaki, "Networks," 164.

⁹⁵ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 72n1. Ōtani Masayuki (*Kakugyō-kei*, 231–2) observes that the name "Nihonkyō" does not appear in any surviving documents, but it could have been informally floated. This sort of detail certainly passes the criterion of embarrassment; that is to say, it is unlikely to have been invented for hagiographic purposes.

⁹⁶ Additional details of the theological shift are noted in Takeda T., "Kokugakusha," 189–90.

their traditional authority over the Fuji *kō* into the new realities of the Meiji era. But Rokurōbei offered an alternative authority: new messages from the mountain deity, which reaffirmed and revitalized the values, epistemology, and heroism of the Fuji religious leader Jikigyō. With the merger with the Maruyama *kō* in early 1875, these two groups were now jostling for control, which would make it difficult to outline the “doctrine” of the proposed independent sect Fusōkyō. Hirata Kokugaku, which Shishino had been versed in from adolescence, was a body of knowledge which he knew better than did either side of this internal struggle. “Orthodox” Hirata theology also appealed to Shishino’s social network outside the sect, which still dreamed of a Shinto state religion. By using his unique expertise to make Fusōkyō-Maruyama potentially “useful” to outsiders, Shishino made himself essential to both sides of the dispute despite his financial misbehavior. There was therefore a political side to this ostensibly administrative change.

Returning to the text, *Fuji shindōki* provides a lengthy explanation of how Amenominakanushi produces two other deities to form a Creator Triad (*zōka sanshin*), and how these three creators relate to Konohanasakuyahime, who is now the “protector” of Mount Fuji rather than the object of worship. It does not, however, explain why the object of worship had suddenly been changed. There is no mention of Hirata Atsutane and the Kokugaku theorists after him who had unearthed Amenominakanushi from ancient texts; Shishino did not want to make it explicit that he was appealing to authorities previously unknown to the Fuji tradition. But the Maruyama *kō* did not perceive theological change as a mere administrative

matter, and *Fuji shindōki* led one of their number to author the first direct riposte to Shishino.⁹⁷

In 1880, a Kanagawa-area Maruyama *kō* participant named Mori Yūjiro wrote out a manuscript called *Fuji nankyō kindōki*, punning on Shishino's *Fuji shindōki* by implying that the reader draws "close" (*kin*) to Fuji by using Rokurōbei's powerful transmission text, the *Fuji nankyō*, rather than Shishino's non-transmission text *Shintokukyō*. This manuscript, which was widely copied throughout the 1880s, explains that Rokurōbei had been given a revelation (or divine inspiration, called *ohiraki*) of the true meaning of Jikigyō's famous five-line *ominuki*, which we learn is a hidden invocation of the Creator Triad. It also introduces some of Rokurōbei's other revelations, such as substituting NAMU-AMITA-USU for *namu-amida-butsu* and the sacred symbolism of dice.⁹⁸

Fuji nankyō kindōki is not the first surviving writing from the Maruyama *kō*, nor is it the first writing supposedly based on Rokurōbei's teachings; in 1879, Fusōkyō had published a text attributed to Rokurōbei that focused on the cycles of the Five Agents (*gogyō*), and some manuscript lecture notes on his teachings also date to this time. However, *Fuji nankyō kindōki* outstripped the 1879 texts in popularity,⁹⁹ and the reason why seems clear. The religion scholar Kwōn Dongwoo

⁹⁷ The official biographies of Rokurōbei do not mention these rival doctrinal texts nor the theological shift to the Creation Triad; see Introduction and Chapter Six.

⁹⁸ Mori, "Fuji nankyō kindōki." For Jikigyō's five-line *ominuki*, see Sawada, *Faith*, 111–2.

⁹⁹ I have acquired three handwritten manuscripts of "Fuji nankyō kindōki." Most notably it was bundled with later teachings by Hirasawa Kumaichi in Shizuoka in 1887, a full seven years later and over a hundred kilometers distant.

has observed that by introducing Amenominakanushi as the central deity in *Fuji shindōki*, Shishino “dismantled” traditional Fuji *kō* beliefs and introduced a discontinuity, causing Fusōkyō to “develop in a different direction from the preexisting Fuji faith.”¹⁰⁰ Fusōkyō was now departing from non-aligned Fuji *kō* and *oshi*, and the lack of explanation leaves an epistemological void. In contrast, *Fuji nankyō kindōki* showed that the Creation Triad had been hiding in the traditional *ominuki* all along. It also showed that the man who could reveal these hidden continuities was not Shishino but Itō Rokurōbei, who had made himself worthy of direct communications from the divine through his extreme asceticism.

Transmission texts and edible talismans

Besides providing a liturgy and authenticating members as *gyōja*, transmission texts were physically used in healing. As mentioned in Chapter One, healing prayer in the Fuji *kō* was conducted by a *gyōja* who would chant sacred words while rubbing the transmission text against the body of the sick. Someone with Kokugaku education, presumably Shishino, gave the preexisting Maruyama practice the unusual name “body purification” (*miharai*) around 1876,¹⁰¹ but no

¹⁰⁰ Kwōn, “Shinwa kaishaku-shi,” 27–29.

¹⁰¹ The kanji for *miharai* appear in *Man'yōshū* 2403, which is in line with Meiji Kokugaku practice of legitimizing healing through ancient precedent (*supra* Chapter Two, “*Kō* in the age of biopolitics”). The phrase’s earliest use in Maruyama context is in Shishino’s *Direct Report from Hat Rock*.

modifications were made to the practice itself, and rubbing the *Fuji nankyō* has been the Maruyama method of healing ever since.¹⁰²

Because of Rokurōbei's impressive reputation, those who came to Noborito to receive body purification and hear sermons did not necessarily feel physically ill. In premodern East Asia, health was considered interconnected with larger cycles of life, social conditions, and cosmic cycles, all of which needed to be aligned and harmonized.¹⁰³ Katsurajima observes that these beliefs carried over into the healing ritual of Japanese new religious movements. In fact the “gods” of these movements were often names being given to unseen and mysterious changes in cosmic cycles that could induce sickness or health as well as rain, seasonal change, or good harvests.¹⁰⁴ Visitors to Noborito would feel mentally reinvigorated by Rokurōbei's words of encouragement, and even decades after his death, “body purification” was recommended to the physically healthy to “remove bad qi” and “return one to the original mind and original nature.”¹⁰⁵

As we saw in Chapter Two, there were two separate hierarchies within Fusōkyō: the *sendatsu* label for spiritual authority which Shishino had seized control of, centralized, and divided into ranks, and the *kyōdōshoku* licensing system for preaching and healing, formally controlled by the Japanese government until 1884. By linking body purification to transmission texts, the Maruyama *kō* kept

¹⁰² Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 13n10; Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 313; communication with Ōtani Masayuki, January 3, 2025.

¹⁰³ Sawada, *Practical Pursuits*, 10.

¹⁰⁴ Katsurajima, *Bakumatsu*, 305.

¹⁰⁵ Motoki, *Michisuji*, 38; Inobe, *Fuji no shinkō*, 417.

itself attached to the *gyōja* ideal and maintained it through a independent third hierarchy, a master-disciple relationship in which *gyōja* could privately entrust others with *Fuji nankyō* and thus grant them the power to heal outside of Fusōkyō and *kyōdōshoku* licensures.¹⁰⁶ Much later, in 1931, the group would prohibit the unauthorized copying of *Fuji nankyō*, which suggests that it had been widely copied before.¹⁰⁷ This investiture model appears to be maintained up to the present day.¹⁰⁸

Although this opened up healing to a large number of *gyōja* beyond government licensing, in fact many *kō* members wished to be healed or purified by the most powerful and dedicated *gyōja*, Rokurōbei. By 1882 this led to chaotic scenes in Noborito, where Rokurōbei would purify large numbers of people at once by waving a fan over them, while the ecstatic visitors wrapped donations in paper and tossed them at the front of the room.¹⁰⁹ A local resident later recalled that it was basically impossible to see Rokurōbei because he was mobbed by people demanding healing throughout the day.¹¹⁰ This situation demanded an easier way to distribute healing power, and the Fuji *kō* talisman tradition provided for this.

The Fuji *kō* had adopted from Shugendō a practice of writing out talismans (*fusegi*) to heal illness. At first these talismans were various writings of partially

¹⁰⁶ There was no oversight of these private investitures. One member mentions an unscrupulous *gyōja* who sold *Fuji nankyō* and counterfeited talismans to the unwitting public (Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 271).

¹⁰⁷ Shintō Maruyama Kyōkai, *Kaiki*, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Seemingly for this reason, *Fuji nankyō* is not available in any libraries and I have never seen a copy of it on the open market.

¹⁰⁹ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 264 (see also 253).

¹¹⁰ Ogiwara, “Fujijo (6),” 24.

legible ideographs meant to treat specific diseases, like medical prescriptions.¹¹¹ These were applied by rubbing them on the body, just like the transmission texts. In later years, they were simplified to sheets of paper covered in repeated powerful characters, most commonly SAN from the *ominuki* phrase SAN-MYŌ-TŌ-KAI-SAN, which were cut one by one as needed. They could be carried as good luck charms or dissolved in water and swallowed.¹¹² Like extensive fasting, the practice of swallowing inscribed talismans together with water can be traced to ancient China. Daoist texts dating to the 200s AD or earlier describe paper talismans as a substitute for food which can extend human life indefinitely.¹¹³

Allegedly as early as 1870, Rokurōbei developed his own modified version of the SAN character for use in “charms” (*fu*).¹¹⁴ In August 1876 he copied SAN or a similar character for eight days straight, and the characters were “divided among the believers” as charms.¹¹⁵ Starting in February 1877, he wrote out a modified character for “human” instead.¹¹⁶ Starting in May 1882, he inscribed talismans with the characters for “gold” for forty-two days, “water” for thirty days, and “heart” for twenty-eight days.¹¹⁷ In June 1884, he copied out “three,” followed later by “body.”¹¹⁸ These careful records of the exact characters Rokurōbei used to produce

¹¹¹ Sawada, *Faith*, 87.

¹¹² Inobe, *Fuji no shrinkō*, 319–320.

¹¹³ Eskilden, *Asceticism*, 58–9; Robson, “Signs of Power,” 135–6.

¹¹⁴ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 74.

¹¹⁵ Aoki, “Shōden,” 59r; Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 37; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 284–5 (“divided among the believers”).

¹¹⁶ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 40.

¹¹⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 343.

¹¹⁸ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 68.

talismans, transmitted and published by later generations, show how central their production and distribution was to his community, but publications from 1875–84 maintain total silence over how talismans were meant to work or their relationship to Fusōkyō-Maruyama teachings.¹¹⁹

We can learn much from this silence. Both transmission texts and edible talismans would have been problematic to Fusōkyō-Maruyama administrators, because healing was only authorized for those with *kyōdōshoku* licenses. The distribution of both objects threatened the return of police surveillance. Any of the hundreds of daily visitors who received a talisman from Rokurōbei could offer it to a friend at home and theoretically be guilty of unlicensed prayer healing. Perhaps this liability was the origin of the 1880 *Yomiuri shinbun* allegation that Rokurōbei had ordered *kō* members not to talk to non-members. It is certainly the reason why “prayer healing permits” were eventually invented in 1885 and restricted in distribution to adult men.¹²⁰

Widespread unlicensed healing would seem to be a major issue for Fusōkyō, which had already suffered reputational damage from Rokurōbei. It is noteworthy that despite Shishino Nakaba’s initial 1873–75 prohibition on talismans throughout Fusōkyō, and despite his liturgical interventions to supplant some traditional

¹¹⁹ I located a unique unsigned, undated pamphlet explaining how to drink the talismans at the Kanagawa Prefectural Archives (probably printed around the 1920s or 30s). Otherwise, the only mention of their consumption which I found was in a 1942 FBI investigation of the Maruyama church in Seattle, which I will treat in Chapter Six. Maruyamakyō regulations from 1885 onwards quietly regulate their distribution.

¹²⁰ Maruyamakyō pamphlet, “Konpan kin’en kisoku...” 今般禁厭規則, 10 October 1885, Takahashi Family Collection, Zama City Board of Education.

chants included in *Fuji nankyō*, there is no record of him objecting to the Maruyama *kō*'s healing use of *Fuji nankyō* or edible talismans, even in his hagiography, which was written by a subordinate with a serious grudge against the Maruyama movement.¹²¹ Shishino must have seen transmission texts and talismans as integral to Rokurōbei's mission, and the only stipulations he offered about them are the suggestions in *Direct Report from Cap Rock* and *Fuji shindōki* that members should see a doctor before employing healing prayer. Despite these suggestions, for many Maruyama believers, avoiding biomedicine remained a point of pride: one member bragged in 1932 that he had never once been to a doctor's office in 87 years.¹²²

The Maruyama *kō* of 1875–1884 believed that Rokurōbei was revealing Mount Fuji's true message as in alignment with the restoration of Japan to ancient Shinto ways. Shishino's textual interventions were understood to be part of this alignment. From the continued use of transmission texts and talismans, though, we can understand that these new revelations were seen as continuous with earlier Mount Fuji-related beliefs. The newly revealed foundation in Shinto was not cause for doubting the efficacy of prayer healing; rather, it made prayer healing even more powerful through eliminating old partial understandings and foreign impurities.

¹²¹ See Introduction.

¹²² Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 21.

Conclusion: the manufacture of a Durkheimian society

From 1873–1874, the Maruyama *kō* was constantly in danger of being crushed by the power of the state. From 1875–1884, the group thrived and became a mass movement. In this chapter, we have seen the complex reasons for its success. Ascetic practice, so detested by Shishino Nakaba, became less frequent, while some members took up economically productive abstinence from alcohol and gambling. Theology was guided by Shishino, or at least somehow changed into a Kokugaku formulation convenient to him. But *kō* members still desired to learn from and imitate Rokurōbei in everyday behavior, religious practice, and personal appearance. They were attracted to his commitment to *gyōja* vows and believed that he was receiving revelations and healing power from Sengen. Shishino attempted to revise the Fuji *kō* liturgy and even its theology, but he did not tamper with the traditional belief in prayer healing, transmission texts, and talismans which brought members into the Maruyama *kō* and to Noborito in ever greater numbers. Such practical benefits (*genze-riyaku*) may have been seen as more important than theology by ordinary members, although Shishino's theological shifts did not go unnoticed.

The exponential growth of the Maruyama *kō* over the course of 1875–1884, with minimal police interference, attests to a successful course being plotted in Meiji society, but there was also a structural failure. The authority and existence of the Maruyama movement became divided between three kinds of institutions: dojos, churches, and self-organized *kō* meetings. How did these different sorts of

structures influence members' self-perception as they handled outside mockery and criticism?

In a 1992 publication, Katsurajima Nobuhiro argued that *kō* did not qualify as “churches” in the Durkheimian sense. He writes that where Christian churches produce doctrine through intellectual systems of governance, such as presbyterian or episcopal polities, *kō* were the product of local custom, “often overlapping with village communities.” Katsurajima even asserts that premodern *kō* fall within Durkheim’s definition of “magic,” the opposite of the church, due to their lack of systematic doctrine.¹²³ If we follow Katsurajima’s suggestion, then *kō* would be structurally antagonistic to Fusōkyō’s organizational scheme. In Durkheim’s dichotomy, religion and magic are oil and water, two approaches to the sacred which are repugnant to each other. Religion, expressed as a Church, systematizes the sacred for noble, public purposes, while magic makes unstructured, secretive use of the sacred to private ends. The magician is “anti-religious,” and magic by definition cannot become a church.¹²⁴

Of course, in reality many Fuji *kō* did cooperate with Shishino’s scheme and joined “churches,” with full awareness that they were aiding the public goal of a National Teaching. Wouter Hanegraaff observes that Durkheim’s dualism of social religion and antisocial magic is circular; he merely defines the terms in this way, and does not prove the universal nature of religion and magic nor their inherent

¹²³ Katsurajima, *Bakumatsu*, 141, 162n12.

¹²⁴ Hanegraaff, “Defining Religion,” 343–4.

opposition.¹²⁵ The same circularity has been attributed to Durkheim's colleagues Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss.¹²⁶ Later scholars critiqued the debate over distinguishing magic from religion as "an artificial problem created by defining religion on the ideal pattern of Christianity."¹²⁷ This exposes the religion-magic dichotomy as one part of a larger debate over the role of rationality and irrationality in culture. The chief reason why the magical and irrational are associated with the savage in classical anthropology is that the civilizational project under which anthropology originally developed sought to relegate unreasonably Dionysian or epistemologically open behaviors to the spheres of the private, marginal, or insufficiently modern.¹²⁸

The Shintoization of the Maruyama *kō* makes the real stakes of this academic debate clear. There were few premodern neighborhood institutions as inherently social as the *kō* (Fuji *kō* as well as Haruna *kō*, etc.), being communities of care which could bring together diverse families and professions in a village and help them weather hard times. But Shishino Nakaba *perceived* the *kō* as undeveloped for reasons that anticipate Durkheim's arguments decades later. Shishino's push to literally remodel *kō* after Christian churches—the centralization around corporate buildings rather than homes, the adoption of specific doctrines and regulations, and the redirection of money as voluntary donations towards a legal institution rather

¹²⁵ Hanegraaff, "Defining Religion," 341–5.

¹²⁶ Belier, "Religion and Magic," 179–180.

¹²⁷ Pettersson, "Magic – Religion," 119.

¹²⁸ This project, although seemingly new to nineteenth-century East Asia, arguably had ancient roots in the West: von Stuckrad, "Magic," 321.

than regular contributions entrusted to fellow members—represented a shift in values towards a universe in which only authorized institutions possessed the status and knowledge to direct the sacred towards the public interest. It is this value system which began to relegate *kō* to the magical and denigrate their interests as private.

In this chapter, which focused on the Tokyo and Kanagawa areas, we saw little evidence of open dissent among pious *kō* members against the loose scheme which bound the Maruyama *kō* to Fusōkyō and to the Meiji state. It is my conclusion that Shishino's changes were gentle enough that the Maruyama *kō* could reinterpret them to fit their own belief in Rokurōbei's vision. However, starting around the time of Shishino's death in 1884, such dissent did arise in Shizuoka Prefecture, and the beliefs of pious *kō* members in this largely rural farming region, far from Tokyo, had extreme consequences. This is the most notorious part of the Maruyama story and has been treated in many prior studies. The Maruyama movement's collapse, however, was not caused by zealotry alone but by the larger issue of cynical exploitation of the *kō* by administrators. In the following two chapters, we will see that this exploitation was inseparable from the type of Shinto authority developed by Shishino Nakaba.

Table 1: Cast of characters for Chapters Four and Five

- **Itō Rokurōbei**, *sendatsu* of the Maruyama *kō* within the Shinto organization Fusōkyō; from 1880, Fusōkyō's Vice Chief of Doctrinal Affairs; from 1883, Fusōkyō Counselor.
- **Kuniyoshi**, son-in-law and adoptive heir of Rokurōbei.
- **Shishino Nakaba**, Kokugaku scholar from Satsuma; founder of Fusōkyō.
 - **Tsuyako**, Nakaba's wife.
 - **Tatemaru**, Nakaba's infant son; nominal president of Fusōkyō after Nakaba's death, by agreement between the Maruyama and Yoshida factions.
- **Early Maruyama followers (Maruyama faction within Fusōkyō)**
 - **Urushibara Yūjirō**, founder of Yamada Church in Kanagawa Prefecture; from c. 1879, Vice President of Fusōkyō. Husband of **Urushibara Shika**, one of Rokurōbei's first followers and the most prominent woman in the movement.
 - **Saitō Fukutarō**, founder of Isobe Church in Kanagawa Prefecture; exact rank within Fusōkyō unknown. Described as a zealous believer by Yuri Jun'ichi.
- **Later Maruyama follower (Shizuoka)**
 - **Nishigaya Heijirō**, allegedly became interested in Maruyama *kō* around 1880; from 1884, founder of Kurihara Church in Shizuoka Prefecture (seized by police in 1887).
- **Non-Maruyama leaders in Fusōkyō (Yoshida faction, etc.)**
 - **Ozawa Gonzaemon**, founder of Fujisawa Church in Kanagawa Prefecture. Granted financial control of Shizuoka area Maruyama *kō* until founding of Kurihara Church in 1885. His background and relationship to Rokurōbei is unclear.
 - **Ozawa Hikochi** (no relation to Gonzaemon), Yoshida *oshi*; Fusōkyō Counselor. Later author of a hagiography of Shishino.
 - **Takazaki Ichizō**, Yoshida *oshi*. Fired from Fusōkyō in 1884 for fraud, but continued to exercise power behind the scenes.
 - **Takaoka Koreyoshi**, lifelong bureaucrat; former employee of Shintō Jimukyoku. From 1882, member of Fusōkyō's board of directors. From 1884, collaborator with Nishigaya. From 1885, co-founder and administrator of Maruyamakyō (see Chapter Five).
 - **Tanaka Yoritsune**, founder and president of Jingūkyō; an old friend of Shishino Nakaba; became regent of Fusōkyō in 1884 following Shishino's death, by agreement between the Maruyama and Yoshida factions.

CHAPTER FOUR:
MARUYAMA INCIDENTS, PART ONE: CRISIS,
1879–1885

In February 1884, newspapers of Shizuoka Prefecture, to the west of Mount Fuji and over a day's journey from Tokyo and Noborito, began reporting on new and unfamiliar teachings in their local Maruyama *kō*. A member told newspapers that he heard that conscription of the elderly would soon begin, and that the Maruyama *kō* could avoid it through prayer.¹ It was said that some members climbed up on their roofs every morning and prayed to the rising sun. Others said that a great disaster was coming that would kill all men and beasts, and that only the Maruyama *kō* would survive.² Members were said to be flocking to a newly built Maruyama church in the town of Kurihara (now part of Shizuoka City), where they were presumably hearing new teachings.³ Beginning in April, some members sold their fields or canceled leases, explaining that they would no longer need to work to survive.⁴

¹ “Kano Maruyama *kō* no ryūkō...” 彼の丸山講の流行, excerpt from *Kan'yū nippō*, February 19, 1884, in Shizuoka-ken, *Shizuoka kenshi shiryōhen*, vol. 17, 745.

² “Enshū Toyoda-gun chihō ni te wa...” 遠州豊田郡地方にては, excerpt from *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, March 28, 1884, in Shizuoka-ken, *Shizuoka kenshi shiryōhen*, vol. 17, 745.

³ “Enshū chihō ni te Maruyama *kō*...” 遠州地方にて丸山講, excerpt from *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, April 1, 1884, in Shizuoka-ken, *Shizuoka kenshi shiryōhen*, vol. 17, 746.

⁴ “Jinushi no konkyaku” 地主の困却, excerpt from *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, April 13, 1884, in Shizuoka-ken, *Shizuoka kenshi shiryōhen*, vol. 17, 746.

According to a police report from that February, these Shizuoka-area *kō* prophesied a great disaster of foul winds and poison rains would begin in May and last for two to five years, with Maruyama *kō* members being the only survivors; they would be healed by talismans and receive food and clothing from Heaven. On top of this, the report claims that the Maruyama *kō* promised that every member who recruited twenty new members before the apocalypse began would be raised to *hatamoto* status and become a daimyo with their own castle.⁵ This extraordinary teaching is confirmed by the recollections of members, who had imagined claiming Nagoya Castle or Kumamoto Castle for themselves when they became daimyo.⁶

In religious studies, these kinds of beliefs and practices are often called “millennial” or “millenarian.” These terms have been wrenched from a specifically Christian context and applied to highly dissimilar phenomena around the world. Christians who believe in imminent rapture may sell off all their possessions, as Shizuoka Maruyama members did. However, millenarian Millerites, like members of Heaven’s Gate, believed that the world would soon cease to exist, while the Shizuoka Maruyama *kō* believed in this-worldly reward. Some who are labeled “millenarians” confront ruling authorities with protests or violence; we will see that the Shizuoka Maruyama members generally did not. The term “millenarian” is so vague—encompassing movements both active and passive, imminent and long-term, exclusivist and universalist, quietist and violent—that it seems to be applicable to

⁵ Suzuki Masayuki, “Kindai minshū,” 18–19.

⁶ Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 481n23; Motoki, “Kikigaki.”

any group behavior deemed sufficiently extraordinary and exotic by religious studies scholars.⁷

In this paper I will invoke generic concepts of apocalypse and catastrophe, but to emphasize the specific nature of Shizuoka-area Maruyama beliefs, I will more often use a euphemism preferred by later Maruyama administrators: the “*Mi* Division Incident” (*Mi kumi jiken*), named after the Shizuoka-area *kō* division that ballooned in size in 1884. One young believer wrote in 1990, “Maruyamakyō began with *Mi* Division, and disappeared with *Mi* Division. Any discussion of *Mi* Division is strictly forbidden. From the beginning, this has been a firm rule in Maruyamakyō.”⁸ In the private internal communications of the group, leaders explained that the incident was provoked by an economic depression which caused farmers to organize into loose groups with names like the Poor People’s Party and Debtor’s Party.⁹

Economic hardship is necessary background for understanding the origins of the *Mi* Division Incident, but it is not a sufficient explanation. There were no mass sales of property in Noborito in 1884, nor anywhere in the surrounding region of northern Kanagawa where it is said that streets were once covered in rows of Maruyama doorplates.¹⁰ In fact, Noborito was at the center of a rural region that

⁷ Otčenášek, “Rhetoric of Reorganization.” A similar problem with the Japanese term *yonaooshi*, which is frequently used in outsider studies of the Maruyama movement, was described in the Introduction.

⁸ Oku, *Bunmei kaika*, 62.

⁹ Shirosaki, “Sono 18.”

¹⁰ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 258.

has drawn scholarly interest for being especially subdued during the severe economic downturns of 1884–5. The economic historian Neil Waters suggested that the Maruyama *kō*'s preservation of community bonds could explain the *lack* of uprising in that area.¹¹

If we focus on the regional economic problems alone, we ignore the massive structural issues in the Maruyama *kō* which allowed this situation to develop. In this chapter, we will see that the parent organization Fusōkyō's single-minded focus on accumulating donations both instigated the *Mi* Division Incident and caused it to turn into a story of exploitation and betrayal. In fact, this exploitation was not an isolated incident in Shizuoka but a structural issue which applied to the entire Maruyama movement. An 1895 book attacking the Maruyama movement does not mention *Mi* Division at all, despite ample opportunity to do so.¹²

The first three chapters of this monograph demonstrated how the Maruyama *kō* arose as a unique mixture of Fuji faith and Shinto authority over the period 1870–1884. In this chapter and the one to follow, I will describe the struggle for the movement's soul which occurred over the course of roughly 1882–1894. This chapter will document the events which led to the *Mi* Division Incident, and Itō Rokurōbei's attempt to integrate them into his teachings. The next chapter will encompass the institutional response to both Rokurōbei and the *Mi* Division Incident as well as the lasting impact on the movement.

¹¹ Waters, *Local Pragmatists*, 109.

¹² Nanba, *Fuhai*. See Introduction for a detailed description of this book.

The vanishing credibility of the Shinto restoration

In 1867, the architects of the Meiji coup declared a restoration of the ancient ministry of Jingi, that is, *kami* ritual. “Restoring” the ancient ways of the *kami* involved firing the hereditary ritual specialists of the Yoshida and Shirakawa households and replacing them with samurai mostly from Tsuwano domain, who had little ritual training among them.¹³ In the subsequent Meiji restoration, the noble cause of Shinto restoration, largely prosecuted by samurai with no Shinto background and competing Kokugaku theories, quickly faltered. We already covered in Chapter Two the switch from the *senkyōshi* program to the *kyōdōshoku* system in 1872. The *kyōdōshoku* system itself steadily declined in scope, with both Buddhist and Shinto groups departing before it was finally privatized in 1884.

Scholars have provided several reasons for this decline. Helen Hardacre, describing the *kyōdōshoku* system as a “Great Promulgation Campaign,” wrote that it was “lacking in appeal and popular allegiance” and emphasized theological disagreements.¹⁴ Trent Maxey has drawn attention to the more specific problem that the association of Shinto with religious belief implied the possibility of legally permitting disbelief in the authority of the emperor, which was the most serious issue for Meiji regulators.¹⁵ Zhong Yijiang similarly concludes that the supporters of Hirata Atsutane’s Kokugaku, who had spearheaded the campaign, came to

¹³ Hardacre, *Shinto*, 351, 359.

¹⁴ Hardacre, *Shintō and the State*, 50–1, and *Shinto*, 378–9.

¹⁵ Maxey, “Greatest Problem,” 20–54.

resemble a religious sect too closely for the liking of Meiji administrators.¹⁶ Without denying these factors, in this chapter and in Chapter Five, I will offer a possible additional explanation: the organizations attempting to establish a Shinto national church were rife with financial mismanagement, rendering them especially unappealing to those who knew them well.

These new organizations were seeking to duplicate the established Buddhist sects' impressive network of temple buildings, but without the centuries of history or broad base of donors that had built up such institutions. In Chapter Two, we saw how Shishino Nakaba sank Fusōkyō (then Fuji Issan Kōsha) into thousands of yen of unsecured debt to obtain land for its central church in 1874 and then, mere days later, was appointed accountant of the Daikyōin. We also saw how he was investigated by police on suspicion of embezzling donations from the Fuji *oshi*, although he was eventually cleared.¹⁷ Shishino later became accountant of the Daikyōin's successor organization Shintō Jimukyoku. As Zhong Yijiang observes, this group was constantly struggling to fund its large staff inherited from the Daikyōin, relying on Ise Jingū and on largely unanswered petitions for government support.¹⁸ A major quest for Shishino was extracting Fusōkyō from the weight of Shintō Jimukyoku's bureaucracy. Branch churches of Fusōkyō-Maruyama were required to financially support local Shintō Jimukyoku branches, which did no missionary work or preaching and (at least in Shishino's opinion) were mere

¹⁶ Zhong, *Origin of Modern Shinto*, 199.

¹⁷ Fukuda, *Kyōsōden*, 60–62.

¹⁸ Zhong, *Origin of Modern Shinto*, 178–9, 188–190. (Compare to Hardacre, *Shinto*, 379.)

parasitical middlemen. Shishino pulled strings with old Satsuma allies to free Fusōkyō-Maruyama from this requirement in 1880.¹⁹

Especially noteworthy here is that local Shintō Jimukyoku branches opposed making a full accounting of expenses widely available, since it would expose their (lack of) activities.²⁰ These ex-samurai bureaucrats generally had no hereditary connection to shrines and had only become “Shinto staff” in the 1870s. One could argue that Shintō Jimukyoku served as a replacement for their samurai stipends which had been abolished in 1873. Fusōkyō-Maruyama leadership must have been delighted to be liberated from this dead weight in 1880, and even more when they obtained full independence from Shintō Jimukyoku in 1882, but financial troubles were now about to tear the group apart and return the Maruyama movement to Shintō Jimukyoku control.

The mysterious 10,000-yen affair and the Great Missionary Tour, 1879–1883

It seems that already by 1878, Shishino’s use of Maruyama *kō* donations for big spending on real estate and missionary tours (*junkyō*) had become a matter of concern, separate from the above issues with Shintō Jimukyoku. By February 1879, Rokurōbei had accumulated a mutual aid fund of 10,000 yen, which he announced to Shishino that he was depositing in a bank to assist the needs of Fusōkyō-Maruyama members “in the event of fire, flood, illness, or other calamities.” It is

¹⁹ Nagata, “Fusō Kyōkai.”

²⁰ Nagata, “Fusō Kyōkai,” 190.

revealing that this emergency fund was not managed by Shishino himself but was deposited in escrow by Rokurōbei and his loyal assistant Urushibara Yūjirō, with Fusōkyō staff to be paid from the interest alone. In the manuscript announcing the creation of the fund, Urushibara is surprisingly described as the vice president of Fusōkyō.²¹ Evidently, from an early stage, Shishino integrated the Maruyama *kō* into the highest levels of Fusōkyō administration.

10,000 yen in 1879 would have the purchasing power of about 32 million USD in 2026, although it is hard to render these figures with precision.²² This mutual aid fund is completely absent from the recollections of leaders on either side of the later dispute and is described only in a single manuscript source, which the author located in a private archive deposited with a municipal history department by descendants of a regional Maruyama minister. The financial agreement signed in 1886 after the Maruyama movement broke away from Fusōkyō is silent about this fund, which indicates that it no longer existed by that time.²³ When we see the large, round figure of 10,000 yen appear again and again in increasingly dire contexts in subsequent years, it becomes evident the mutual aid fund was one hidden motivation behind Shishino's and Rokurōbei's actions in these years.

As the Maruyama movement developed, Rokurōbei was slowly promoted within Fusōkyō's hierarchy and the national *kyōdōshoku* licensure system as he

²¹ Itō Rokurōbei and Urushibara Rokuzaemon, “Fusō Kyōkai shachū fuki tsuke hōhō” 扶桑教会社中扶寄附方法, February 1879, Takahashi Family Papers, Zama City Board of Education.

²² This is according to the inflation calculator on English Wikipedia (accessed March 31, 2026), which makes reference to Williamson, “Real Wages” for nineteenth-century figures.

²³ Shirosaki, “Sono 23.”

collaborated with Shishino on various public ceremonies and administrative issues. In 1880 Rokurōbei was named Fusōkyō's Vice-Chief of Doctrinal Affairs (*fuku kyōmuchō*) and in 1881 he was promoted to the *kyōdōshoku* rank of *gon-chūkōgi*, roughly one-third of the way up the government hierarchy.²⁴ In July 1881, as he summited Fuji where the word KŪTŌ 九十 was revealed to him (it is said to explain the kanji *maru* 丸 in Maruyama 丸山), Rokurōbei was also being granted permission by Kanagawa Prefecture to build a Maruyama headquarters at his home in Noborito, although it does not seem that this was considered a “church” (*kyōkaijo*) at the time.²⁵

Meanwhile, Shishino Nakaba was running into more and more trouble balancing budgets, despite being chief accountant of Shintō Jimukyoku. In nineteenth-century Japan, debts were required to be repaid by the end of the year. On December 28, 1879, Shishino was forced by his Maruyama-aligned creditor Saitō Fukutarō to refinance his debts; on the night of December 31, 1880, he rushed to Shintō Jimukyoku headquarters to resolve unpaid construction bills.²⁶ It seems Shishino was unable to make the last-minute repayment for Fusōkyō's new headquarters in December 1881, so that in January 1882 his credit was ruined.

According to Shishino's posthumous hagiographer Ozawa Hikochi, on January 29, 1882, Rokurōbei visited Fusōkyō headquarters in Tokyo and pledged to

²⁴ Shirotsuki, “Sono 2” and “Sono 3.”

²⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 321–2, and “Shōzen,” 6n3. Yuri does not seem to notice that the word *kyōkai* is missing from this document.

²⁶ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 172–3.

resolve Shishino's money troubles. Hikochi dubiously claims that Rokurōbei accomplished this by requesting 10,000 yen from the Shizuoka-area Maruyama *kō*, which was purportedly received on March 2 with the assistance of one Ozawa Gonzaemon (no relation to Hikochi), who owned a Fusōkyō church in the southern end of Kanagawa Prefecture.²⁷ It is unclear whether Gonzaemon had any involvement in the Maruyama *kō* before this,²⁸ but perhaps from this period onward, Gonzaemon is described as having financial control over the Shizuoka-area Maruyama *kō*.²⁹ Hikochi's description of this arrangement may be suspected of skipping over some details. We lack other sources on the origins of this impressive and speedy donation from a distant branch of the *kō*, which matched exactly the amount of Rokurōbei's mutual aid fund.³⁰ One possible explanation is that Gonzaemon was a moneylender and arranged some kind of loan with the mutual aid fund as collateral.

Shizuoka by this time had become a major branch of the Maruyama movement. The first informal Maruyama *kō* in Shizuoka Prefecture was established in 1879–80 as a collaboration between several women and men with contacts in Yokohama.³¹ In March 1882, a *Shizuoka shinbun* journalist was dispatched to a

²⁷ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 103–4. There is no mention of this in Maruyamakyō sources.

²⁸ In 1882, Rokurōbei was fundraising for him: Shirosaki, “Sono 9.” But does this mean he was a Maruyama believer, or was he just a key person in the Fusōkyō power structure?

²⁹ Yuri, “Shōzen,” 7n7.

³⁰ A full century later, Sasaki Chiyomatsu (*Minshū shūkyō*, 226) would claim that sometime in 1882, Rokurōbei loaded “about 50,000 yen” “onto a wooden wagon” and sent it to Shishino to build Fusōkyō's main hall. It is hard to believe such an outrageous sum would have gone unremarked by Ozawa Hikochi or other period sources. This must be a third-hand exaggeration of something like the situation Ozawa describes where 10,000 yen was raised in a peculiar way.

³¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 338–9n9, 339n11.

house near Sunpu Castle. The reporter skeptically observed a self-appointed healer wave a fan over the ill while chanting “KŪTŌ-ANZEI” and “Maruyama-sama.”³² Rokurōbei frequently changed the words he used in healing rituals, and KŪTŌ-ANZEI, a mantra apparently meaning world peace and unity through countless revelations, was an innovation announced just that month.³³ News of Rokurōbei’s revelations was traveling fast, even if he could not visit himself. *Shizuoka shinbun* continued to publish articles criticizing the “strange” Maruyama *kō* as its healers steadfastly fought the cholera epidemic throughout 1882.

Although Tokugawa period Japan is generically depicted as a society where local people were expected to maintain relationships with Buddhist temples in the *danka* system, not all regions were pleased with the institutional power of Buddhism. A prison chaplain noted in 1883 that many people in the Hamamatsu area of Shizuoka had never been on good terms with traditional religious institutions, whether Buddhist or Shinto, and that its inhabitants were eager to embrace a new teaching.³⁴ One Hamamatsu area member recalls, “We did not like the cash-centric way of our temples and wondered when we would quit them. We listened to and interrogated Christianity and Maruyamakyō which had arisen at that time, and in the end we joined Maruyamakyō on New Year's Day in my 15th year” (1881 or 1882).³⁵

³² “Kimyō na ōgi” 奇妙な扇, *Shizuoka shinbun*, April 11, 1882.

³³ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 327–8.

³⁴ Harada, *Meiji zenki*, vol. 2, 351.

³⁵ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 134.

Following the resolution of its debts, in May 1882 Fusōkyō was finally able to gain legal independence from its parent group Shintō Jimukyoku. Rokurōbei was promoted to “counselor” (*sangen*) of the new Fusōkyō organization, apparently its second highest ranking.³⁶ Only at this point did Rokurōbei become able to visit Shizuoka in person. He did so in November 1882, accompanied by Shishino on a “great missionary tour,” and as Rokurōbei’s hagiographer admits, “one of the motives” of the expedition was pecuniary, allegedly funding new buildings for both Fusōkyō and Maruyama headquarters.³⁷ The exact amount that was donated on this tour is unclear, but we have one example: a Shizuoka City innkeeper, who had previously been written up in the *Yomiuri shinbun* for subjecting his guests to intense proselytizing,³⁸ spent 2,200 yen, reportedly to commission a print distributed at one of several public ceremonies.³⁹

Another motive for the tour was a competition for dominance between the Maruyama *kō* and Shishino’s backers among the old Yoshida *oshi*. Shishino had conducted many of these missionary tours alone, but by 1882 it would have become obvious that his approach inspired none of the enthusiasm of Rokurōbei’s revelations. Now that they were in the mission field together, top functionaries of both sides insisted on accompanying the two men, which caused great expenditures on horses, palanquins, inns, and food. When Rokurōbei refused to be carried in a

³⁶ Shirosaki, “Sono 3.”

³⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 329. Either Ozawa Hikochi or his postwar editor (Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*) conspicuously omitted the Shizuoka joint tour from his detailed day-by-day account of Shishino’s activities; it leaves a large blank in his timeline for 1882.

³⁸ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 83. I could not locate the *Yomiuri* article.

³⁹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 338n5. I could not locate any copies of this print.

palanquin hoisted by a thousand eager believers in Numazu, Shishino made a point of also refusing; in the end, they both took palanquins.⁴⁰ Upon arrival in Shizuoka City, they were both treated to a formal dinner with the governor. At another formal dinner hosted by a shrine priest in Numazu, an altercation broke out between the two sides, the details of which are lost to history. The following morning, Shishino claimed he was urgently needed in Tokyo and left Rokurōbei to complete the tour alone. Something about the tour had become inconvenient to Shishino.⁴¹

From the perspective of Shizuoka area Maruyama *kō* members, the “great missionary tour” was a glorious celebration. Rows of believers followed Rokurōbei through the streets carrying vertical banners proclaiming *tenka-taihei*, the arrival of peace and justice on earth (Figure 5).⁴² Decades later, one believer wrote, “I was eight years old at the time and carried a *tenka-taihei* banner for four *ri* with my

⁴⁰ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 331.

⁴¹ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 332–3. We find no explanation for the fight or the “urgent business” in Fusōkyō sources. It is very interesting that although Yuri had knowledge of the fight, no one in the 1940s/50s could tell him what it was about. There are several mundane things they could have fought over, but how could the story have been so selectively preserved? For instance, could Urushibara and Saitō have learned that they had been deceived into surrendering the mutual aid fund as collateral, and had to keep this quiet because Rokurōbei himself had been part of the agreement? Did Shishino leave because he was implicated?

⁴² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 330; Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 187.

grandfather, until I got tired at Okitsu [east of Shizuoka City]. I remember they put me in the back of a cart with the banners and I rode back to Shizuoka. I also remember there was a purification with a *taiwa* wand in the presence of Gokaisan-sama [Rokurōbei] in front of Sengen Shrine, and rows and rows of believers took turns coming to the front and bowing their heads.”⁴³ We do not have data for growth of the Shizuoka-area Maruyama *kō* in 1883, but it is hard to imagine that such a public spectacle had no benefits.

Within Fusōkyō, though, the joint tour seems to have exposed the reality that something was amiss in their finances. On February 28, 1883, Urushibara Yūjirō and Saitō Fukutarō, the owners of two Maruyama-aligned churches, demanded that Shishino fire top Fusōkyō staff and replace them with Maruyama-aligned employees. Again, the exact details of this financial issue are concealed from us in extant sources. Shishino’s loyal biographer Ozawa Hikochi explains that this demand emerged from an “accounting matter” and admits that “the Maruyama churches ... contributed financially to [Fusōkyō] headquarters. While that service can be fully acknowledged, the use of it as an excuse for arbitrary behavior is not to



Figure 5: Emaki depicting Great Missionary Tour in Shizuoka. Reprinted in Kami no hikari, April-May 2025.

⁴³ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 18.

be admired.”⁴⁴ Perhaps Urushibara and Saitō had learned something in Shizuoka about the unusually rapid 10,000-yen donation. Also during this winter, on January 5, Hikochi had convened an emergency meeting with his ally Takazaki Ichizō and the Shizuoka financial controller Ozawa Gonzaemon on how to fundraise even more. Absent from this meeting were Rokurōbei, his allies Urushibara and Saitō, and, notably, Shishino. Traveling from Shizuoka to Tokyo for this purpose, however, was a previously unknown figure named Nishigaya Heijirō.⁴⁵

This catalog of historical minutiae has been necessary to help us understand the two grand dramas that unfolded simultaneously in the Maruyama movement after this point. First, in Tokyo, Urushibara and Saitō conceived a coup against Shishino over financial mismanagement, which Hikochi judged serious enough that he organized a response team of his own. Shishino, apparently cornered, announced his resignation from Fusōkyō and a meeting of all churches was called. It was agreed at this meeting that Shishino would temporarily keep his seat and that his infant son would inherit it after his death. After this agreement was completed, 10,000 yen was returned to Rokurōbei. However, on the conspicuous date of December 31, 1883, the Shizuoka Maruyama *kō* again sent 10,000 yen to Fusōkyō, this time labeled as a donation to build a new worship hall.⁴⁶ The battle for control of finances and power between the Maruyama-aligned churches and Fusōkyō would

⁴⁴ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 109. No extant Maruyamakyō source mentions this incident; Urushibara and Saitō departed the movement circa 1893–4, before most sources were written.

⁴⁵ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 107. No extant Maruyamakyō source mentions this incident. Ozawa departed the movement in 1885; Nishigaya disappears from records around 1893–4.

⁴⁶ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 112–121, 125 (giving the date as December 2, 1883), 179 (giving it as December 31, 1883). No extant Maruyamakyō source mentions this incident.

only intensify in 1884 and 1885. At the end of this period, Fusōkyō's new worship hall had been mortgaged, and it was again somehow in nearly 10,000 yen of debt.⁴⁷

But this was all just one drama. Meanwhile, in Shizuoka, trouble was brewing as Nishigaya Heijirō took a leadership role in the *kō*. At some point, Nishigaya broke away from Ozawa Gonzaemon's *Mishiye* Division and started his own *Mi* Division.⁴⁸ From August 1883 to December 1884, Nishigaya sent 24,047 yen from Shizuoka to various Fusōkyō-Maruyama churches.⁴⁹ Police received reports of erratic behavior in *Mi* Division and sent in spies. By February 1884, they had confirmed the circulation of apocalyptic prophecies and extraordinary ideas, as documented above.⁵⁰ In the postwar period, Maruyama insiders blamed the *Mi* Division Incident entirely on Nishigaya, who first appears in the written record at the January 1883 fundraiser meeting with the two Ozawas. Maruyamakyō staff member Taima Seishi wrote in 1958 that although Nishigaya had begun as Gonzaemon's accomplice, Urushibara and Saitō "manipulated" him, and he became responsible for "half" of the doctrines spread in the Shizuoka region.⁵¹

These accusations come from interested parties. Gonzaemon, Nishigaya, Urushibara, and Saitō, all of whom left the Maruyama movement by 1894, are retroactively accused of skullduggery unrelated to the main purpose of the

⁴⁷ Takahashi, "Fusōkyō," 1019.

⁴⁸ Later sources are helplessly confused on when this occurred, and the answer is probably in the Maruyamakyō archive which is closed since 2023.

⁴⁹ Taima, "Maruyama kyōdan," 20n37.

⁵⁰ Suzuki Masayuki, "Kindai minshū shisō," 18.

⁵¹ Taima, "Maruyama kyōdan," 20n37.

Maruyama movement, but the reader can see from the above account that church leaders did not contract Nishigaya out of simple cupidity. His fundraising mission was closely tied to a major dispute over control and finances, tied inextricably to the future of the movement. Furthermore, one man's words are not sufficient to make thousands believe extraordinary things. Our first task for the rest of this chapter will be to contextualize *Mi* Division. We have already seen that it was very different from the Maruyama movement encountered in Chapter Three. What made the Shizuoka-area Maruyama *kō* welcome these ideas?

Our second task will be to analyze Rokurōbei's response to these dramas. First, we will see how rapid developments within Fusōkyō-Maruyama in 1884 add context to the events in Shizuoka. Then we will examine how Rokurōbei addressed both the dispute and the *Mi* Division Incident in his sermons, in which he communicated a major 1884 revelation called TENMEI-KAITEN. The unveiling of TENMEI-KAITEN is extremely informative, and yet there are good reasons why the present-day organization Maruyamakyō has displaced Rokurōbei's original words. The resolution of the Maruyama movement's structural problems will be handled in the following chapter.

Causes of the *Mi* Division Incident, 1884

This section discusses direct and indirect factors which contributed to the *Mi* Division Incident. First, we will briefly consider the material conditions, namely the

“Matsukata deflation” which is universally associated with the Debtors’ Parties and the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement, as well as conscription. We will also analyze the changes to moral economy which Shizuoka’s farmers encountered as they sought relief from these new challenges. Next, we will look at influences from the older traditions of the Fuji *kō* and the newer belief in Shinto as the foundation of the country. Finally, we will discuss the specific contributions of Fusōkyō-Maruyama itself.

In October 1881, Satsuma native Matsukata Masayoshi was appointed Japan’s finance minister and enacted a policy of deflation to prevent the country from falling into foreign debt. This, combined with the popping of a rice speculation bubble in that year, erased most farming profits from 1882 to 1884. 1884 saw collapses in the price of silk, an especially common product in Shizuoka and Kanagawa, as well as rice.⁵² Neil Waters observes: “In 1883–1884, 44 percent of all cultivated rice fields in Japan were mortgaged to raise cash, and 40 percent of these were sold at public auction.”⁵³ The spread of liberal ideas among middle class farmers in 1884, and the simultaneous outbreak of violent uprisings among the indebted lower classes, is often attributed to this poor economic situation. It is to be noted, however, that although many farmers went into debt, the distribution of free rice through prudent relief programs prevented humanitarian catastrophe following a poor harvest in fall 1884, just as Jikigyō had demanded in an era long past.⁵⁴

⁵² Ericson, “Matsukata Deflation.”

⁵³ Waters, *Local Pragmatists*, 105.

⁵⁴ Ericson, “Matsukata Deflation.”

On one level, the young Meiji regime was both avoiding bankruptcy and intervening against famine. Recent studies have regarded the “Matsukata deflation” as a success in macroeconomic policy and even as a “model” for modern fiscal crisis.⁵⁵ On another level, though, some impoverished farmers felt that the new regime could no longer hear their voices. In the Tokugawa period, peasant petitions to local magistrates had been considered an important tool available within the feudal system, and period values portrayed peasant uprising as a manifestation of failed economic policy. The Meiji Restoration disrupted this traditional understanding: an 1869 peasant petition for relief from land taxes landed the petitioners in prison.⁵⁶ Although the feudal system was replete with injustice, it was constitutionally based in an ideal of responsibility of superiors towards inferiors, which was replaced under the Meiji system with an absolute right of property which sapped the power of small indebted and tenant farmers.⁵⁷

In Kanagawa’s Kawasaki region, including Noborito, wealthy landlords called *gōnō* collaborated in 1884 to maintain the traditional *noblesse oblige*. Rents were voluntarily reduced to prevent unrest, and the local Liberal Party (Jiyūtō) dispatched arbitrators to prevent foreclosure.⁵⁸ In Shizuoka, by contrast, many of the *gōnō* themselves filed for bankruptcy.⁵⁹ Where feudal-style *gōnō* relations had deteriorated, property was now owned by corporate banks with a stricter view of

⁵⁵ Ericson, *Financial Stabilization*, 141.

⁵⁶ Yamasaki, “Shogunal Benevolence,” 278 and *passim*.

⁵⁷ Yasumaru, “Konmintō,” 338.

⁵⁸ Waters, *Local Pragmatists*, 105–6.

⁵⁹ Haraguchi, *Meiji zenki*, vol. 2, 253.

law and property relations. In places like Hachiōji and Ashigarashimo, just a few hours from Kawasaki, banks proved uninterested in loan forgiveness, leading to petitions and multiple violent confrontations. These disturbances have been described as Busō Konmintō, meaning roughly the Poor People's Parties of Tokyo and Kanagawa, although they were initially separate incidents; the actual organization Busō Konmintō existed only from November 1884 to January 1885 and made a single, failed attack on the Kanagawa Prefecture office.⁶⁰

Scholars Yasumaru Yoshio and Tsurumaki Takao described the Busō Konmintō as pleading for the return of a premodern “moral economy,” invoking E. P. Thompson's analysis of early modern English peasant uprisings.⁶¹ Rather than mere “rebellions of the belly,” these 1884 uprisings were articulations of a specific value system which farmers felt the new government was unfairly neglecting, specifically the belief that the rich had a duty to aid the poor in times of hardship. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Itō Rokurōbei's own response when he witnessed the hardships of non-samurai was to sanctify the role of farmers in food production, consistent with Fuji *kō* tradition and popular moral economy.⁶²

Meanwhile, in December 1883, the Japanese army eliminated exemptions from its conscription system, which had many loopholes well-known to farmers. In 1884, under the old system, 58% of Japanese men claimed exemptions; in 1885, only

⁶⁰ Waters, *Local Pragmatists*, 106–8.

⁶¹ Yasumaru, “Konmintō,” 335; Tsurumaki, *Kindaika*, 32, 46n14.

⁶² Yasumaru, *Minshū shisō*, 127.

35% were able to take deferments.⁶³ Conscription was also an insult to moral economy. In Tokugawa times, the farmers had paid deference and taxes to the samurai class, and in return, the samurai were supposed to risk their lives for their lords and domains. Now the farmers were asked to risk their lives as well. Not only did conscription take strong young men away from the fields during harvest time, but army training in Japan was sadistic: “A minute blemish on a rifle or bayonet, a button askew, shoes not polished spic and span were causes for physical beatings.”⁶⁴ In Shizuoka Prefecture, crowds of military-age men traveled to the Buddhist temple Okuyama Hansōbō in the mountains northwest of Hamamatsu to pray for deferments. Fervent prayers were also reported in Shimizu City.⁶⁵

In times of distress, people often turned to their *kō* for support, and the Fuji *kō* in particular had a tradition of calling on “the rulers of Japan to fulfill their anointed role in the establishment of a just society.”⁶⁶ As mentioned in Chapter One, this was not itself a belief in imminent apocalypse, but a broader vision of an ideal world which Jikigyō had called the “Age of Miroku.” Entering the Meiji period, several Fuji *kō* began spreading apocalyptic ideas independent of the Maruyama movement. In 1878, the *Yomiuri shinbun* accused one Fuji believer in Kajigaya village, Kanagawa Prefecture, of preaching that the world would become “an ocean of mud” and that Japan’s borders must be closed at once.⁶⁷ In 1884, a Fuji *kō* in

⁶³ Jaundrill, *Samurai to Soldier*, 164–5.

⁶⁴ Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcastes*, 60.

⁶⁵ Haraguchi, *Meiji zenki*, vol. 2, 227.

⁶⁶ Sawada, *Faith*, 146.

⁶⁷ “Kanagawa kenka Kajigaya mura...” 神奈川県下梶谷村, *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 22, 1878.

Shizuoka called Mitsuboshi *kō* grew to 800 members as its members encouraged each other to cease doing farmwork and heal illness with prayer alone.⁶⁸ In the Shizuoka Maruyama *kō*, one confirmation of cataclysm was found in the group's Fuji transmission text *Fuji nankyō*, where a poem containing the numbers 17 and 18 was interpreted as concealing a message of economic depression followed by an apocalypse in the 17th and 18th years of the Meiji era (1884–5).⁶⁹

The Shinto which the Maruyama movement had embraced also contained within it a suggestion of social upheaval. Less than two decades before 1885, the complete overthrow of Japanese social order had been achieved in the name of the “restoration of the ancient ways.” For those living through this tumultuous period, the completion of this restoration seemed like one possible hope for relief from injustice. Tsurumaki Takao cites a “Vow to Return to the Age of the Gods” movement which began in 1885. Using Kokugaku epistemology against its powerful proponents, this group, based in Tokushima Prefecture and Tokyo, asserted that the primeval “age of the gods” was a time of perfect social equality when the benevolent emperors distributed surplus freely among the people, and that inequality was a Confucian or Buddhist concept imported from foreign countries. Notably, the group rejected the traditional texts of ancient Japanese history, claiming they had been distorted by Confucian and Buddhist ideology.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Haraguchi, *Meiji zenki*, vol. 2, 346.

⁶⁹ Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 17n23.

⁷⁰ Tsurumaki, *Kindaika*, 125, 129.

Finally, we come to the unique contributions of Fusōkyō-Maruyama. Shishino Nakaba may seem like an unlikely source of religious fervor, but by declaring his group Japan's new National Teaching and endorsing the idea that Fuji *kō* concepts were being purified, he summoned up earlier beliefs about the "Age of Miroku." One biographer of Shishino wrote, "The restoration of the ancient ways through the Meiji Restoration heralded the advent of the Age of Miroku. The First Great World Teacher who was discovering and publicizing the original meaning of the Laws of Miroku was therefore Miroku himself."⁷¹ This is an unusual use of the word "Miroku" to mean an individual messiah, which is not found in Jikigyō's or Rokurōbei's lectures and writings. No other surviving sources praise Shishino in this way, but we do not really have records of how the Maruyama *kō* saw him at the time.

Finally, we must consider Rokurōbei's radically independent politics. Grounded in Jikigyō's critique of paid ritualists, Rokurōbei in his lectures depicted ancient emperors as farmers who worked in the fields rather than lounging in a palace and changed the characters for *tennō-heika* (His Majesty the Emperor) to read "heaven's farmer equal to oneself" 天農平我.⁷² Transcripts of his lectures from 1882–4 mention that the recent human emperors had "forgotten" to revere the God of Fuji and protect the nation, and that their power was now fading as they had become subservient to the West. He even blasts the "wrongful thinking of the

⁷¹ Miyata, *Miroku*, 190, citing an undated, unprovenanced manuscript biography.

⁷² Yasumaru, "Oshirabe," 544n; Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 41; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 282n6; Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 1, 11n5.

emperor” for causing Japan to follow the Western path.⁷³ Rather than a sacrosanct hereditary position, the emperor in Rokurōbei’s thought was a ritual function meant to be filled by someone capable of revering the gods and bringing about peace and justice on earth, so in the specific context of the Maruyama movement it was not unreasonable to imagine another person taking over the position.⁷⁴

It is notable, then, that in the aforementioned police report of February 1884—the earliest account of the *Mi* Division Incident—the post-apocalyptic Emperor of Japan is prophesied to be not Itō Rokurōbei, nor Nishigaya Heijirō, nor even Emperor Meiji, but either “Shishino Nakaba or Arisugawa.”⁷⁵ Shishino, being the self-appointed pontiff of his “National Teaching” under whom Rokurōbei was working, was one obvious candidate for leading the restoration of pure ancient rituals and politics. Another was Prince Arisugawa, the uncle of Emperor Meiji. Where Meiji was concerning himself with industrialization and the normalizing of trade relations, Arisugawa had led the “ancient restoration” movement since 1868. The elder prince was a close friend of both the Yoshida *oshi* and Shishino Nakaba and often presided over Shinto ceremonies.

In summary, Shinto restorationism and Fuji *kō*, the two major ideological aspects of the Maruyama movement, both had a preexisting association with world-renewal (*yonaooshi*) and socioeconomic justice, and in 1883–5, Shizuoka area farmers

⁷³ Yasumaru, *Minshū shisō*, 124; Sawada, “Mind and Morality,” 120, 136n66.

⁷⁴ While it is unusual to see these ideas spreading among non-samurai, they are not radically republican; rather, they somewhat resemble Minobe Tatsukichi’s emperor-as-organ interpretation of the 1889 Meiji Constitution.

⁷⁵ Suzuki Masayuki, “Kindai minshū,” 19.

sought relief from extraordinary economic pressure and universal male conscription, neither of which was being handled in traditional ways by the Meiji government. Fusōkyō-Maruyama's official authorization encouraged eager *kō* members to believe the promise of the Age of Miroku was now being realized. Finally, Rokurōbei saw the emperor as a ritual servant of God and the nation rather than a hereditary monarch, which enabled uniquely radical ideas of how Japan might be purified in an era of unpredictable change.

Well before the *Mi* Division Incident began, Maruyama *kō* members had become so delighted in the realization of the Age of Miroku that some of them had failed to attend to quotidian business. In November 1882, on Shishino's orders, Rokurōbei had to warn the Maruyama *kō* not to neglect their farmwork or other occupations.⁷⁶ This is especially interesting because Rokurōbei was constantly praising hard work and the sanctity of farmers in his lectures. This warning shows that the Maruyama *kō* was kindling enthusiasm for the manifestation of the Age of Miroku beyond what Rokurōbei could handle. In the Tokyo-Kanagawa area there were many Fusōkyō-Maruyama leaders who could calm this enthusiasm, including Rokurōbei himself. Perhaps in far-off Shizuoka, it only needed a spark to burst into a flame—for instance, a certain Nishigaya Heijirō being informed that Fusōkyō-Maruyama was in dire need of funds.

⁷⁶ “Gokyōhō” 御教法, 19 November 1882, manuscript, collection of Maruyamakyō honcho, photocopy in Kanagawa Prefectural Archives.

In postwar writings by two national Maruyama leaders and three former leaders, Nishigaya is universally blamed for the *Mi* Division Incident.⁷⁷ Nishigaya is a poorly documented character. With the background that he was contracted by Fusōkyō leaders, it is easy to imagine that he conceived of novel teachings as a nefarious scheme to raise money, but the rare descriptions of him depict him as a genuine, even fanatical believer in Rokurōbei's salvation mission. Motoki Fukuharu, later a Shizuoka-area leader, recorded that Nishigaya had developed his own interpretations of Rokurōbei's mantras and writings.⁷⁸ Itō Kuniyoshi, Rokurōbei's son-in-law and the second leader of Maruyamakyō, wrote in his diary that after the *Mi* Division Incident died down, Nishigaya came to Kuniyoshi's home and asked permission to start preaching apocalypse again, and that he proved frustratingly hard to talk down.⁷⁹ Taima Seishi, a postwar Maruyamakyō staffer, wrote that Nishigaya died a pauper, most likely still believing in imminent apocalypse.⁸⁰ Lacking better sourcing, Nishigaya's *modus operandi* is ultimately unknowable, but there is something to be said about how and why he convinced farmers to abandon and sell their fields.

⁷⁷ Taima, "Maruyama kyōdan," 20n37; Motoki, "Kikigaki"; Shirosaki, "Sono 18"; Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*, 216–7; Itō-sei, "Fushigi," 8.

⁷⁸ Motoki, "Kikigaki."

⁷⁹ Itō-sei, "Fushigi," 8.

⁸⁰ Taima, "Maruyama kyōdan," 20n37.

A core issue: monetary sacrifice in Japanese new religions

Perhaps the most important difference between the Maruyama beliefs and practices we outlined in Chapter Three and those associated with the *Mi* Division Incident is the type of monetary sacrifice being demanded. The Tokyo-Kanagawa area Maruyama *kō* members had supported their parent organization Fusōkyō with large donations, but 1884 Shizuoka area newspaper reports attest to believers selling off their land or breaking their leases out of a belief in imminent apocalypse. Motoki Fukuharu even remembered these donations being described as a “war fund” for some imminent battle to control Japan.⁸¹ These incidents sound exploitative, but as above, the larger context of the economic situation in Shizuoka and Japanese new religious movements complicates the picture considerably.

In 1896, Tenrikyō, a much larger new religious movement, was also accused of “the extortion of members through excessive, compulsory donations” by police authorities intending to outlaw it.⁸² Large contributions were, in fact, common in early Tenrikyō, and could lead members to financial ruin. Believers themselves made light of the life-altering contributions they were socially pressured to make, changing the daily prayer of “clear the dust from our hearts and save us, Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto” (*Ashiki o harōte tasuketamae*) to “clear away our homes and sell our paddies” (*Yashiki o harōte ta-uri tamae*).⁸³ Roy Forbes writes that while outsiders could only see massive donations as “irrational,” believers were following foundress

⁸¹ Motoki, “Kikigaki.”

⁸² Forbes, “Schism,” 86.

⁸³ Plath, afterword to *Sensei*, 181.

Nakayama “Miki’s example of self-inflicted poverty.”⁸⁴ This suggests that widely held rural values, rather than the specific teachings of one group, may have encouraged large donations.

Researcher Suzuki Masayuki has analyzed the economics of one Maruyama community in Shizuoka during the 1880s.⁸⁵ Using period membership documents and land records, he was able to find that both Maruyama believers and non-believers lost much of their land between 1881 and 1888, due to the poor economic climate and the lack of spare capital to protect against bad harvests. The main difference between the Maruyama and the non-Maruyama farmers is that the Maruyama farmers did not participate in the founding of a community bank, which in any case failed in 1887. Furthermore, the three wealthiest Maruyama-aligned families held onto their property through the bad times and became even wealthier.⁸⁶

In tough economic times, there were multiple ways for farming households to demonstrate their commitment to the community and to larger ideals, such as founding a cooperative bank to build local capital, or donating one’s wealth to an organization that promised peace and justice (*tenka-taihei*) through purification of the Japanese spirit. As David Plath once wrote, the latter kind of “conspicuous contribution” was as much a feature of Japanese peasant life as conspicuous

⁸⁴ Forbes, “Schism,” 88.

⁸⁵ Present-day Toyoda village in Iwata City.

⁸⁶ Suzuki Masayuki, “Kindai minshū,” 21–25.

consumption was to Veblen's leisure class.⁸⁷ Such contributions may not have been economically productive and were certainly criticized as a "delusion" opposed to "civilized" ideas of building financial power. But this does not mean that members were uniquely imperiled by their bad economic decisions. On the contrary, the expression of trust in and commitment to the Maruyama movement could have served a need for community.

Perhaps such a devoted community was capable even of transforming basic concepts of property. James C. Scott writes: "Community of property is perhaps the major economic theme in the millenarian tradition."⁸⁸ Tokyo area newspapers seized on the suggestion that such sentiment was at work in Shizuoka. The liberal newspaper *Jiyū shinbun* reported in December 1884 that the Maruyama movement taught "equality of property."⁸⁹ Another Tokyo newspaper, *Chōya shinbun*, informed readers that *kō* members were eating rice broth communally, and that Rokurōbei "teaches that the heavenly deity has no preference among men, but desires to bless everyone equally and uniformly, so that it is not the desire of the deity that rich and poor should exist, a teaching rather like that of the Socialists."⁹⁰ More than a decade later, the Tokyo magazine *Taiyō* was still warning readers that "the Maruyama Church once called for Socialism and caused great commotion in one region."⁹¹

⁸⁷ Plath, afterword to *Sensei*, 180.

⁸⁸ Scott, *Subaltern*, 79.

⁸⁹ Oku, *Bunmei kaika*, 69.

⁹⁰ "Sakigoro, Enshū Fuchi-gun..." 先頃、遠州敷知郡, *Chōya shinbun*, December 13, 1884, excerpted in Shizuoka-ken, *Shizuoka kenshi shiryōhen*, vol. 17, 751.

⁹¹ "Kyōkai zasso" 教界雑俎, *Taiyō*, October 1896, 210–11.

This appears to be just a rumor, as neither Maruyama members nor local Shizuoka journalists recorded any teaching or praxis of communal property. Furthermore, there is no evidence to connect Maruyama *kō* to anti-state uprisings. In May 1884, when liberal radicals attempted to organize an armed uprising in a Maruyama-heavy area of Nagano Prefecture, investigators found no link between the conspirators and the Maruyama *kō*.⁹² Suzuki Masayuki found no meaningful overlap between leadership of the Shizuoka Debtor's Party and the local Maruyama movement.⁹³ If the *Mi* Division truly believed that the non-believers were about to be exterminated by waves of disease and that *kō* members would be saved through prayer alone, it makes sense that they would not engage in proactive political activity or communal self-organizing. But the rumors of ties to the Debtor's Party were severe enough that Noborito leadership were summoned to Shizuoka to answer to them.⁹⁴ What did these leaders think of all this?

Fusōkyō-Maruyama after the death of Shishino, 1884

In Maruyamakyō's internal history, the *Mi* Division Incident is seen as something that Noborito leaders were forced to refute by traveling to Shizuoka many times and trying to inform *kō* members of the "correct" teachings. But in some of his surviving lectures from 1884, Rokurōbei responds to Shizuoka's Maruyama boom in a much more positive tone. In one manuscript dated to November 1884,

⁹² Yasuhara, "Ikezawa Heikichi," 122.

⁹³ Suzuki Masayuki, "Kindai minshū," 26–7.

⁹⁴ Suzuki Masayuki, "Kindai minshū," 30.

Rokurōbei makes an inscrutable comparison between the stages of the Maruyama movement and the “four moltings” of the silkworm, and then remarks:

They say the four moltings cannot be hindered. Starting from Musashi and Sagamihara [i.e. Kanagawa and Tokyo], now we are growing in Shizuoka, and we rely on the government as we bring the Treasured Transmission (*gohōden*) to every country/region. [...] The six seas will be bound together.⁹⁵

As for Nishigaya, who was allegedly behind the incident, in April 1884 Maruyama leaders brought him to Tokyo to be licensed as a lecturer in the government *kyōdōshoku* system. He stayed at the official dormitory for Maruyama staff, and on paper at least, Rokurōbei himself is recorded as recommending Nishigaya’s licensure to the Tokyo government.⁹⁶ All this happened after the aforementioned February 1884 police report about the Shizuoka area prophecy of a coming apocalypse and the crowning of a new emperor. So, throughout 1884, Rokurōbei seems to have had a somewhat positive view on what was happening in Shizuoka.

What did Shishino think of this? He was likely unaware, because by April 1884 he was on his deathbed. Since winter 1883, he had reportedly been afflicted by severe hemorrhoids. His follower Ozawa Hikochi, a Yoshida *oshi*, bitterly claimed that Maruyama leaders Urushibara Yūjirō and Saitō Fukutarō had somehow forced

⁹⁵ “Gokaisan no sekki” 御開山之説記, manuscript, November 1884, archives of Maruyamakyō honcho, photocopy at Kanagawa Prefectural Archives.

⁹⁶ “Itō Rokurōbei hoka 7-nin yori Nishigaya Heijirō hoka shiho saiyō ni tsuki shōkai ni tsuki kaitō,” July 1884, Tokyo Metropolitan Archives. It appears to me that Rokurōbei’s signed recommendation is missing from this file or has been covertly replaced with an unrelated document. I have not studied other documents from this archive so am not sure if this is due to poor archival conditions.

Shishino to abstain from medical treatment and try to cure his illness with talismans and prayers. When Hikochi called a doctor weeks later, he wrote, it was already too late.⁹⁷ Hemorrhoids are not deadly, so Shishino may have had colorectal cancer, which was hardly treatable in 1883. In any case, he was bedridden for months, attended by many Fusōkyō, Maruyama, and Shinto notables including Itō Kuniyoshi, Urushibara Shika, and Prince Arisugawa, and finally died in May 1884 at the premature age of 39.⁹⁸ In honor of Shishino's service to the nation, Emperor Meiji gifted 50 yen to his bereaved family.⁹⁹ Despite the solemn occasion and the earlier agreement between the Maruyama and Yoshida camps to endorse Shishino's young son as heir, Fusōkyō headquarters descended into chaos immediately upon his death.

Hours after Shishino's death in May, board member Takaoka Koreyoshi was banned from Fusōkyō headquarters and made to resign his position.¹⁰⁰ Shishino's widow Tsuyako demanded to be recognized as the new leader of Fusōkyō, although this ran against the Yoshida-Maruyama agreement.¹⁰¹ The following month, Fusōkyō's leading intellectual, Aoikawa Nobuchika (who was not a member of either camp), quit the organization and deregistered himself as a *kyōdōshoku*.¹⁰² In April 1885, the leader of Fusōkyō's Yoshida faction,¹⁰³ Takazaki Ichizō, was fired by

⁹⁷ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 124, 126.

⁹⁸ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 139.

⁹⁹ Takeda T., "Kokugakusha," 197.

¹⁰⁰ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 142.

¹⁰¹ Shirosaki, "Sono 7."

¹⁰² "Aoikawa Nobuchika gonchūkyōsei ga igan menshoku" 葵川信近権中教正が依願免職, *Yomiuri shinbun*, June 22, 1884.

¹⁰³ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 376.

four Maruyama faction leaders on the charge that he was falsely presenting himself to outsiders as Fusōkyō's new chief and embezzling funds.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, the situation in Shizuoka was fully out of control. Police started making arrests in May 1884. Two Kokugaku-educated Fusōkyō leaders traveled to Shizuoka where they assisted the police in denouncing apocalyptic prophecies before crowds. These public lectures continued throughout 1884, but enthusiasm for the Maruyama *kō* was unabated; in November, one local *kō* attacked government workers who came to break up a meeting. In December, Fusōkyō received a complaint from Shizuoka Prefecture accusing the Maruyama *kō* of collaborating with the local Debtor's Party, once again requiring three Fusōkyō leaders to travel there and pacify their followers.¹⁰⁵

In the midst of this chaos, though, was a bright spot: in late 1884, the Maruyama *kō* was permitted to donate 3,000 yen to help construct a road from Tokyo through to Yamanashi Prefecture, modernizing the pilgrimage route to Mount Fuji called the Kōshu Kaidō. This road had been planned since 1874, when Emperor Meiji struggled to climb over Mount Kobotoke as he walked the old Kōshu Kaidō post road. A ridge near the village of Chigira was chosen for excavation, but work was held up due to local disputes as well as cost.¹⁰⁶ With the assistance of the Maruyama *kō*'s donation, a new route was under way which could take Noborito

¹⁰⁴ Shirosaki, "Sono 25" and, incidentally, "Sono 8."

¹⁰⁵ Suzuki Masayuki, "Kindai minshū," 29.

¹⁰⁶ Ojima, *Kobotoke*, 44.

pilgrims on an easy walk to the foot of Mount Fuji. This road still exists as Japan National Route 20.

According to the *Yomiuri shinbun* of November 8, 1884, four men were involved in the Maruyama *kō*'s considerable donation to excavate Kobotoke Pass: Itō Rokurōbei, Urushibara Yūjirō, Saitō Fukutarō, and Ozawa Gonzaemon.¹⁰⁷ This united the leader of the *kō* with his two most loyal followers and leaders of the Maruyama-aligned churches within Fusōkyō, as well as Gonzaemon, who was at the center of the mysterious affair of the 10,000 yen. The actual money transfers were made over the course of 1885, and in June 1886, the Maruyama organization was presented with two trophies (*shōhai*), a type of national award given to civilians who provide remarkable service to the nation. The Buddhist press took note of these trophies.¹⁰⁸

This was a genuine coup for the Maruyama movement. Another Fuji-derived group named Jikkōkyō, which was much more efficiently run with a more orderly structure and regime-friendly teaching, did not receive such “official commendation” until December 1886, when it contributed 3,800 volunteers to work on the Imperial Palace.¹⁰⁹ While the acceptance of the donation and subsequent honoring of the Maruyama *kō* was remarkable enough to appear in several newspapers, Itō Rokurōbei was more surprised than anyone else by his rise in fortune after years of

¹⁰⁷ “Kaisakuchū no Kōshū kaidō Kobotoke tōge” 開作中の甲州街道小仏峠, *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 8, 1884.

¹⁰⁸ “Shintō Fusōkyō Maruyama honbu” 神道扶桑教丸山本部, *Meikyō shinshi* 2097 (October 18, 1886), 5.

¹⁰⁹ Miyazaki, “Formation,” 308; Inobe, *Fuji no shinkō*, 402.

struggle. We will now see how both the prophecies circulating in Shizuoka and the Kobotoke Pass donation became central to his understanding of how Fusōkyō-Maruyama could resolve its leadership struggle and achieve its goal of purifying Japan.

TENMEI-KAITEN, October 1884

Throughout the period 1870–1884, Itō Rokurōbei introduced several sacred chants, such as NAMU-AMITA-USU and KŪTŌ-ANZEI, as replacements for the earlier Buddhist formulae chanted by Fuji pilgrims, or for use in healing with transmission texts. Earlier Fuji *kō* chants, such as *rokkon-shōjō*, were also maintained. Today, in the 2020s, the remaining Maruyamakyō practitioners predominantly use a single chant when they are climbing Fuji or engaging in many other rituals: TENMEI-KAITEN, a formula which is said to have been first revealed in September 1884.¹¹⁰

The announcement of TENMEI-KAITEN was soon accompanied by an unusually political set of sermons.¹¹¹ This may have begun as a series of revelations delivered orally over the course of some weeks, although there are also signs that these

¹¹⁰ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 368. The date perhaps indicates the decision on a specific pronunciation. The manuscript “Gokaisan no setsu, kami no nendaiki” 御開山之説 神之年代記 (completed December 1884; archives of Maruyamakyō honcho; photocopy at Kanagawa Prefectural Archives) mentions an earlier phrase *tenmei-kaiden* 天明海伝, a reading closer to Rokurōbei’s earlier revealed phrases. Rokurōbei himself recalls using *tenmyō-kaiten* in July 1884 (Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 147), and in April 1884, “Shintō Fusō fusetsu no maki” (神道扶桑不説の巻, Emura Eiichi Collection) even has *tenmei-kaika* 天明開化.

¹¹¹ For the citations to the copies of these sermons in the following footnotes, refer to the bibliography section “TENMEI-KAITEN Sermon Manuscripts.”

sermons were written down by Rokurōbei and copied.¹¹² The first sermon is entitled simply “The Opening of TENMEI-KAITEN” (*Tenmei-kaiten no hiraki*) and is optimistic in tone. It is attested in only two witnesses.¹¹³ The second sermon is entitled “The Closing of the Secret Meaning of TENMEI-KAITEN” (*Tenmei-kaiten gokui no tsume*), or “The Great Sumo Bout Between TENMEI-KAITEN and Civilization” (*Tenmei-kaiten bunmei-kaika ōzumo torikumi*). It is apocalyptic in tone and widely distributed.¹¹⁴ It is dated to October 18, 1884.¹¹⁵ The third sermon has no title and appears in three witnesses. It is entirely symbolic in content, and the words TENMEI-KAITEN do not appear.¹¹⁶

Below, I will refer to this group of texts as the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, and the first two individual texts will be called the Opening and Closing sermons. It seems that the Opening sermon was delivered first, followed by the Closing sermon, although it is hard to say because of the peculiar way these were preserved. Despite how TENMEI-KAITEN is often presented as the core of modern Maruyama practice and a phrase of great meaning, the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons have never been published or even acknowledged by Maruyama headquarters in Noborito.¹¹⁷

¹¹² “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 99, has a large section which resembles the dictionary entries of the *Oshirabe*. If it was not handwritten by Rokurōbei himself, it is a careful forgery.

¹¹³ “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 97f; “Tenmei-kaiten F.”

¹¹⁴ All manuscripts except “Tenmei-kaiten F.”

¹¹⁵ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 253; also “Tenmei-kaiten E,” “G,” “H.”

¹¹⁶ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 259; “Tenmei-kaiten E;” “Tenmei-kaiten H.”

¹¹⁷ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 1, 4, explains that Maruyamakyō does not consider texts scripture unless the originals in Rokurōbei’s own hand still survive. There have been two printings of surviving TENMEI-KAITEN sermon manuscripts by outside scholars: “Tenmei-kaiten A” and “Tenmei-kaiten C.”

Yasumaru Yoshio indicates that some manuscripts of the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons contain warnings like “This book is not to be shown to others.”¹¹⁸ I was not able to find such a warning among the eight manuscripts I obtained, but it is consistent with the idea found in Fuji *kō* lineages that certain types of knowledge and divine formulae were not meant for the public.¹¹⁹ Early Maruyama *kō* manuscripts included “secret meanings” along Fuji *kō* lines—a brief mantra or mnemonic appended to the end of a long prose commentary.¹²⁰ The Closing sermon was the first instance where the prose itself was considered a “secret meaning.”¹²¹

The Closing sermon begins with these lines:

The true meaning of TENMEI-KAITEN 天明海天: TEN is Heaven and Earth (*tenchi*), the Emperor (*tennō*), the Hundred Bodies, the Hundred Venerables [Rokurōbei’s term for farmers]. A Person is the Body between Heaven and Earth; the character Great (大) takes the form of One Person (一人). When you bind the hair of a Great (大) it becomes the character Heaven, TEN (天). Without a doubt, the Sun (日) and Moon (月) Enlighten the Ocean (海).¹²²

As is typical for Rokurōbei’s sermons, this lecture uses both oral and written wordplay. For instance, the characters for Sun (日) and Moon (月), the two aspects of Fuji, combine to form the character “light” (明), the MEI of TENMEI-KAITEN. But here, for the first time in Rokurōbei’s extant sermons, we see a concern with the bound hair being adopted by his most loyal followers (see Chapter Three). The

¹¹⁸ Yasumaru, *Kindaika*, 122.

¹¹⁹ Sawada, *Faith*, 84–5.

¹²⁰ Mori, *Fuji nankyō kindōki*, unnumbered page.

¹²¹ There would later be others, for instance, “Gohōden oku no maki gokui,” October 1888, Emura Eiichi Collection.

¹²² “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 253; “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 100; “Tenmei-Kaiten E.”

Great Person becoming “Heaven” through binding their hair is a simple visual pun, but also refers to a phrase the Maruyama movement used to describe hair binding, literally “binding into one Heaven” (*itten ni musubu*).¹²³ The text quickly establishes a binary of bound hair, Japaneseness and Heaven on one hand, and short hair, foreignness and animality on the other. Rokurōbei warns: “Those who forget the character Heaven (天) cut their hair, imitate foreigners, sell their rice fields and put on trousers. They are like monkeys, only without the tails.”¹²⁴

The phrase TENMEI-KAITEN itself is wordplay. The obvious parallel is to *bunmei-kaika*, the ubiquitous Meiji catchphrase often translated as “civilization and enlightenment.” Where *bunmei* literally means “illumination from letters,” TENMEI means illumination from Heaven. Through this revelation, we learn that Heaven is represented by the long-haired Maruyama *kō* believer, and its “light” is the Sun and Moon, the dual god of Fuji. On top of this, TENMEI-KAITEN also alludes to the Buddhist phrase *tenmei-kaigo* 転迷開悟, meaning “turning delusion into enlightenment.”¹²⁵ We are to understand that Western civilization is a sort of delusion, which the Maruyama movement will be able to transform, not into Buddhist “enlightenment” (*go* 悟), but into Heaven (*ten* 天), apparently meaning the Maruyama *kō* itself, or at least its values and ideals.¹²⁶

¹²³ Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage,” *Shōrai-sei*, “Chōhatsu.”

¹²⁴ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 253; “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 100.

¹²⁵ Motoki, *Sengenroku*, 131.

¹²⁶ This interpretation may have taken time to congeal. It does not appear in the Opening sermon.

Much like the apocalyptic messages being disseminated in Shizuoka, the Closing sermon offers a concrete prediction of imminent destruction by the end of 1884: “We are now in the final stage of the secret meaning of Maruyama *kōsha*’s TENMEI-KAITEN. The secret meaning lasts from April through the end of December, so have faith. Things will get interesting, and it is all the Will of God ... Civilization, Buddhism, shrine priests, Christianity, Westerners, all will be overthrown.”¹²⁷ What does “overthrowing civilization” consist of exactly, and how will TENMEI-KAITEN defeat civilization, Christianity, Buddhists, and even “shrine priests?”

Grounded in Tokugawa-period sanctification of rice, central to Fuji *kō* beliefs,¹²⁸ and anticipating later valorization of the farmer as a pure wellspring of Japanese identity,¹²⁹ the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons reject the financialization of the Japanese economy. Rokurōbei writes: “Today, people say that gold is a treasure. That’s wrong. Gold and silver are earth. They come from the earth. Even with gold and silver, if you don’t have food, you can’t live. The five grains are treasure. Your fields are the origin of the treasure, and the origin is precious.”¹³⁰ The knowledge of all who have forgotten their principles and Westernized is condemned, including Buddhists and doctors.¹³¹

¹²⁷ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 258 (“through the end of December”); “Tenmei-kaiten B” (“through the end of December”); “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 104 (“from the lunar third month through the end of December”); “Tenmei-kaiten D,” 123 (“from the third month through the end of December”). The mention of April seems to correspond to the police report at the top of this chapter.

¹²⁸ Sawada, *Faith*, 124.

¹²⁹ Vlastos, “Agrarianism Without Tradition.”

¹³⁰ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 258; “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 104; “Tenmei-kaiten D,” 130.

¹³¹ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 258–9; “Tenmei-kaiten B,” “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 104.

Yasumaru Yoshio describes Rokurōbei's thought as evoking what he calls a "common morality" (*tsūzoku dōtoku*), which he conceives of as a group of premodern concepts by which local communities could resolve their problems independent from the dictates of state authority. In Yasumaru's reading, Rokurōbei attempts to universalize "common morality" as a rebuff to state authority but falls short. "As a means of world-repairing (*yonaoshi*) thought to conceptualize problems in social structure at large," he writes, "it turns into something extremely illusionary and magical. The search for concrete methods to achieve peace and justice (*tenka-taihei*) is fully obstructed by magic, and the passion and energy for revolution is wasted uselessly on magic and fantasy." In a footnote, he contrasts the Maruyama movement negatively with farmers' protests in pursuit of "non-religious" economic objectives.¹³²

But Rokurōbei's appeal to premodern values did not emerge as an abstract statement of principles, and the short haired "monkeys" which he associates with Westernization, civilization, and financialization were not just doctors, Buddhists, or vague, shadowy figures in a distant capital. The Fusōkyō leadership, who had spent years fighting with Maruyama-aligned church leaders over control of finances and decision making, had short hair. The career "shrine priests" now growing close to Maruyama headquarters in Noborito, with charges of embezzlement and financial mismanagement swirling around them, would never stoop to growing their

¹³² Yasumaru, *Kindaika*, 137, 141n18.

hair long.¹³³ Sasaki Chiyomatsu, a less reliable source, reports that Rokurōbei even called Nishigaya a “monkey.”¹³⁴ All of these money-hungry figures inside the Maruyama movement are implied to be Rokurōbei’s target. The text explains:

The shrine priests never understood the meaning of the two characters NAMU. ... They cut the hair on their heads and will be utterly destroyed. In the way of this teaching, we cannot cut the principle of “Respect for the Gods and Love of Country” [a line from the Three Articles of Instruction].¹³⁵

The literati, like the Kokugaku scholars at Fusōkyō headquarters, are also called out: the “civilization and enlightenment” they claim is only a disguise for their inner “darkness,” as they “know naught of Heaven’s bounty.”¹³⁶ The Opening sermon also seems to vaguely reference people who have sullied their reputation through inappropriate use of loans and money:

People who take money as their treasure will lose it. From now on, our bodies are precious ... The human face [takes the shape of] the character for money [金; see Figure 6], so when you lend and borrow money, you must put your face on it. If you disgrace your face, you won’t get any money. And now, people are appearing who disgrace their face and only want money, so they throw out their own bodies. However, some politicians¹³⁷ in government will be imprisoned, and some will lose their heads, so in Maruyama, [by] saying TENMEI-KAITEN, you’ll have no

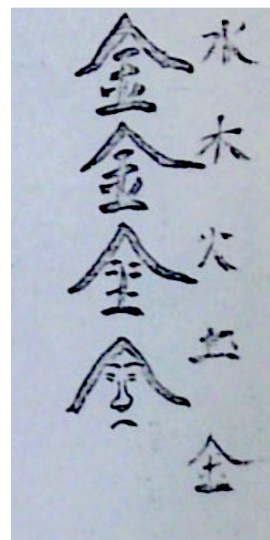


Figure 6: The character for money becoming a human face, from “Tenmei-kaiten B.”

¹³³ Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage.” For an overview of these leaders, see Chapter Five.

¹³⁴ Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*, 217.

¹³⁵ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 259; “Tenmei-kaiten B;” “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 105.

¹³⁶ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 258; “Tenmei-kaiten B;” “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 105 (“darkness” modified to “lawlessness”).

¹³⁷ “Tenmei-kaiten F” has a scribbled character here but seems to read *seifu no seijika*. “Tenmei-kaiten C” modifies it to *seifu no seiji*, which is ungrammatical (“some politics in government will be imprisoned”). See below for another possible incendiary statement affected by a hasty scribe and later modification.

need for money,¹³⁸ so you won't have to cause hardship to people who have life.¹³⁹

Rokurōbei is thus drawing his readers into a conspiracy with him. By taking sides with righteous, long-haired believers who take responsibility for their financial actions, they will triumph over the disbelieving, untrustworthy “shrine priests,” the short-haired scholars of “darkness,” who are doomed to be “utterly destroyed” in the coming cataclysm. Those responsible for the corruption will go to prison or “lose their heads,” while the believers will make all things possible by chanting TENMEI-KAITEN.

Why send out an appeal to believers by writing “secret” sermons, instead of simply firing these meddling priests? The issue is that Rokurōbei needed the institutional support Fusōkyō provided for a larger project which he now had in mind. This brings us to the central evidence which Rokurōbei offers to prove that TENMEI-KAITEN has begun. Even the Closing sermon, the more apocalyptic of the two, does not condemn the government to destruction, but rather announces its imminent divinization through the donations of pious Maruyama believers. “The estimate [for the cost] to open Mount Kohoike was a great sum of 180,000 yen,” Rokurōbei explains, avoiding the word *hotoke* or “Buddha” by writing “Kohoike”

¹³⁸ “Tenmei-kaiten C:” *kingin o iranai yō ni suru*; “Tenmei-kaiten F:” *kingin hakanai yō ni suru*.

¹³⁹ “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 97; “Tenmei-kaiten F.”

instead of “Kobotoke.”¹⁴⁰ He then celebrates the legitimization of his *kō* through its financial aid to Mount Kobotoke’s excavation:

The Maruyama *kōsha*¹⁴¹ has come to the aid of the government with a contribution of 3,000 yen. The winds of TENMEI-KAITEN are blowing. Thirteen years ago, God told me to open this mountain. Now, the government opens it! And the Maruyama *kōsha* provides the assistance of 3,000 yen. ... TENMEI-KAITEN is for the government and for the Maruyama *kōsha*. It is the Will [of God]. Each of us contributes by ones and tens, and our exertions (*tansei*) will be for government. We call for a great sumo match between *bunmei-kaika* (“civilization and enlightenment”) and TENMEI-KAITEN.¹⁴²

From this we may understand that TENMEI-KAITEN is a means of creating nationwide order which will bring the Japanese people to the god of Fuji, as the Kobotoke Pass project brings pilgrims to the physical Fuji. There is an odd contradiction in the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons: the pursuit of money is critiqued as an insult to the inherent value of the five grains, but the fruits of the 3,000-yen donation are celebrated within the same secret document, and further sacrifice is anticipated. This is a new teaching: with collective financial power comes legitimacy, and with legitimacy comes authority. It runs close to a contradiction with Jikigyō’s philosophy of making do with less and rejecting any and all financial compensation for rituals and prayers,¹⁴³ although it is unlikely that Rokurōbei saw himself as breaking from Jikigyō.

¹⁴⁰ “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 256; “Tenmei-kaiten B” (“Kohoiike” *furigana* reinterpreted as a section heading); “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 102 (modified to “Kobotoke”).

¹⁴¹ “Tenmei-kaiten C” has inconsistently replaced some instances of *kōsha* with *kyōkai*.

¹⁴² “Tenmei-kaiten A,” 256; “Tenmei-kaiten B;” “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 102 (modified “thirteen years ago” to “twenty years ago,” which seems to date this manuscript to about 1890, and indicates an attempt at conscious adjustment rather than a faithful copy).

¹⁴³ Sawada, *Faith*, 125.

Rokurōbei's writing, however politically radical, never provided a basis for full rebellion against state authority. In their apocalyptic aspects, the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons seem to appeal to the Shizuoka grassroots; in the celebration of the Kobotoke Pass project, they seem to appeal to believers in the Kanagawa area who would be using the pass for pilgrimage. Both groups are united in a single message, which proclaims that through the collective exertions (*tansei*) of the believers, Rokurōbei's divine revelations—most prominently TENMEI-KAITEN and NAMU—can gain legitimacy and overrule the short-hairs both inside and outside Fusōkyō, all in order to divinize the Japanese state.

The Opening sermon contextualizes the Kobotoke Pass donation as the culmination of Rokurōbei's trials and struggle against the government:

I began my asceticism fourteen years ago, and after four or five years, the Governor of Kanagawa took me and put me into a dark place [i.e. a prison]. It was hard, and those times were terrible. If I were a useless person, there'd be no buts about it. [But in fact] I am a useful person. He said “go home,” but I was returned [to prison] again and again, seven times, and felt ashamed. It was no match for the regret that Hitsuki-sama [God] felt. ... Soon Kobotoke Pass will be opened up, so [while] they say the government has thought little [of us] until now, now the bond¹⁴⁴ is withdrawn¹⁴⁵ from Rokurōbei's account], and it has become a model for one and all. Soon, I'll be able to give the emperor himself three thousand yen and become his partner. But soon we'll be laughing¹⁴⁶ at what the governor says. Then we will say TENMEI-KAITEN

¹⁴⁴ “Tenmei-kaiten F:” *shōsho* “bond,” with kanji 証書. “Tenmei-kaiten C:” *shosho* しよしよ.

¹⁴⁵ “Tenmei-kaiten F:” *hikidashi*. “Tenmei-kaiten C:” *shikidashi*, which is not a word at all. “Various places are outspread from Rokurōbei” is the rough gist of C's strange modification. It is as if the copyist has trouble accepting the financial language.

¹⁴⁶ “Tenmei-kaiten F” again has a poorly written character here but appears to read *kenrei no iu koto o waraite yaru no sa* 県令ノ云事ヲ囁イテヤルノサ. “Tenmei-kaiten C” has “we'll be hearing what the prefecture says,” which is again ungrammatical.

and open the Way. When this [teaching] goes around to the 60,000–70,000¹⁴⁷ *kō* members, something will come of it.¹⁴⁸

This passage gives us a clear picture of Rokurōbei's self-image and his intent in writing the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons. His past imprisonment was a failure by the government to recognize their *gyōja* partner, causing God to feel “regret.” Now he has that recognition, but he is not done. Soon, he will be able to “laugh at” local authorities, befriend the emperor, and modify Japan's civilizational program, bringing it in line with the divine plan. The proof of this is in the size of the Maruyama *kō*, which he believes to now encompass 60,000–70,000 members, and the amount they have been able to place in his coffers, which is useful to gain leverage but, as he has explained, will soon become meaningless with the arrival of TENMEI-KAITEN. In Rokurōbei's vision, the tens of thousands of faithful represented the true salt of the earth who would be able to rescue the Maruyama *kō* from the bureaucrats closing in on it. Members were meant to pass around the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons and become aware of their collective power. The victory of rank-and-file members over the short-hairs, both in government and in Fusōkyō, would be the victory of TENMEI-KAITEN over “civilization and enlightenment.”

It is possible to read the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons cynically and conclude that Rokurōbei aimed to exploit growing anger against corruption as part of an appeal

¹⁴⁷ “Tenmei-kaiten F” has “60,000–70,000.” “Tenmei-kaiten C” has “600,000–700,000,” which was the Maruyama movement's standard membership claim from 1889–1891. I believe the “F” manuscript is Rokurōbei's own words and further that it is the most accurate estimate we have for the size of the Maruyama movement at its peak. See Appendix.

¹⁴⁸ “Tenmei-kaiten C,” 98; “Tenmei-kaiten F”.

for further donations. I would reject this reading for two reasons. First, the impressive stories of Rokurōbei's asceticism recounted in Chapter Two suggest that he was not a particularly greedy character. Second, the explicit critique of the "short hairs" who were managing donations makes it hard to evaluate the text as a simple call for long-term financial support. Money is naïvely depicted as an expedient means to overcome the present, spiritually incomplete society (including the meddlesome short-haired priests who misuse money) and usher in the spiritual civilization of TENMEI-KAITEN, which Rokurōbei seems to believe is imminent.

But how exactly were these members to obtain TENMEI-KAITEN, other than by maintaining their hairstyle and making large donations? Here the text dissolves into symbolism and a familiar prophecy. We learn of the Creation Triad, its special relationship to Japan and its rice fields, and the deep history of the *Kojiki*. Next Rokurōbei invokes Mount Sumeru, a mythical mountain at the center of the world which was actually an imported cosmology from Indian Buddhism. He speaks of five lands surrounding Mount Sumeru containing five types of foul wind, which will soon begin to blow across the planet, causing illness and death. "The emperor supports Maruyama, [so] he will control the country," he says.¹⁴⁹ This makes sense of the odd statement that "the secret meaning lasts from April through the end of December." Rokurōbei seems to be aware of the content of the *Mi* Division prophecies which had emerged in late 1883 or early 1884: a great apocalypse to

¹⁴⁹ "Tenmei-kaiten A," 255; "Tenmei-kaiten B;" "Tenmei-kaiten C," 101 (modified to add the word "so").

begin in May 1884, with most of humanity killed by foul wind (e.g., cholera), and the Maruyama movement, surviving through divine protection in answer to their prayers and talismans, to unite with a Shinto-friendly emperor to inherit Japan. But many transcripts of Rokurōbei's lectures survive from 1883 and 1884, and none of them mentions such beliefs before the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons appear.

I can think of three ways to interpret this, all of them perplexing. The first is that the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons are in part or entirely forgery. I personally cannot accept this theory at all. The sermons very closely resemble Rokurōbei's writing style and interpret the TENMEI-KAITEN revelation using Rokurōbei's familiar exegetical methods. A forgery would have been easy to denounce and warn believers about, but the sermons were never described this way in the copious material produced after 1884. A second possibility is that Rokurōbei gave a *secret* prophecy to Nishigaya in 1883–4, and that the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons are a belated justification. This smacks of uncharacteristic opportunism. It is hard to imagine Rokurōbei puppeteering Nishigaya or giving secret apocalypses to anyone, for financial or other reasons.

The third possibility is that the apocalypse was invented by Nishigaya but then accepted by Rokurōbei as he took sides with pious farmers against faithless samurai bureaucrats. To me, this seems most likely. Rather than opportunism, it suggests that Rokurōbei heard of these beliefs arising among the Shizuoka farmers, interpreted them through his consistent pro-farmer perspective, and attempted to bring about an ideal resolution using what he understood as his divine gifts and his

mission. Given the disarray within Fusōkyō-Maruyama, the urgent need for global upheaval which Rokurōbei sensed is understandable. But if we accept this scenario, then the values and forces guiding Rokurōbei had led him into a serious mistake. He wedded his fortunes to *Mi* Division and legitimized Nishigaya's zealotry, making the man whom he allegedly called a "monkey" into a kind of assistant prophet. In any case, all three possibilities make the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons deeply problematic, which may explain why Rokurōbei never directly referenced their content in his later writings.

Nevertheless, the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons circulated for many years. One of the manuscripts cited here seems to date to about 1890, and there is an account of Maruyama believers meeting furtively to discuss the sermons in Shimoina District, Nagano Prefecture in October 1891. Recapitulating the TENMEI-KAITEN prophecy and adjusting its timeline, the 1891 account describes a "lily flower" opening in May, marking a period which would come to completion on December 1, 1891, after which Western civilization (*bunmei-kaika*) would come to an end and Maruyama believers would become daimyo.¹⁵⁰ The esoteric nature of the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, their attribution to Rokurōbei, the instruction to distribute them outside of official channels, and their apocalyptic, revelatory tone gave them a longstanding power among grassroots believers.

¹⁵⁰ Takeda Y., "Genchiku-ki," 56–7.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed several interlinked topics. First, we looked at the twisted finances of Fusōkyō-Maruyama which spurred a successful Great Missionary Tour in Shizuoka and sparked a messy power struggle. Next, we connected the Missionary Tour and the power struggle alongside many other factors to the emergence of the *Mi* Division Incident. Finally, we examined the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, the most important and provocative teaching in the history of the Maruyama movement. Invoking his claims of divine mission and ability to channel the God of Fuji, Rokurōbei envisioned dramatic, imminent change which would crush the corrupt and spiritually undeveloped forces polluting the movement and Japan and bring his pious farmers into power. In essence, these sermons turned the *Mi* Division prophecies into doctrine.

Yasumaru Yoshio complains that Rokurōbei's appeal to common morality contains "neither a theory of social change, nor suitable principles for examining specific problems of social structures and state power."¹⁵¹ By dating the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons to winter 1884 and supplying the context of the chaotic Fusōkyō-Maruyama and Shizuoka situations, we have seen that this is partially owing to the difficult path Rokurōbei was tracing. His goal was to reform the hearts of the outsiders who were assuming leadership positions inside the Maruyama *kō* without casting them out entirely. To aid in this task he turned to the masses for help, attempting to manifest the collective subjectivity of his faithful supporters in

¹⁵¹ Yasumaru, *Kindaika*, 136.

Shizuoka. Perhaps the most powerful line is found in the poorly preserved Opening sermon, which Yasumaru probably never had access to: “When this [teaching] goes around to the 60,000–70,000 *kō* members, something will come of it.” This makes it clear that the sermons were a call to action beyond Rokurōbei’s already unique and radical teachings.

The grassroots Maruyama believers who circulated these sermons for many years, without any official approval, seem to have understood them as the most important thing Rokurōbei ever said or wrote. The sermons might have been interpreted as the culmination of their own work and sacrifice, as a herald of victory for their cause, and as a reassurance of the imminent arrival of justice and peace on earth (*tenka-taihei*). In the text of the sermons, we see that the coming upheaval is meant to include even the leadership of the Maruyama movement itself. But how did that leadership actually respond to these prophecies?

Immediately after Rokurōbei’s death in 1894, his adopted son Kuniyoshi, who had been about twenty-six years old in 1884, commissioned a hagiography from Aoikawa Nobuchika, who had been working for Fusōkyō until June 1884. Neither Kuniyoshi, Aoikawa, nor anyone else involved in this hagiography project remembered that the 3,000-yen donation to the Kobotoke Pass project had been formally accepted in late 1884. All those directly involved in the donation were gone: Rokurōbei was dead, and Urushibara, Saitō, and Gonzaemon had all left the movement for unclear reasons. The TENMEI-KAITEN sermons clearly connect the donation to the prophecy, but despite their years of grassroots popularity, it seems

no one in Noborito was familiar with the content of the sermons in 1894. Aoikawa incorrectly states that the Kobotoke Pass donation was made in 1891.¹⁵² The postwar biographer Yuri Jun'ichi painstakingly searched through archives until he found the initial trophies were received in July 1886.¹⁵³ It does not seem that Yuri read the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons either.

This act of rapid, collective forgetting reflects the surprising extent to which the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons became meaningless to Maruyama leadership. The sermons posed no serious threat to their legitimacy, nor did they or Rokurōbei's other teachings shape their morality. Yasumaru's complaint about Rokurōbei's thought is more accurate than he could have known: if we interpret this text as the voice of Rokurōbei directing the grassroots to seize control from leadership, he was unable to provide any structure or concrete guidance for them, and could only prophesy that the world was about to be destroyed and rebuilt. Since no cataclysm occurred, Rokurōbei not only rendered his own movement headless, but left his followers bewildered, some with all their possessions surrendered to the Fusōkyō-Maruyama organization. In the next chapter, we will see how others intervened both to remedy and to exploit this dire situation.

¹⁵² Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 101. Indeed, an additional trophy was awarded on February 27, 1891, according to *Kanpō*, June 19, 1891.

¹⁵³ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 388–9. Yuri's dating is followed by Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*, 232.

CHAPTER FIVE:
MARUYAMA INCIDENTS, PART TWO: OPPORTUNITY,
1885–1894

In his research on the *Mi* Division Incident, social historian Suzuki Masayuki uncovered an 1885 letter from a Maruyama believer asking to undo the sale of his family's ancestral land for 131 yen, which had probably been donated in its entirety to the Maruyama movement. The farmer begs forgiveness for entering into a “mistaken contract” as a result of being “bewildered by rumors like in a dream.” Despite feeling as if he had woken up from a dream, though, this man remained a Maruyama believer at least through 1889, when he signed his name to a petition to permit the now autonomous organization Maruyamakyō to register as an independent sect.¹ How could this man have seen himself and fellow believers sell their lands for what he now knew to be a false cause, and then remain committed to the Maruyama movement?

Seventy years ago, social psychologist Leon Festinger and his collaborators argued that prophecy failure does not necessarily entail the collapse of a religious group.² Psychological beliefs, whether “religious” or “non-religious” in nature, can prove hard to abandon, especially if the social stakes are high. However, more recent research has thrown Festinger's conclusions into question: total collapse

¹ Suzuki Masayuki, “Kindai minshū,” 17–18.

² Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails*.

after prophecy failure is a common outcome, and serious reconsideration of core concepts or reworking of the failed prophecy seems to be a necessary stage for a group's survival.³ This chapter will propose that such a reformulation of the apocalyptic TENMEI-KAITEN prophecy guided the Maruyama movement through the period 1885–1894.

In Chapter Four, we saw that *Mi* Division, seemingly endorsed by Itō Rokurōbei himself, prophesied global calamity around December 1884. This chapter will also show that disillusionment in the group did not spread until much later, around 1891–1894. Rokurōbei's writings composed at this time, called the *Oshirabe*, would be identified in later decades as the principal scripture of the religious organization Maruyamakyō. But the *Oshirabe*, for all its wisdom, contained little to no practical guidance for how to resolve the issues dividing the Maruyama movement.

Recent scholarship has pointed to a “Shinto reform movement” beginning around 1893 and aimed at improving the quality of Shinto organizations. The outside image of Shinto in 1885–1894 was poor, and journalists and early religion scholars listed Maruyamakyō alongside Renmonkyō, Kurozumikyō, and Tenrikyō as an example of the extreme corruption in Shinto.⁴ This chapter will show the nuances of this poor reputation. Some of the criticism of Maruyamakyō was

³ Kelly, “Failed Prophecies Are Fatal;” Kelly, “Debunking ‘When Prophecy Fails.’” These papers are hyperbolic, but read together, Kelly presents a strong argument that scholars have tended to massage their data to fit Festinger's flawed hypothesis.

⁴ Kimura, “Meiji kōki,” 47–49, 54–55.

deserved, but the corruption was partly grounded in lack of direction. Church leaders were working to strengthen Maruyamakyō as a Shinto institution, but there was no consensus among leadership and membership about what an ideal Shinto movement should look like and how it related to traditional belief in Mount Fuji. Differences in opinion, alongside more mundane corruption, led to bad blood inside the group.

A troubled split from Fusōkyō, June–July 1885

From its Tokugawa period inception to 1885, the Maruyama movement was a Fuji confraternity or *kōsha*, which had existed since 1875 within Shishino Nakaba's government-authorized "church" Fusōkyō. In 1885, the leadership of the Maruyama movement broke from Fusōkyō and incorporated their movement as Maruyama Kyōkai or Maruyamakyō, a new subsidiary church of Shintō Jimukyoku, which Fusōkyō had just left in 1882.⁵ In this section, I will discuss why this was allowed to happen and how the new structure changed basic dynamics in the disorganized Maruyama movement.

In Chapter Three, we saw that the Maruyama *kō* was constantly reworked during its time within Fusōkyō. Although Rokurōbei was its charismatic leader, its

⁵ Ōtani Masayuki would distinguish Shintō Jimukyoku's Maruyama Kyōkai (1885–1952) from the independent organization Maruyamakyō (1952–present), which underwent unannounced doctrinal changes. In fact the abbreviation "Maruyamakyō" was used casually from 1885 onwards. I do not treat the period after 1952 in this dissertation, so Ōtani's intended distinction is unimportant to me in any case.

liturgy was modified by Shishino Nakaba, who also seemed to give the movement some sense of its mission. One might expect that making the Maruyama movement a church in its own right would be an upgrade, bolstering its autonomy and giving Rokurōbei more authority to guide his flock. This was not the case. The establishment of Maruyamakyō disempowered both Rokurōbei and grassroots members and centralized authority around a handful of ex-samurai bureaucrats with backgrounds in shrine administration. For this reason, after World War II when Maruyamakyō gained full independence as a religious corporation, its leader depicted the move from Fusōkyō to Shintō Jimukyoku as a leap from the frying pan into the fire.⁶

The July 1885 break from Fusōkyō was engineered by an outsider to the Maruyama movement named Takaoka Koreyoshi. Takaoka, an ex-samurai, had worked in several Shinto-related bureaucratic positions, including at the Tokugawa ancestral shrine Tōshōgū,⁷ at the headquarters of Shintō Jimukyoku,⁸ and at one of the Shintō Jimukyoku branch offices that were mentioned at the top of Chapter Four for their inefficiency and lack of financial transparency.⁹ In early 1882, we see him grumbling to another Shintoist that he didn't care what Japanese people believed in as long as it wasn't Christianity.¹⁰ Takaoka joined Fusōkyō later that year and worked closely with other staff at the Tokyo headquarters on

⁶ Itō Iten, "Gyōjamage." This article will be scrutinized further in the Epilogue.

⁷ Hiraizumi, "Nikkō," 798.

⁸ "Shintō Jimukyoku kitsujin'in kyōmyō" 神道事務局詰人員交名. *Kaichi shinbun* 19 (December 10, 1876).

⁹ Inoue, "Shintō World," 343.

¹⁰ Inoue, "Shintō World," 343.

administrative matters.¹¹ He may have become involved in the Maruyama movement after Shishino's death, as a bitter rivalry developed between him and Shishino's close associate Ozawa Hikochi.¹²

As we saw in Chapter Four, a Maruyama *kō* member named Nishigaya Heijirō had cultivated apocalyptic prophecies in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1884, seemingly inspired by Rokurōbei's teachings. According to postwar Maruyamakyō staff member Taima Seishi, many Maruyama believers in this region sold off their land and property and gave the proceeds to Nishigaya, who distributed them to various Fusōkyō-Maruyama churches.¹³ In early 1885, Nishigaya began to fundraise to build a massive church in Shizuoka City, to be called the Kurihara Church after its location. Multiple sources report that the eventual size of the Kurihara Church was larger than the worship facilities at Rokurōbei's own family home in Noborito, Kanagawa.¹⁴ Takaoka was financially involved in this project, although it is unclear if this was widely known at the time.

On June 1, 1885, Shizuoka and Aichi Prefectures forwarded a joint complaint to Japan's Bureau of Shrines and Temples accusing local Maruyama *kō* of financial malfeasance. Fusōkyō's regent Tanaka Yoritsune dispatched a team of three investigators including Takazaki Ichizō—a Yoshida *oshi* whom the pro-Maruyama faction had just fired from Fusōkyō for fraud, embezzlement, and conspiracy¹⁵—and

¹¹ Fukuda Katsumizu, *Kyōsoden*, 176, 107, etc.

¹² See the Introduction to this monograph.

¹³ Taima Seishi, "Maruyama kyōdan," 20n37.

¹⁴ Suzuki Masayuki, "Minshū shisō," 219; Taima Seishi, "Maruyama kyōdan," 20n37.

¹⁵ Shirosaki, "Sono 25."

Rokurōbei's adopted son Kuniyoshi. Takaoka Koreyoshi came along as well, and during the course of the investigation Takazaki became angry at Takaoka for some reason. Rokurōbei's postwar hagiographer explained that "Takaoka tarried long in his investigation, and no report was issued," which is a mysterious statement. In any case Takazaki made a formal protest to Fusōkyō's regent Tanaka, as did Ozawa Hikochi. On June 27, Tanaka dismissed Takaoka from the investigation, then attempted to fire him. Relying on his connections with Shizuoka grassroots *kō* members and Kuniyoshi, Takaoka claimed he had been illegally fired without cause and gradually escalated his case, incurring excommunications for his Shizuoka-area supporters, and then for Itō Kuniyoshi who rallied to their cause. Although Rokurōbei had allegedly taken Tanaka's side at first, by the end of July the two men were forced to announce that their groups had separated.¹⁶

Fusōkyō had an inculpatory addition to this story. Following the formal split, they hired Ishihara Iwao, a Kansai-area private investigator specializing in financial crimes.¹⁷ Ishihara went to Shizuoka to investigate the account books of Maruyama *sewanin*, traditional village-level volunteers who handled the accounting of neighborhood *kō*. Upon arriving in these villages Ishihara discovered that the *sewanin* had been instructed to hide their account books from him (could this be why Takaoka had "tarried long in his investigation?"), and his interrogations led to arguments and fighting. On August 3, 1885, he turned over the account books he

¹⁶ Yuri, *Kyōsōden*, 375; Shirosaki, "Sono 26," 9 and *passim*.

¹⁷ Assuming this is the same person mentioned in "Ōsaka-fuka Minami-ku..." 大阪府下南区, *Kōbun shinshi* 1 (January 12, 1880), 12.

had been able to obtain to the police, and Fusōkyō urged authorities to disband all Maruyama *kō* nationally.¹⁸

But it was too late: the new organization Maruyamakyō had already obtained the legal protection of its new affiliate Shintō Jimukyoku, and in March 1886 it won significant legal victories against Fusōkyō which allowed the new church to maintain ownership of large church buildings throughout the country, on the grounds that Maruyama members had paid for them.¹⁹ The headquarters in Noborito was now under the control of ex-samurai Takaoka Koreyoshi and a clique of Shinto confederates who transferred to Noborito from Fusōkyō in Tokyo. All of these men cut their hair short, which in Rokurōbei's view marked them as “monkeys” who were imitating Western civilization and ignorant of TENMEI-KAITEN. From this limited focus on top-level organization, it does appear as if a group of faithless bureaucrats had skillfully managed the dispute over financial misconduct in Shizuoka to maneuver themselves into power over the Maruyama movement. They would now be able to direct Maruyama members towards Shintō Jimukyoku ideological interests and profit from their ongoing donations. In a 1952 article, Maruyamakyō's third president Itō Iten wrote that grassroots believers condemned these short-haired men with the pejorative label of “worldly” (*sejō*).²⁰ In a 1932

¹⁸ “Kaku nenrai Shizuoka Aichi ken-ra ni okite...” 各年来静岡愛知県等におきて, *Shizuoka daimu shibun*, August 5, 1885; reprinted as “Kaku nenrai Shizuoka Aichi ken-ra ni te...” *Chōya shinbun*, August 9, 1885.

¹⁹ Haraguchi, *Meiji zenki*, 362.

²⁰ Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage.”

Maruyama glossary, “worldly” is explained as “a heart hardened from hatred of faith; an immoral person.”²¹

An 1887 notice in the Shintō Jimukyoku magazine *Kaitsū zasshi* gives us a taste of how these short-hairs saw themselves. The article named Maruyamakyō’s “top ten” staff members, which included all of the worldly short-hairs later recalled by Itō Iten. This article imitates articles in period Buddhist magazines honoring the hardest-working priests in specific regions. However, where an 1886 Sōtō Zen article awarded titles to the top ten monks of western Aichi Prefecture such as “The Religionist,” “The Missionary,” and “The Preacher,”²² the top ten Maruyamakyō leaders included much more “worldly” appellations: “The Economist,” “The Scrivener,” and “The Governor.”²³ This “top ten” list therefore seems to show a drastic shift of focus at headquarters which occurred alongside the split from Fusōkyō. Although the purpose of publishing the list was evidently to crow about Maruyama’s liberation from Fusōkyō, in its focus on secular accomplishment, it seems to imply a departure from Rokurōbei’s salvation mission; in fact, the list was retracted in the following issue out of concerns that it conveyed the wrong impression.²⁴ If we compare the 1887 “Top Ten” list to Itō Iten’s 1952 list of “worldly” leaders and to some of the major accusations made against Maruyama movement leaders, we can see a pattern of irresponsibility (Table 2).

²¹ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 313.

²² “Konogoro Bishū ichien...” 此頃尾州一円, *Meikyō shinshi* 1960 (January 6, 1886), 6.

²³ “Maruyama Kyōkai no jūketsu” 丸山教会の十傑, *Kaitsū zasshi* 34 (January 1887), 9.

²⁴ “Seigo” 正誤, *Kaitsū zasshi* 35 (February 1887), 15.

The 1885 split from Fusōkyō, and the installation of a new administrative leadership in Noborito, had dramatic, long-lasting consequences. However, it would not be profitable to lay out pages and pages of further details of the Fusōkyō dispute here.²⁵ This summary should be enough to show that Itō Iten's pessimistic 1952 depiction of the situation had some basis in reality—but Iten's impressions were formed with the benefit of decades of hindsight. As we saw at the start of this chapter, even those directly financially affected by the *Mi* Division Incident stuck with the Maruyama movement for at least several years. Let us now see what was happening outside of Noborito, and how the interventions of the short-haired “Top Ten” might have been seen in a more beneficial light by some.

²⁵ The legal side of the dispute has been covered in some detail in Haraguchi, *Meiji zenki*, vol. 2, 346–64, and the personal enmities are visible in period newspaper sources and in Nanba, *Fuhai* (see Introduction).

Table 2: Association of Maruyama-Fusōkyō split organizers with misconduct

	1877 “Top Ten”	1952 “short hairs”	Official role in Maruyamakyō	Misconduct allegations
Itō Kuniyoshi	●		Second president	Sexual misconduct, embezzlement, fraud (Nanba, <i>Fuhai</i>)
Takaoka Koreyoshi	●	●	Tokyo branch office	Bid rigging (Fukuda, <i>Kyōsoden</i>)
Tsuchiya Mitsutomo	●	●	General Affairs	
Takagi Sansei	●	●	General Affairs	Resigned for unclear reasons
Fukagawa Namiho	●	●	General Affairs	
Hirose Chūsei	●	●	Accountant	
Arai Iwao	●	(3)	Unknown	Fired for financial misconduct (<i>Kaitsū zasshi</i> 74 [March 1888], 16)
Kobayashi Yosuke	●		<i>Ma</i> Division chief	
Urushibara Yūjirō	●		Accountant, founder of Yamada Church	Plagiarism (Omote, <i>Kōzan bunkobon</i> , 791–2); resigned
Saitō Fukutarō	●	○ (1)	Accountant, founder of Isobe Church	Extortion, fraud (Nanba, <i>Fuhai</i>); resigned
Suzuki Jōsuke		○ (1)	One of “four dojos”	
Shida Matabei		○ (1)	One of “four dojos”	
Nakamura Kisaburō		○ (1)	One of “four dojos”	

Table 2: Association of Maruyama-Fusōkyō split organizers with misconduct

	1877 “Top Ten”	1952 “short hairs”	Official role in Maruyamakyō	Misconduct allegations
Maruyama Yūka		● (2)	Accountant; director from 1893	Inadequate record keeping, leading to conflict (Yuri, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 461–4)

- (1) Itō Iten (b. 1883) writes that he heard these men wore ponytails once, but they had cut them by the time he encountered them—presumably the 1890s.
- (2) Not mentioned by Itō Iten but named as one of the short-hairs in a follow-up discussion (Tennangen-sei, “Maruyama Sakura”). He had been Takaoka’s coworker at the Shinto Office in 1876. Yūka’s Maruyama Incident is discussed later in this chapter.
- (3) Presumably Iten did not mention Arai because Arai was already dismissed in Iten’s youth.

Sources

1877 “Top Ten:” “Maruyama Kyōkai no jūketsu” 丸山教会の十傑, *Kaitsū zasshi*, January 1887.

1952 “short hairs:” Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage.”

In search of a new appeal, September–October 1885

Following the split from Fusōkyō, the new Maruyamakyō continued to attract not only converts, but politically active converts. Freedom and People's Rights Movement researcher Ōhata Satoshi discovered that the name of one Oyama Katsuemon appears on the member roster for Maruyama Isobe Church, with a note that he joined the church in September 1885. Oyama was a formal leader of the Busō Konmintō, which was identified in Chapter Four as a driving force behind a populist uprising in Kanagawa Prefecture that advocated for the restoration of a premodern moral economy. Ōhata speculates about Oyama's interest in Maruyama and invokes a Yasumaru-like reading of TENMEI-KAITEN as a “fantasy” of a coming utopia of justice and peace.²⁶

In Shizuoka, another activist named Kawamoto Tōzō entered the movement at this time. According to an account he gave to a Maruyamakyō leader, Kawamoto was selected in 1879 as the representative of thousands of farmers representing 106 villages in Aichi Prefecture to travel to Tokyo and petition the government for relief from unfair taxation.²⁷ The prefecture reportedly imprisoned him for fifty days when he returned, but he then went back to Tokyo and attempted to petition again, determined not to cower in the face of oppression. When he received orders from Aichi to stop his petitioning, he was nonplussed, still angry at the government but

²⁶ Ōhata, *Zoku Kanagawa*, 17–19.

²⁷ This incident is described in Aichi-ken Higashikasugai-gun nōkai, *Higashikasugai-gun nōkai shi*, 315–325. Neither Taima Seishi (“Maruyama kyōdan,” 17n23) nor I could find Kawamoto's name among the petitioners.

not wanting to burden his family and his village. At some point, he heard of Rokurōbei's ascetic activities for the sake of the peace and health of the nation. This gave him much to think about, and he and his family eventually joined in October 1885. That winter, we are told, he was cured from severe illness by chanting TENMEI-KAITEN. Out of gratitude he fasted for seven days and nights on a hill in Kosenjo, Nagakute City, Aichi, then for another week on Mount Mitake (now Inasachō Mitake), Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka.²⁸

These individual accounts suggest that the bitter split from Fusōkyō and the unruly situation in Shizuoka did not deter new members from joining Maruyamakyō. Kawamoto's account also gives us some idea of why a politically active farmer might become interested in Maruyama. Rather than envisioning a “fantasy” utopia based on TENMEI-KAITEN, Kawamoto was paralleling his own sacrifices to Rokurōbei's bodily sacrifices, and purportedly considering the greater cause of purifying the nation beyond his own family and village. Whatever else TENMEI-KAITEN might have meant to Kawamoto in 1885, it was Rokurōbei's latest key for restoring bodily health and harmonizing self, nation, and universe. In this sense the post-1885 Maruyamakyō was operating on the same religious, moral, and national values that the Maruyama *kō* had appealed to before 1885, described in Chapter Three.

²⁸ Taima Kōtarō 当麻小太郎, “Kawamoto Tōzō-ō no nyūshin ki” 川本藤藏翁の入信記, *Kami no hikari* 110 (May 1921): 13–15. According to this article, Kawamoto later conducted Shinto funerals for Japanese soldiers in occupied Korea; see Chapter Six.

It seems plausible, however, that there were multiple understandings of TENMEI-KAITEN, given that part of the prophecy associated with it was circulated in secret. What remained, then was to clean up the damage done by the prophecies of apocalypse. A text published by Takaoka Koreyoshi in the wake of the split from Fusōkyō gives some insight into how Maruyamakyō staff may have intended to pursue this major challenge. In this Maruyama headquarters-endorsed publication, *Shinkyō genri ron*, Takaoka takes on debates around Neo-Confucianism and Western liberalism, arguing that only “principles” (*genri*) grounded in the ancient ways of the gods could guide Japan through these difficult waters. However, he does not explain what these principles might be.²⁹ There is no mention of Rokurōbei at all, even though Takaoka had published an attempt at systematizing Rokurōbei’s doctrine just a few months earlier.³⁰ Rather, in *Shinkyō genri ron*, Takaoka takes up the unique task that Shishino had pursued until his death: how to share power with Rokurōbei without objecting to his widely attested healing powers or his powerful formulae such as TENMEI-KAITEN. In Chapter Three, we saw how Shishino muddled through these issues over the years as he gradually refined his ideas about his National Teaching. Takaoka, desiring to match Maruyamakyō to the pre-established goals of the new parent sect Shintō Jimukyoku, had a much clearer mission.

²⁹ Takaoka, *Shinkyō genri ron*.

³⁰ Ozawa, Saitō, and Urushibara, *Shinkyō jutsugi*.

Several years earlier, Takaoka had a deep discussion with Sano Tsunehiko, founder of the Shinto sect Shinrikyō. Sano felt that his own revelations did not constitute an “independent religion,” but rather a single perspective faithful to a greater Shinto tradition and in harmony with the ancient texts.³¹ Sano records that Takaoka accepted his arguments at that time.³² Takaoka seems to have used Sano’s concept of Shinto as a basis for reinterpreting the role of Rokurōbei. Maruyamakyō, like Shinrikyō, could function within Shintō Jimukyoku as one perspective among many, faithful to the larger goal of a common “Shinto.” To achieve this harmony, the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, which insisted on the unique superiority of the Maruyama believer, would have to be entirely abandoned. The topknots would have to go so that pursuits aligned with Shintō Jimukyoku leadership could take their place. This was the real, unspoken “principle” that the new leadership of Maruyamakyō now pursued.

Enforcing haircuts in Shizuoka, 1886–1887

Despite the legal victories over Fusōkyō and the continued appeal to new members, by 1886 the Maruyama movement faced major challenges in Shizuoka. The two biggest were the disorder caused by the *Mi* Division Incident and the government response to it. In January 1886, the village of Tokatsu north of Hamamatsu banned all villagers from joining Maruyamakyō; this would be the first

³¹ Inoue, “Divine Principle,” 218.

³² Sano, *Shinrikyō kyōso gonisshi*, 151. Helen Hardacre translates this inaccurately (Inoue, “Shintō World,” 343).

of many such prohibitions in central Japan.³³ In February, a newspaper reported a scuffle among Maruyama believers who argued over which castles they were to inherit when they became daimyo.³⁴ Although Noborito continually sent staff members to lecture in Shizuoka, Rokurōbei had condemned these short-haired scolds in the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, and another newspaper reported that local *kō* were ignoring them.³⁵ According to multiple internal sources, *Mi* Division had developed a strict, secretive hierarchy which united the group against Maruyamakyō administrators. Katagiri Makoto, a former member of *Mi* Division, recalled that Nishigaya required members to rely solely on their immediate superiors for all matters of faith (*shinjin*), and orders from outside the hierarchy were to be ignored.³⁶ Taima Seishi, a former Noborito staff member, claimed that Nishigaya condemned anyone who brought *Mi* Division business to Noborito to fall into hell.³⁷ The only threat to the chain in command was members' intense faith in Rokurōbei. By 1886, *Mi* Division no longer thought Shishino Nakaba or Prince Arisugawa would obtain the position of emperor but now expected Nishigaya and Rokurōbei to divide up Japan in the coming cataclysm. Rokurōbei in particular, whose visit to Shizuoka had been celebrated with such fanfare in 1882, was now

³³ Inasa-chō, *Inasa chōshi*, vol. 2, 185.

³⁴ “Maruyama kō shinto” 丸山講信徒, *Tōkai gyōshō shinpo*, February 9, 1886. The ex-member Motoki Fukuhara (“Kikigaki”) also claimed that such discussions were common in *Mi* Division.

³⁵ “Kenka kakusho ni Maruyama kō...” 県下各所に丸山講, *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, February 17, 1886. Reproduced in Shizuoka-ken, *Shizuoka kenshi shiryōhen*, vol. 17, 755.

³⁶ Katagiri, “Takinosha.”

³⁷ Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 17n23. However, diary records indicate that Nishigaya brought *Mi* Division members to Noborito multiple times in November and December 1885 (Shirosaki, “Sono 18,” 12). Perhaps this claim of Taima's is exaggerated or pertains only to 1884; or perhaps there was additional context to these visits which is now missing.

believed to have acquired superhuman powers through his asceticism, notably the ability to heal with golden light that came out of his fingertips.³⁸

The position of Maruyamakyō headquarters was now delicate. They continued to benefit financially from Nishigaya's *Mi* Division and indeed had an ownership stake in its new property, Kurihara Church.³⁹ A direct attack on Nishigaya's apocalyptic message could result not only in loss of membership and faith but would also implicate themselves as operators of the Kurihara Church and Rokurōbei as the plausible author of the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, which had backed up some of Nishigaya's prophecies. But some intervention was needed to control the fervent activities of *Mi* Division members. With their goal of a common vision of Shinto in mind, Noborito therefore focused on eliminating the topknot, the mark of true faith described in the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons.

In May 1886, Maruyamakyō headquarters ordered Shizuoka area members to cut off their topknots, printing a notice in the *Shizuoka daimu shinbun* to prove that the order came from them.⁴⁰ Local members were shocked and began gathering signatures to petition headquarters to reverse the order.⁴¹ Some refused to cut their hair, and it is said that police were called to enforce the haircuts, as if Maruyamakyō's orders were backed by law.⁴² One man, who was described as being

³⁸ Motoki, "Kikigaki;" Emura, "Maruyamakyō," 208–9 (quoting from Katagiri, "Takinosha").

³⁹ As of 1887, Noborito staff member Takaoka Koreyoshi legally remained the president of Kurihara Church: "Shōmeishō" 証明書, circa January 18, 1887, collection of Maruyama Nakase Kyōkai, photocopy in Emura Eiichi Collection, Hosei University.

⁴⁰ Shintō Maruyama Kyōkai, notice in *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, June 3, 1886.

⁴¹ "Maruyama kō-to sanpatsu o itō" 丸山講徒散髪を厭ふ, *Tōkai gyōshō shinpo*, June 9, 1886.

⁴² "Ginbatsu subeshi" 斬髪すべし, *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, June 18, 1886.

in visible distress, reportedly evaded police and went into hiding rather than cut his hair. The newspaper reporter was astonished that a man could choose to become a fugitive over the question of an anachronistic forward-facing topknot, which the reporter compared to an ugly, dirty scrubbing brush.⁴³ But the man's reaction is reasonable given the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons' description of topknots as signs of Heaven, in contrast to the short-haired "monkeys" doomed to destruction in an imminent apocalypse.

As Rokurōbei had not renounced the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons and *Mi* Division rejected the authority of Noborito representatives, it is unsurprising that many believers were unreceptive of the haircut order. In fact, this order applied only to Shizuoka and was never issued to the Kanagawa-Tokyo area.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Maruyamakyō had to grapple with the criticism of Buddhists in Shizuoka. When Maruyamakyō staff lectured at a private estate in Shizuoka City on April 3–5, 1886 to an audience of 600, dozens of Buddhist priests attended, and one priest in particular heckled the lecturers relentlessly, demanding an explanation of Maruyama teachings on human personality and the fate of the soul after death. Ten others joined the heckler in confronting the lecturer after the lecture was concluded. The lecturer's inability to answer on the spot was characterized by newspaper reporters as incompetence.⁴⁵ In March 1887, Buddhist groups urged Shintō

⁴³ "Kisha mo fuda o toru..." 記者も筆を取る, *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, May 26, 1886.

⁴⁴ Itō Iten, "Gyōjamage," 16.

⁴⁵ "Maruyama kō no shippai" 丸山講の失敗, *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, April 13, 1886; "Maruyama kō shinto no go-benkai" 丸山講信徒のご弁解, *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, April 25, 1886.

Honkyoku, the successor to parent organization Shintō Jimukyoku, to do something about Maruyama “delusions.”⁴⁶ Shintō Honkyoku sent out an “inspector” who visited locations including Ueda City, Nagano, and held public lectures attacking their own subsidiary Maruyamakyō; the Buddhists claimed victory.⁴⁷

Local governments in prefectures neighboring Shizuoka also began to take organized action in 1887.⁴⁸ In April, secret orders to put a stop to Maruyama preaching were distributed to district and village chiefs across Aichi Prefecture.⁴⁹ In June, the chief of Ena District, Gifu Prefecture, sent similar orders to mayors in his district, telling them to intervene or call police if they witnessed Maruyama preaching or proselytism.⁵⁰ A written pledge to refuse to affiliate with Maruyama was circulated for signatures in Ikuta village, Nagano Prefecture,⁵¹ and in Tsuda village, Aichi Prefecture.⁵² In the Ina district of Nagano Prefecture, the district chief assembled Buddhist priests of all sects to preach about the dangers of Maruyama starting in May.⁵³ Accusations were now flying freely inside the group as well. In

⁴⁶ Shintō Jimukyoku changed its name to “Shintō” in 1886. The organization was called just “Shintō” until 1940 at which point it became “Shintō Taikyō,” the name it uses today. The widely used scholarly name “Shintō Honkyoku” technically refers to its headquarters in Tokyo.

⁴⁷ “Shaji jimu,” *Meikyō shinshi*, February 6, 1888; Ueda-shi, *Ueda kindai-shi*, 299. Also mentioned in *Kanpō*, February 2, 1888.

⁴⁸ It is not clear to me why none of these examples come from Shizuoka itself.

⁴⁹ Ōhama, “Nōson,” 101, 109n59.

⁵⁰ Fukuda Yutaka 福田豊, “Maruyama kyōkaiin torishirabe naiki” 丸山教会員取締内規, June 7, 1887, reprinted in Gifu-shi, *Gifu kenshi shiryōhen: kindai 5*, 927–9.

⁵¹ Takeda Y., “Genchiku-ki,” 53.

⁵² Toyohashi-shi, *Toyohashi shishi shiryō mokuroku*, vol. 5, 25.

⁵³ “Gunchō hakki” 郡長発起, *Meikyō shinshi* 2218 (July 2, 1887), 6.

August, *Mi* Division leaders themselves demanded to know what Nishigaya was doing with their donations.⁵⁴

Under pressure from local authorities and Japan's Bureau of Shrines and Temples, Maruyamakyō's policing of believers became increasingly severe. In May 1887, Kuniyoshi promised to send pairs of salaried employees on patrol (*junkaiin*) in the Shizuoka area to enforce compliance with church doctrine. Division leaders were required to send monthly discipline reports to Noborito.⁵⁵ In September 1887, Rokurōbei gave his backing to the patrols and furthermore announced that each division would hold monthly study meetings to correct "misunderstandings." Effectively, the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons had been abrogated, and the meaning of TENMEI-KAITEN was now unclear. The church published Rokurōbei's announcement with a warning that those who continued to wander from village to village urging believers to sell their land would be referred to police.⁵⁶ In November, Maruyamakyō administrators submitted a formal accusation of fraud against Nishigaya, and he was arrested.⁵⁷

In a past study, Emura Eiichi observed that alongside a copy of Rokurōbei's announcement dated October 1887, one document preserves an early copy of a new Rokurōbei text called *Oshirabe*, which is today considered to be the central scripture

⁵⁴ "Ukagaisho" 伺書, August 1887, collection of Nakase Kyōkai, photocopy in Emura Eiichi Collection.

⁵⁵ Itō Kuniyoshi, "Shinto torishimari hōhō" 信徒取締方法, notice in *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, May 18, 1887. The term *junkai* was already in use to describe visits to Shizuoka by Fusōkyō-Maruyama staff, including the June 1885 visit described above: Takaoka, "Fusōkyō junkai."

⁵⁶ Haraguchi, *Meiji zenki*, 362–3; Nanba, *Fuhai*, 21–3.

⁵⁷ Suzuki Masayuki, "Kindai minshū," 36n51.

of the Maruyama movement. “The implication,” Emura concluded, “is that the *Mi* Division Incident occasioned the writing of the *Oshirabe*.”⁵⁸ It is therefore worth investigating what sort of message the *Oshirabe* conveyed and its relation to earlier texts that had exacerbated the *Mi* Division Incident.

***Oshirabe* and abrogation of the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, 1887–1894**

From January 1887 onwards, Rokurōbei began dating his writings and calling them *Oshirabe* (“Inquiries”). After gaining independence in 1952, Maruyamakyō, in an attempt to rule out problematic earlier texts, has only accepted manuscripts which were preserved in Rokurōbei’s own hand as part of their scripture. This means that its official *Oshirabe* publications begin from 1888, although Rokurōbei’s dated writings from 1887–8 are also included as an appendix to a postwar compilation.⁵⁹ Select writings attributed to Rokurōbei from before 1887 are mentioned from time to time in Maruyamakyō’s monthly magazine *Kami no hikari*, but they have never evaluated the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons nor Rokurōbei’s pre-1887 corpus as a whole.

The *Oshirabe* has the same characteristic writing style as the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons and is accordingly difficult to translate. Here is a representative excerpt from one of the earliest entries:

⁵⁸ Emura, “Maruyamakyō,” 207.

⁵⁹ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, preface.

Meiji 21 [1888], Old Eighth Month, 10th day⁶⁰

From the past in this Imperial Land, there was a Conquest of Amakusa. Shakyamuni put our divine country on the Buddhist path; this is called the Conquest of Amakusa. The reason is that [Buddhism] opened [established] its teaching, etting up prohibitions against women [ascending Mt. Fuji], and writing the two characters for *bodhisattva* (*bosatsu* 菩薩) with the grass radical. These characters correspond to the forehair of women, so to take [the grass radical] away and set up prohibitions on women is unjust. In Shinto, when we correct [ourselves] using the Original Father-Mother as a mirror, and the two characters *bodhisattva* are the reason why the myriad things have been sliced up into little pieces. In Shin[to], when we explain [the word] *bodhisattva* in this way and rescue women, our Father-Mother will rejoice. Making peace between parents and children and saving the myriad people is a joy. First, in Shinto two characters *bodhisattva* help us.

Moreover, Buddhas are also the bowels of people. The heart harmonizing with the *bodhisattva*/rice, a child is born from the womb within ten months, and germinating, born from the mouths of *bodhisattvas*/rice, that this should be called a god is something everyone knows. [...]

In Shinto, we should correctly write NAMU-AMITA-USU, take care of the body and receive the heart. MU is revealed as the sun and NA as the moon, the A is the breath, and we breath through the TA, the fire and water. U is the bodily organ and SU is the home, broadly speaking, the home-country. U is called the home (*uchi*) or the floating world (*ukiyo*).

皇国ににむかしより、天草退治とゆことあり。これは、釈迦に神国を仏道とされたる、これが天草退治とゆう。この理由は、女人禁制として、草冠なる菩薩の二字をかきとりて、宗旨をひらかれたり。これ、女の前毛にあたる文字、これをとりて女人禁制とゆうは、不正と申。神[道]にては、元の父母をかがみとしてあらため、菩薩の二字は、百数万のも[の]を、こまやかにきざみをさむる理由なり。これは、神道にて、菩薩を説きはけて、女人をたすけるときは、父母のよろこびとなる。親子和合して、万民のたすけ、よろこびとなる。まづ神道にてたすけたる、菩薩の二字。

又、仏も人の腑なり。これは、心と菩薩和合もて、この腑巢に十月のあいだ子腑巢にて、みのりうまれるときは、菩薩の口よりうまれて、神とゆうべきことは、誰しらぬものはあるまへ。菩薩、仏を説きはけて、大穴口の命にさだめたもう精神也。 [...]

神の道にてただしたるは、牽愈あ身田宇す、身をつつしんで心をいただく。無は日、南は月とひらいて、あは身の息、これは火水、田よりふくひく。宇は身の肝心にあたる。すは身の住居と申。ひろくすゆうて国巢。宇は宇ちとゆう、守きよとゆうことなる。⁶¹

⁶⁰ Translated from Yasumaru, "Oshirabe," 494-495; Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 1, 63–64.

⁶¹ This Japanese text follows Yasumaru Yoshio's suggested emendations and kanji readings to improve legibility. The Japanese text is omitted from other *Oshirabe* excerpts for reasons of space.

This excerpt is representative of the *Oshirabe*'s difficulty level. Even a casual reader can see that Rokurōbei is rejecting taboos on women's participation in Fuji climbs and describing his Maruyama movement as a more complete expression of Shinto; neither of these points were so explicit in the manuscripts dating from 1879–1885, so here the *Oshirabe* provides a clearer depiction of his vision for how the power of Fuji might be extended to all through Shinto. Beyond this, the text is frequently obscure. “Buddha” and “bodhisattva” may be surprising to see in a “Shinto” text, but it conforms to Rokurōbei's teaching that Buddhism is a partial truth rather than foreign heresy, and the identification of rice as a kind of bodhisattva originally derives from Tokugawa period popular beliefs which were deeply held among the Fuji *kō*. Rokurōbei's explication of his divine phrase NAMU-AMITA-USU invokes symbolism probably only familiar to his followers. The arrival of Buddhism is described as the “Conquest of Amakusa,” which is a nationalist euphemism for the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637–8, but it is unclear whether Buddhism is being analogized to the “foreign” teaching of the Christian rebels of Shimabara or to the “conquerors” who suppressed them.⁶²

The *Oshirabe* provides a capsule summary of many of Rokurōbei's past teachings and recounts some events from his life. It also occasionally refers back to TENMEI-KAITEN. Rather than rapidly canceling his past prophecy, over years of

⁶² Yasumaru, “Oshirabe,” 494n.

Oshirabe from 1887 through 1891, Rokurōbei elaborates and defers the ideal of TENMEI-KAITEN with sometimes playful language:

Meiji 23 [1890], Old Third Month, 13th Day⁶³

[...] In our practice, the world of TENMEI is a once sought-for past, leaving Civilization and Enlightenment (*bunmei-kaika*) behind. In short, in the mirror in front of us, Tenmei is in the calendar. This is surely a thing of long ago.

The concept of TENMEI is now located in the past, rather than the imminent future. To soften the blow of this news, Rokurōbei makes it into a pun: Tenmei was Japan's era name for the 1780s, so by 1890 a Tenmei calendar would have indeed been quite old. Another *Oshirabe* passage clarifies that resurrecting TENMEI in the present will be an internal practice, requiring purification of heart and mind.

Meiji 24 [1891], Old Third Month, 23rd Day⁶⁴

In olden times, when the word *world* was used, there could be no doubt that the people who passed it down were repeating a teaching from Takasago [i.e. the God of Fuji]. Let us sum up the character “olden times” 昔. This character can be read as *saki*, *seki*, *mukashi*, *inishie*, *kinō* (yesterday), *shaku*, becoming, ending, beginning, making, a while, water, stars. In this way, everyone talks about old times or different times, but all have differences in what comes of it, so there are many people for whom it bears no fruit. The light of civilization (*bunmei*) destroys people, [but] the light of heaven (TENMEI) saves people. Among the readings of 昔 are both “beginning” and “ending.” Begin by unlocking the energy and creating liveliness.

In passages such as this one, Rokurōbei points out that “everyone talks about” a specific term but “they differ in” what they believe it means. Chinese characters can be read using many different sounds even today, and in the

⁶³ Yasumaru, “*Oshirabe*,” 516–7; Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 1, 17–8.

⁶⁴ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 1, 345–47.

Tokugawa period, unusual readings had been relatively more common. Kanji dictionaries could provide unexpected readings, and Rokurōbei seems to imply that various understandings and misunderstandings appear depending on how people read important terms like “ancient times” or “bodhisattva.” Reflecting Rokurōbei’s years of Fuji asceticism where he uncovered hidden meanings of key phrases in his transmission text, the *Oshirabe* takes pains to locate divinely intended meanings which have perhaps been concealed from us by polysemy or linguistic change. In short, relying on words alone (*bunmei*) cannot create a world of harmony and peace; only divine guidance from Heaven (TENMEI) guarantees salvation.

The *Oshirabe* is a unique text standing in between the earlier Fuji *kō* revelations of oblique phrases and the more grammatically natural scriptures which characterize Japan’s new religious movements. The text can be rewarding when read closely, but one wonders what impact it had on the Maruyama movement of 1887–1894. Its writing style, obscure folklore references, and leaps of logic were reportedly hard even for Rokurōbei’s most devout followers to understand, and later Maruyamakyō leaders, including the editor of the *Oshirabe*, have found it “obscure and difficult to read” in many places.⁶⁵ 21st-century researcher Ōtani Masayuki notes that the full text has never received close scrutiny and suggests that its true import was comprehensible only to Rokurōbei himself.⁶⁶ Did believers or leaders use this text to answer the troubles their group faced?

⁶⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 275; Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 1, 4.

⁶⁶ Ōtani, *Kakugyō-kei*, 266. Sections have been carefully analyzed by Yasumaru (“Oshirabe”).

The timing of the text, which Rokurōbei began to write during the crisis in Shizuoka, suggests that there was social pressure to produce a scripture. Pressure to produce texts like this can be seen in many heterodox groups at this time and is described by some Japanese scholars as “doctrinalization” (*kyōgika*). Hatakama Kazuhiro has pointed to Tenrikyō’s doctrinalization in the 1880s, when spiritual experiences became deemphasized in favor of acceptance of carefully managed doctrine.⁶⁷ Katsurajima Nobuhiro describes the textual products of doctrinalization as emphasizing allegiance to “Shinto” rather than specific deities, as in the case of the *Oshirabe*.⁶⁸

The vision of Shinto in the *Oshirabe* remained idiosyncratic. Rokurōbei continued to insist that the ancient emperors were productive farmers, although he also maintained, as he did from the beginning of his mission, that Maruyama was the protector of the state.⁶⁹ The political message that was explicit in the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons and other early manuscripts is gradually sublimated. Emura Eiichi has observed that compared to Rokurōbei’s earlier writings, the *Oshirabe* makes just a few references to foreign countries and the eventual downfall of civilization, while apocalyptic prophecies go unmentioned.⁷⁰ The few references to hairstyle are enigmatic and lack a definite connection to the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, for instance:

⁶⁷ Hatakama, “Tenrikyō,” Katsurajima, “Comment.”

⁶⁸ Katsurajima, “Byōki naoshi.”

⁶⁹ Yasumaru, “Oshirabe,” 490–1, 544n, 556–7.

⁷⁰ Emura, “Maruyamakyō,” 207.

Meiji 21 [1888], Old Fifth Month, 18th Day⁷¹

[...] In this country, it is good for hair to be long. In foreign countries, even when you want to grow it long, it doesn't grow. In China, hair is longer than in Japan. Japan is the Land of the Sun, and China is the Land of the Moon. Even in Japan, women have longer [hair] than men, for this reason.

The “reason” is seemingly that the moon is female and produces longer hair than the masculine sun. These two celestial bodies represent the two aspects of Fuji, the Original Father-Mother. What this is meant to teach us about women and men, Japan and China, TENMEI-KAITEN, Maruyama topknots, or anything else, Rokurōbei does not explain, here or elsewhere.

Maruyamakyō leaders supplemented the *Oshirabe*'s complex and obscure writing style with lectures of their own. An 1891 manuscript entitled “An Explanation of TENMEI-KAITEN” (*Tenmei-kaiten no benkai*) provides a wholly contradictory explanation for the revealed TENMEI-KAITEN phrase. Rather than the character for Heaven (天 *ten*) visually representing a Maruyama “great person” (大) with bound hair, it was now explained to represent “two people” (二人), which are further defined as the sun and moon (日月 or 明), the two aspects of Fuji. After a lengthy discussion of traditional cosmological cycles, the text concludes by explaining the revised meaning of TENMEI-KAITEN in extremely simple terms:

We call this TENMEI-KAITEN, and so we hoist the rising sun [flag], clasp our hands before Heaven, honor our Creator day and night, respect the national flag of His Majesty the Emperor, with loyalty to the sovereign, with filial piety to our parents, with separate roles for husband and wife, maintaining the order of older and younger siblings, with trust among one's friends.

⁷¹ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 2, 478, 480. Present-day Maruyamakyō considers this particular *Oshirabe* to be only semi-canonical, as the original manuscript does not survive.

Observe the Way of the Five [Confucian] Virtues⁷²; we all must firmly abide by these, and do our utmost.

天明海天と申す故に日の丸を掲げて天に手を合せて朝夕主神を敬い天皇陛下の国旗を仰いで君に忠父母に孝夫婦の別兄弟の順序朋友の信是を勤めて五常の道もゆう故に一同堅く守るべし勤むへし⁷³

This new teaching, which does not seem to logically follow from the rest of the lecture, revises the message of the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons. Japan's rising sun flag, which had been esoterically interpreted as a symbol of the ascendance of the Maruyama movement, is now "the national flag of His Majesty the Emperor," whom Rokurōbei had tried to cast as a servant of the people. Confucian ideas of deference to political superiors and patriarchy had always been part of Maruyama discourse, but they are now placed front and center to expel the prophecies of the end of "civilization and enlightenment."

We are helpfully told that this manuscript comes from the "storeroom of the censor of *Mi* Division, Third Unit," and it even includes a bit of apology in its final lines: "This is only one-ten-thousandth of the teachings of our Venerable Founder [Rokurōbei]. I have given a brief outline; it is not possible for me to recount [them] in detail in a single talk ... I am sure you will have been bored by this long talk, so I beg your forgiveness."⁷⁴ It may be concluded that this text was delivered by a local Maruyamakyō bureaucrat to an audience of farmers and other grassroots believers.

⁷² That is, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trustworthiness.

⁷³ "Tenmei kaiten no benkai" 天明海天之弁解, manuscript, May 1891, author's collection.

⁷⁴ (我開山尊師の御説の万分一でもござりませんが一寸あらずじを搦んで申上げましたのであるます是をことこまかに申あげるにはなかなか一せきやことき下りわしくのべきれるものではありません … 長話にてさそ皆様もご退屈きまでございましょうからこれにて御免をねがいます)

The speaker attempts to use his institutional authority to highlight specific aspects of Rokurōbei's teachings and thereby gloss over problematic aspects of the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, although the *Oshirabe* continued to express ambiguous political messages and did not directly contradict earlier TENMEI-KAITEN ideas to such an extent.

The reception of the *Oshirabe* in 1887–1891 shows that it was part of a response to contemporary pressures for Shintoization and doctrinalization, but that its obscure content failed to satisfy the movement's various parties. Church leaders were unable to drag easy political solutions out of Rokurōbei's new writings; instead of teaching the *Oshirabe*, they resorted to manufacturing their own interpretations of TENMEI-KAITEN. The *Oshirabe* therefore started out in an already uncomfortable position, forced to compete with older expressions of divine will which some found more compelling or easier to understand.

Out with the topknots, in with the burials, 1885–7

In August 1885, shortly after the Maruyama movement split from Fusōkyō and became affiliated with Shintō Honkyoku, Rokurōbei made an announcement in Noborito: "From now on, Maruyama will handle the spirits of people, so do your utmost to conduct Shinto funerals."⁷⁵ With this announcement, Rokurōbei seemingly signed on to Takaoka Koreyoshi's program of shifting the movement's

⁷⁵ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, 112. The date of 1885 is confirmed by Itō Akiyoshi, *Niikura*, 21, 34.

entire focus to harmonize with Kokugaku ideas of Shinto. Since that day, the Shinto funeral has displaced the topknot as the visible, socially contentious marker of commitment to Maruyamakyō. Like topknots, Shinto funerals ruptured social convention, but to different ends. The TENMEI-KAITEN sermons had presented topknots as a symbol of divinely ordained resistance to political and financial power in the Shinto world. In contrast, Shinto funerals were Shinto-aligned intellectuals' collective strike against Buddhism, Christianity, and concepts of pollution which were also deeply embedded in popular shrine custom.⁷⁶ The new organization Maruyamakyō was thus adopting a new marker of difference which put the grassroots on the same side as their administrators and against premodern practice.

The association of dead bodies with pollution (*kegare*) dates back to the earliest periods of Japanese history. Although pollution taboos were often enforced at Shinto shrines and have been linked to “native, *kami*-centered cults,” some of our earliest discussions of pollution come from Buddhist literature,⁷⁷ and previously common burial practices were restricted by the Buddhist-influenced Heian court.⁷⁸ As Buddhism was thought to be a purifying force in a world of defilement, Buddhist specialists obtained a monopoly over care of polluted dead bodies, although in some regions those who handled the dead were subject to discrimination.⁷⁹ During the

⁷⁶ Inoue, *Keisei*, 376.

⁷⁷ Drott, “Care,” 4.

⁷⁸ Stone, “Kami,” 206.

⁷⁹ Bernstein, *Modern Passings*, 31–32.

Tokugawa period, cremation slowly grew in popularity, as fire was seen to destroy the solid and liquid sources of bodily decay, pollution, and contagion.⁸⁰

Pushing back against these ancient taboos, Tokugawa period reformers had often called for funerals to be held in a Shinto style with burial rather than cremation. These Confucian-influenced intellectuals preferred burial to cremation for reasons of filial piety, as well as to counter the widespread reliance on Buddhist institutions which they condemned as foreign in origin.⁸¹ During an 1873 attempt to mandate Shinto burial nationwide, the Meiji government took pains to eliminate any concept of pollution from the death ritual.⁸² After massive popular pushback ended that program, several Shinto sects, in particular Fusōkyō-Maruyama and Shintō Shūsei-ha, took up the mantle of bringing Shinto burial to the masses.⁸³ Fusōkyō had pursued this objective aggressively. They claimed to have conducted 5,000 Shinto burials by 1880, and from December 1884, a new style of funeral rites was central to their seminary program.⁸⁴ This was despite the fact that the general public remained uncomfortable associating Shinto with care for the dead.⁸⁵

From 1882 on, the Maruyama movement contributed more than any other religious group to lower-to-middle-class involvement in Shinto burial, engendering incessant social conflict throughout the country. In November 1882, Shishino had to

⁸⁰ Bernstein, *Modern Passings*, 79.

⁸¹ Bernstein, *Modern Passings*, 45, 51, 54.

⁸² Bernstein, *Modern Passings*, 63–4.

⁸³ Inoue, *Keisei*, 376; Yoshimura, “Shiu.”

⁸⁴ Takeda T., “Kokugakusha,” 192; Inoue, *Keisei*, 332; Shishino, *Sōji ryakki*.

⁸⁵ I am here omitting the role played by funeral regulations in the 1884 Fusōkyō-Maruyama struggle. Suffice it to say that popular unease with Shinto funerals was exploited by the Yoshida *oshi* side of Fusōkyō to extract significant expenses from the Maruyama *kō*.

warn Maruyama *kō* members not to destroy the Buddhist altars of their ancestors.⁸⁶ In October 1884, Maruyama believers in Osaka were unable to obtain permission to conduct a Shinto burial by themselves and had to settle for a syncretic Shinto-Buddhist ritual performed in a Shin Buddhist temple.⁸⁷ That year, when two temples in Misaki Town, Kanagawa Prefecture, refused to permit Maruyama burials, Fusōkyō headquarters sent a protest to the regional government.⁸⁸ The following year in the same town, an attempt to bury a Maruyama believer who had died of cholera incited townspeople to riot out of fear of contagious illness, and police were called.⁸⁹ In 1892, Buddhist magazines reported that Maruyama believers attempting a burial in a town graveyard were made to hold a “theological debate” with Buddhist clerics, and upon losing, were forced to accept a Buddhist ceremony.⁹⁰ At around that time, Maruyama believers in Shimada, Shizuoka Prefecture, were forced to carry a coffin through the woods to a designated graveyard after being refused entry to a temple.⁹¹

Maruyamakyō eventually made Shinto burial the primary commitment asked of its members. Members were sorted into three groups: *shinto*, ordinary “believers,” *kyōto*, those who had committed to Shinto burial, and *kyōshi*, “teachers” who had

⁸⁶ “Gokyōhō” 御教法, 19 November 1882, manuscript, collection of Maruyamakyō honcho, photocopy in Kanagawa Prefectural Archives.

⁸⁷ “Shinbutsu-konkō no sōshiki” 神仏混淆の葬式, *Shizuoka daimu shibun*, October 17, 1884.

⁸⁸ Utsumi, *Misaki chōshi*, 110.

⁸⁹ Utsumi, *Misaki chōshi*, 110.

⁹⁰ Bernstein, *Modern Passings*, 117; “Ikyōsha maisō jiken” 異教者埋葬事件, *Meikyō shinshi* 3115 (August 28, 1892), 3–4.

⁹¹ Taima, “Maruyama no mura.”

been fully educated in Maruyamakyō doctrine.⁹² Needless to say, burial of the dead had not been a concern of pre-Meiji Fuji *kō*, and this grading of believers based on commitment to burials had not been promoted by Rokurōbei's TENMEI-KAITEN vision, where topknots served as the chief marker of a devout believer. Probably due to these multiple, contradictory ideals being expressed in 1884–6, the exact motive and timing of the push for Shinto funerals was forgotten in later years.

As described above, Fusōkyō was encouraging Shinto funerals in the Maruyama *kō* particularly from late 1884, and Rokurōbei himself endorsed the concept upon joining Shintō Honkyoku in August 1885. However, Rokurōbei's hagiographers pass over these events in silence and instead claim that the first “Maruyama funeral” was conducted in March 1887 for Rokurōbei's wife. At the end of a week of mourning, Rokurōbei “cut his hair and buried it in front of the grave. This established the rule,” his disciple Maeda Suekichi explained, “that when a woman precedes him in death, the man cuts his hair and buries it in her grave, and when a man precedes a woman in death, she cuts her hair there [in front of the body] and places it in the coffin.”⁹³ Long hair, which even in 1885 had been the inalienable mark of a Maruyama believer, was now made into a ritual sacrifice for the funeral ceremony.

⁹² Suzuki Masayuki, “Minshū shisō,” 378n7.

⁹³ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 407. See also Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 85.

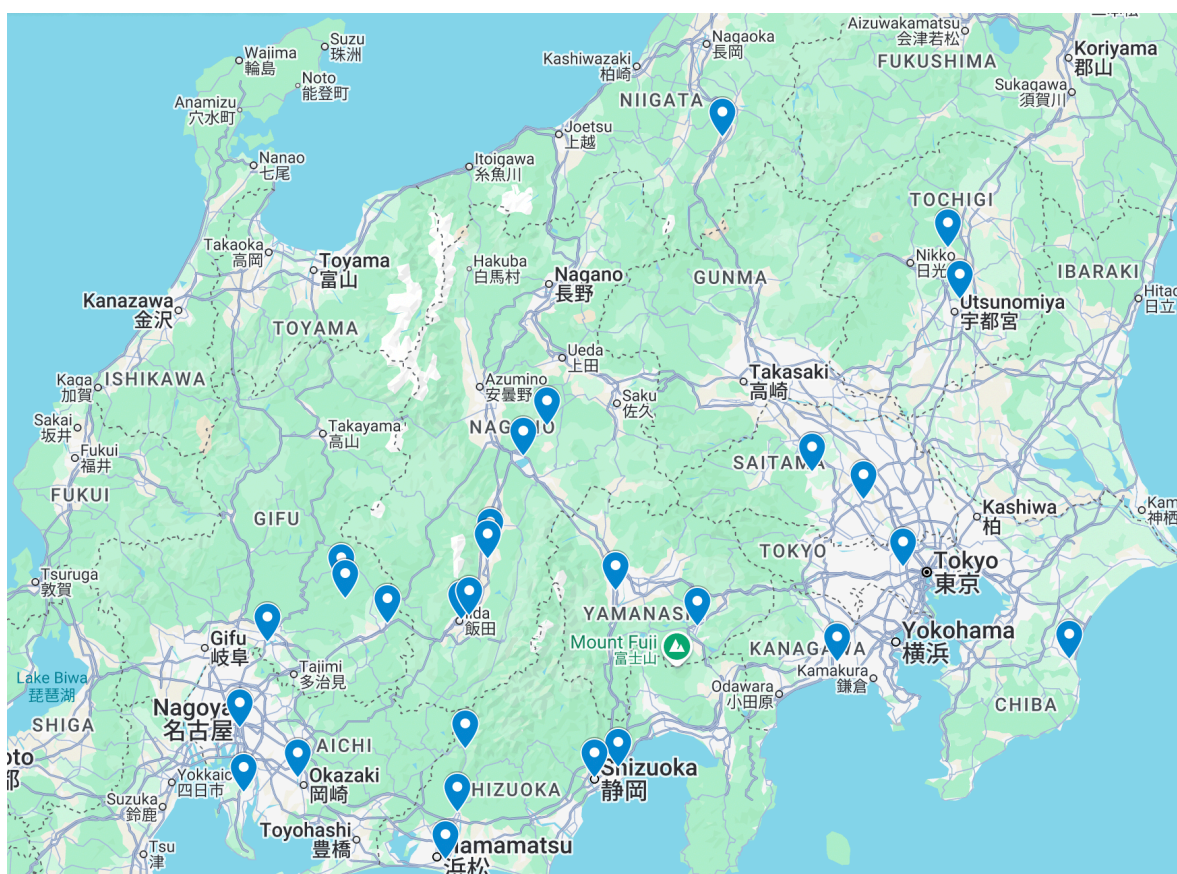


Figure 7: New Maruyamakyō churches (kyōkaijo) built from 1889 to 1892. Author's map, generated according to internal data reported in Yuri, Kyōsoden. Map data ©2026 Google.

Institution building and TENMEI-KAITEN reverberations, 1887–1892

The new affiliation with Shintō Honkyoku changed the Maruyama movement from a network of *kō*, essentially home meetings, to a *kyōkai*, a “church” encouraged to construct church buildings (*kyōkaijo*) for members to meet and worship. From 1889 to 1892 especially, many such buildings were completed (see Figure 7). An 1892 print proudly displays a completed Maruyama church complex in rural Nagano with a worship hall, meeting hall, and a massive rising sun flag, an unusually early association of a European-style flag with a Shinto-style structure (Figure 8). The flag continued to serve the dual purpose of representing the

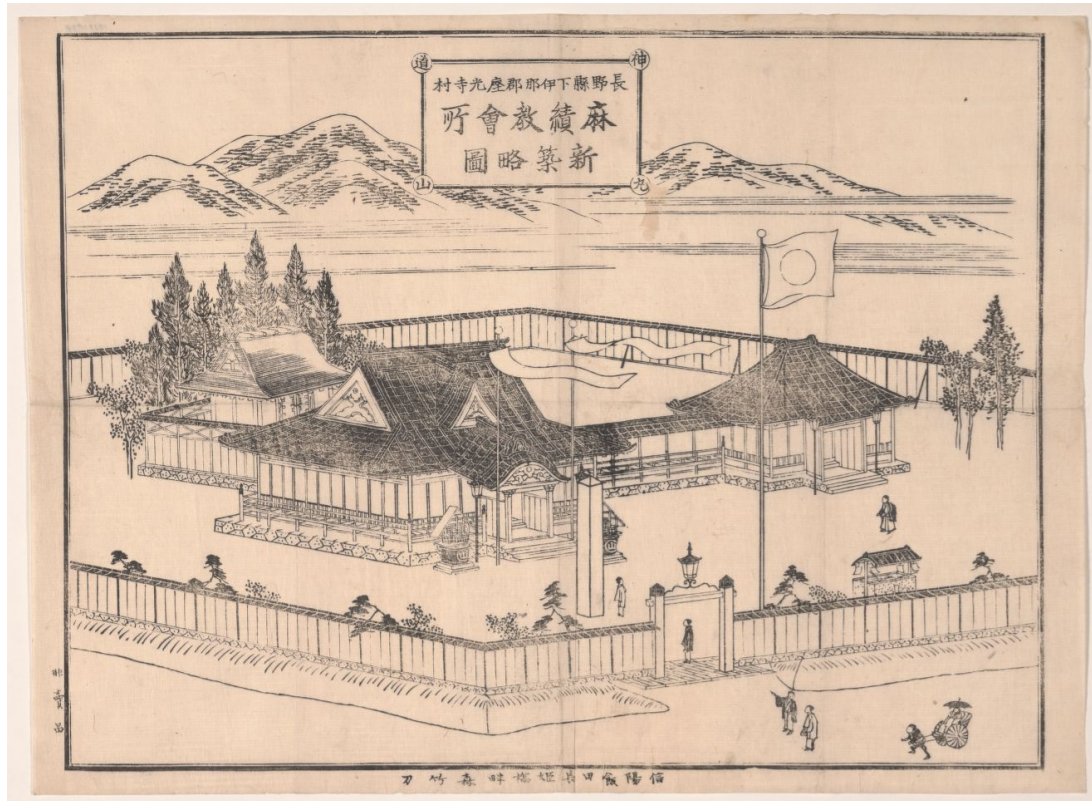


Figure 8: Print depicting a newly built Maruyama church in Omi, Nagano Prefecture. Collection of Stanford University. Circa 1892, according to date in Yuri, Kyōsoden.

Japanese state and the Maruyama movement. Through this investment in land and construction of buildings, member concern shifted from the realization of a TENMEI-KAITEN revolution to the maintenance of an institution. After years of being pulled in two directions, Maruyamakyō was finally completing the transition from local, neighborhood-focused *kō* to nationalized, sectarian *kyōkai* churches, which is described by Shimazono Susumu as a general pattern for popular religious movements of this time period.⁹⁴

To achieve this level of logistical planning and social acceptance, Maruyamakyō must have been well-organized, able to handle complaints from local

⁹⁴ Shimazono, “Shūkyō to minzoku II.”

governments, and in constant communication with local branches and Shintō Honkyoku. Several accounts bear this out. Rokurōbei's hagiographers tell us that in 1889, Maruyamakyō was able to organize a massive simultaneous Fuji pilgrimage involving 16,000 members climbing up all sides of the mountain. This had not been attempted since 1885 or 1886. Many of the "short-haired" leaders named above were present on the mountain, organizing this feat.⁹⁵ This implies to me that Maruyamakyō had about 64,000 members in 1889, although it unbelievably claimed 1.36 million members in this year.⁹⁶

Clearly, though, the organization was proud of its successes in 1887–91. "Maruyama Kyōkai is flourishing. I myself am now *gondaikyōsei*," Rokurōbei bragged in an early 1889 entry in his *Oshirabe*, advertising that Shintō Honkyoku had granted him the second highest rank in its now-privatized *kyōdōshoku* licensing system. "We have over 50,000 licensed *kyōsei* [senior preachers] and lecturers, and countless subordinates," Rokurōbei continued, merging his own movement with the total figures for Shintō Honkyoku.⁹⁷ Having harmonized his vision with the goals of Shintō Honkyoku, he could boast of a successful organization building churches around the country. He was also able to donate to disaster victims in Gifu.⁹⁸ Around

⁹⁵ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 435. I could not find reports of this climb in period newspapers.

⁹⁶ See Appendix to see how I made this calculation.

⁹⁷ Maruyamakyō, *Oshirabe*, vol. 1, 170. There were about 36,000 licensed teachers in Shintō Honkyoku at this time: Inoue, *Keisei*, 45.

⁹⁸ Shirosaki, "Sono 11."

this time, some leaders even proposed publishing a book to tell the stories of “One Hundred Heroes of Maruyamakyō.”⁹⁹

However, this new institution continued to be haunted by disruptions. In November 1889, the *Yomiuri shinbun* reported that Maruyama believers in Minamiazumi District, Nagano Prefecture, were again selling off their land and possessions.¹⁰⁰ Police records show the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons being read secretly in Shimoina District, Nagano Prefecture, in October 1891.¹⁰¹ It seems that despite Rokurōbei moving on from his revolutionary prophecies and Maruyamakyō cohering around the “church” institution, unauthorized activities using the Maruyama name continued for several years. Not all of these related to the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons. In October 1890, the *Daidō shinbun* reported that a man calling himself a Maruyamakyō priest made a public display of summoning a “fox” from a tube (*kuda-gitsune*, probably a trained stoat), saying that he could use the power of the Maruyama deity to control foxes and urging his audience to join the local Maruyamakyō church.¹⁰² The impact of such reports on the group’s reputation can only be imagined.

Furthermore, there is evidence that even at this late date, Rokurōbei himself still viewed the Maruyama movement as antagonistic to the ruling authorities at some deep level. A member from Nagano Prefecture named Morimoto Tokusaburō

⁹⁹ Motoki, *Kyōyū no omoikage*, preface.

¹⁰⁰ “Maruyama kō” 丸山講, *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 27, 1889, extra, 1.

¹⁰¹ Takeda Y., “Genchiku-ki,” 56–7.

¹⁰² “Hachiōji-machi ka...” 八王子町か, *Daidō shinbun*, October 2, 1890. Reprinted in Itō Yōjirō, “Inshi,” 3.

recorded that in late September 1891, Rokurōbei privately told him that the Original Father-Mother, the Creator God of Fuji, was the “god of the Taira,” while “the present world is the world of the Minamoto” (*ima no yo wa Genji no yo*); a reference to the twelfth-century Genpei War, in which the two illustrious clans fought to have their chosen candidate as emperor.¹⁰³ If true, this suggests that Rokurōbei secretly thought that the true, Creator God was not the same as the divinities being promoted by state institutions, despite the fact that his publicly distributed scriptures boasted of the institutional ranks he had attained, as mentioned above.

Loss of faith, 1891–4

In October 1891, pent-up frustrations in the Maruyama grassroots suddenly spilled into the open.¹⁰⁴ Maruyamakyō had been forced to once again pay to cover financial mismanagement that had occurred in its parent organization, Shintō Honkyoku, in 1890.¹⁰⁵ According to a journalist’s critique, that year also saw two large scandals: Maruyama leadership was found to have been fundraising for Japan’s “naval defense” and pocketing the donations for themselves,¹⁰⁶ and

¹⁰³ Kyōgakubu 教学部, “Shiryō” 資料, *Kami no hikari* 823 (August 1990): 7–10.

¹⁰⁴ “Maruyama kyōkai no koto” 丸山教會の事, *Asahi shinbun*, February 27, 1892.

¹⁰⁵ “Maruyama kyōkai no koto,” *Asahi shinbun*, February 27, 1892. This followed reports that Maruyama members were frustrated with Shintō Honkyoku and were trying to gain independence (*Asahi shinbun*, August 30, 1890); Itō Kuniyoshi, who would have understood the importance of maintaining institutional legitimacy, had stepped in to defend Shintō Honkyoku (*Asahi shinbun*, September 12, 1890).

¹⁰⁶ Nanba, *Fuhai*, 34–41.

unknown persons using the names of church leaders sold Maruyama members thousands of yen of equity in a nonproductive and possibly nonexistent gold mine.¹⁰⁷ Here, it must be cautioned that we do not know the details of these stories reported by an outside critic, or whether financial issues were more serious in 1891 than in the 1880s. There may have been multiple causes which collectively led to a break between the grassroots and leadership in late 1891.

In November 1891, self-described Maruyamakyō member Watanabe Nakazō published a blistering series in the *Shizuoka daimu shinbun* entitled, “With an Announcement for Maruyamakyō Believers Throughout the Land: Itō Rokurōbei, I Have Questions!”¹⁰⁸ The exposé ran as seven articles, and this quotation from the first article is representative of the tone:

They told me that it was the will of Rokurōbei that the course of the world would soon change (*seiun ippen*) and that we who believed in the Maruyama *kō* would become daimyo in a feudal system like the Tokugawa era. I felt like I had just come into a great inheritance. They said Rokurōbei would become a great king with the power of life and death, and that he intended eternal peace and prosperity for believers. Isn’t this a load of pompous garbage? Those who have been born into this sacred era of imperial restoration and dare to vomit such garbage at us, are you not harming the nation and deluding the people? Call it what it is!¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Nanba, *Fuhai*, 32–34, 50. The advertised location of the mine does not correspond to any real place. The shares were seemingly sold by agents, and Nanba is hesitant to directly connect them to Itō Kuniyoshi, whose name appeared on the share certificates.

¹⁰⁸ “70-man mai no yūbin kitte yōkyū no soshō” 七十万枚の郵便切手要求の訴訟, *Asahi shinbun*, December 11, 1891, 2. (満天下丸山教会信徒諸君に告げ合わせて院長伊藤六郎兵衛に質す)

¹⁰⁹ Suzuki Masayuki, “Kindai minshū,” 19. This excerpt is from the Maruyamakyō archives. Suzuki does not make it clear if the rest of the series is present in the archives, which have been closed since 2023. These issues of *Shizuoka daimu shinbun* are no longer extant on microfilm or in libraries.

The aggressive tone of this public accusation demonstrates the level of anger which some Maruyama affiliates in the Shizuoka area now held towards church leadership. Maruyamakyō responded by suing the newspaper, demanding payment for 700,000 postage stamps to mail a retraction to all member households.¹¹⁰ The church archive also preserves the official response letter from Maruyamakyō headquarters, which begins:

One cannot help but pity people like this Nakazō¹¹¹ who harm themselves while trying to attack others. Claiming to be followers of our faith, they pen articles fabricating ridiculous and delusional theories with no basis in fact, seeking to injure not only our founder but our believers. In this age of Civilization and Enlightenment, such a conspiracy to return to the false customs of the old shogunate, bring back the feudal system and become daimyo, etc.—even a street urchin could not help but be astonished by such ridiculous prattle. A man like our founder who is committed to morality and charity, and who only seeks through moral doctrines to prevent the disturbance of people’s minds throughout the world, would never think to rule the world and plot for the wealth and prosperity of his descendants, even in his dreams.¹¹²

The hostile tone of this response is striking. Not only does it deny Maruyama headquarters’ involvement in the *Mi* Division Incident and mockery of self-identified Maruyama members, it also appeals to *bunmei-kaika*, the very concept which Rokurōbei had condemned as corrupt and promised to overcome through TENMEI-KAITEN. Both sides of this debate have modified their views somewhat from Rokurōbei’s radical depiction of the emperor as ritual servant. But Watanabe at

¹¹⁰ “70-man mai no yūbin kitte yōkyū no soshō” 七十万枚の郵便切手要求の訴訟, *Asahi shinbun*, December 11, 1981. Maruyamakyō could not have had 700,000 households on its rolls at this time; see Appendix.

¹¹¹ The use of a given name without an honorific exhibits extreme disrespect.

¹¹² Suzuki Masayuki, “Kindai minshū,” 20. The exact date of this response is unclear, but it was printed in *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, according to *Nōnin shinpō*, February 29, 1892.

least insists on a “sacred era of imperial restoration” (*ōsei-fukkō no seisei*) in which domestic concepts of imperial majesty might bring about justice. Maruyamakyō’s response refutes Watanabe by acidly invoking Civilization and Enlightenment, blithely ignoring that Rokurōbei was continuing to denounce this concept in the *Oshirabe* and that his TENMEI-KAITEN chant was still in use throughout Maruyamakyō. Neither letter writer is defending Rokurōbei’s teachings, and the lack of charity in the church’s response suggests that the underlying dispute must have begun long before Watanabe’s series was published.

The Buddhist newspaper *Nōnin shinpo* reported that the headquarters’ response infuriated the Maruyama movement throughout central Japan and escalated the conflict between Noborito and the grassroots considerably.¹¹³ In January, *Ho* Division in west Shizuoka was expelled from Maruyamakyō; the reasons were not stated.¹¹⁴ In February, representatives of a Maruyama group in Yana District, Aichi Prefecture (bordering Shizuoka), reportedly visited Sano Tsunehiko, the founder of the Sect Shinto group Shinrikyō, inveighed against Rokurōbei’s “misdeeds” (*higyō*), and begged Sano to take control of Maruyamakyō.¹¹⁵ This appeal suggests that rather than single-minded faith in Rokurōbei’s leadership, some grassroots members had developed their own goals which were drawing close to the ideals of Sano. Sano, who had long desired mass adoption of

¹¹³ “Shintō no shoharan” 神道の小波瀾, *Nōnin shinpō*, February 29, 1892.

¹¹⁴ Notice in *Yokohama mainichi shinbun*, January 10, 1892, 6.

¹¹⁵ “Shintō no fungi” 神道の紛議, *Nōnin shinpō*, March 7, 1892, Meiji Shinbun Zasshi Bunko. Maruyamakyō arrived in Yana District around 1885 (Aichi-ken Yana-gun, *Yana gunshi*, errata).

“Shinto” faith and customs, had expressed concern about Maruyamakyō’s decline in 1889–1890.¹¹⁶

On February 27, the *Asahi shinbun* reported that Maruyamakyō headquarters in Noborito was “struggling to contain” the anger spreading throughout central Japan, and that the head of Shintō Honkyoku had approved of splitting the movement into two separate churches, but that this was unlikely to happen as the Interior Ministry was uncomfortable with increasing the number of Shinto sects.¹¹⁷ Just prior to these reports, on February 19, the Maruyama Firefighting Squad in Toyoda Village, Shizuoka (Nishigaya’s hometown and a notable center of Maruyama activity), sold the fire pump which Rokurōbei had donated to them and changed their name to Marunana.¹¹⁸ Some members demanded that the trophies awarded to Maruyamakyō for the 1884 Kobotoke Pass donation be turned over to the *kō* divisions which had raised the necessary funds, eventually incurring a written apology from Takaoka Koreyoshi for failing to acknowledge their contributions.¹¹⁹ This chaotic dispute shows a church fundamentally unable to make amends between leadership and grassroots and take responsibility for its recent past.

Even more astonishing is the extent to which the Maruyama healing tradition and Rokurōbei’s ongoing writings were now being thrown under the bus by

¹¹⁶ Inoue, *Keisei*, 141.

¹¹⁷ “Maruyama kyōkai no koto,” *Asahi shinbun*, February 27, 1892.

¹¹⁸ “Shōbōgumi secchi,” 消防組設置, *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*, February 19, 1892, Meiji Shinbun Zasshi Bunko; Higashitoyoda kyōdoshi hensan iinkai, *Higashitoyoda kyōdoshi*, 88.

¹¹⁹ Nanba, *Fuhai*, 42–44.

movement leadership, in Noborito and elsewhere. Throughout 1892, the Maruyama Takamatsu Church in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, advertised a new magazine “to promote the prosperity of Shinto” in the *Asahi shinbun*.¹²⁰ This publication, entitled *Shinri* or “Divine Principle” (the same kanji used for the Sect Shinto group Shinrikyō), anticipates later magazines which period scholar Anesaki Masaharu lauded as the forefront of the “Shinto reform movement” in 1897.¹²¹ *Shinri* issue number three, the only one known to be preserved, contains well-wishes from nearly the entire staff of Maruyamakyō headquarters in Noborito, and poetry such as: “May the Spirit of the Emperor be pronounced / as Maruyama teachings flourish day by day.” There is an article about how to present a Japanese flag to a military unit and proud announcements of the opening of new Maruyamakyō church buildings. Most striking, however, is an ominous warning against unnamed “criminals of Shinto” (*Shintō no zainin*) who “poison vulgar men and women” with talk of healing rituals (*kin'en*).¹²² Of course, healing rituals had always been central to Maruyama activities, and Maruyama-kyō licensed the use of talismans and transmission texts in their 1885 statutes.¹²³ The magazine does not make a single mention of Rokurōbei nor his *Oshirabe* which he was actively writing in Noborito at the time.

¹²⁰ Advertisement in *Asahi shinbun*, June 23, 1892.

¹²¹ Kimura, “Meiji kōki,” 48.

¹²² My thanks to Kimura Yūnosuke for showing me his copy of *Shinri* 3 (August 3, 1892).

¹²³ Maruyama Kyōkai 丸山教会, *Shintō Maruyama Kyōkai kiyaku* 神道丸山教會規約, 1885, collection of Yamaguchi Prefectural Library, microfilm copy by Yuta Keizu Kyōkai, Salt Lake City, Utah, film reel #1836907, DGS #8078047, FamilySearch Library.



Figure 9: Print of Maruyama Isobe Kyōkai commissioned by Saitō Fukutarō to celebrate its completion in March 1893. The large facility contained a guesthouse, a staff office, and an official archive. Takahashi Family Collection. Reproduced by permission of Takahashi Kikuo.

In June 1893, four major leaders suddenly resigned from their administrative roles at Maruyamakyō headquarters, including Takaoka Koreyoshi as well as Urushibara Yūjiro and Saitō Fukutarō, two of Rokurōbei's earliest followers who had built the Maruyama-aligned churches and fought for control of Fusōkyō in 1879–1884.¹²⁴ Saitō had just finished ten years of construction on a massive new church building in March 1893 (Figure 9).¹²⁵ The new director of Maruyamakyō was Maruyama Yūka, who despite his coincidental name was not a follower of Rokurōbei but a petty bureaucrat and an old colleague of Takaoka from Shintō

¹²⁴ "Hon'in yakuin no shintai" 本院役員の進退, *Shintō* 10 (June 1893), 11. Takaoka remained caretaker of Maruyamakyō's satellite office in Tokyo through 1895.

¹²⁵ Zama-shi, *Zama shishi*, vol. 3, 196.

Honkyoku's central office.¹²⁶ The reason for these resignations is not known, but with the handover to Yūka, there was nobody left from the early days of the Maruyama *kō*, which suggests a complete victory of “worldly” bureaucratic authority over attempts to maintain faith in Rokurōbei. After Rokurōbei's death the following year, Urushibara's and Saitō's churches eventually broke away from Maruyamakyō entirely, and Urushibara's church no longer existed by the 1950s.¹²⁷

Maruyamakyō's membership was probably collapsing in this period, but neither Rokurōbei's hagiographies nor the *Oshirabe* text give us even a wisp of a reference to the startling acrimony which grassroots members in central Japan had suddenly developed towards Rokurōbei's administration of his sect, nor the disdain that the staff at Noborito headquarters appear to have held for their leader's teachings and healing practices, much less to the surprising top-level resignations of 1893. Yuri's postwar biography does mention that in December 1893, thirty grassroots division leaders confronted Maruyama Yūka in Noborito and demanded an immediate audit of Maruyamakyō's account books, which were found to be cooked, causing an “uproar” (*ōsawagi*). Yuri claims that Rokurōbei eased tensions with some words of wisdom, which is likely the only reason this particular incident made its way into the hagiography.¹²⁸ The catalogue of the Maruyamakyō archives

¹²⁶ “Shintō Jimukyoku kitsujin'in kyōmyō” 神道事務局詰人員交名, *Kaichi shinbun* 19 (December 10, 1876).

¹²⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, inserts (showing Saitō and the Urushibaras at Rokurōbei's funeral), 140.

¹²⁸ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 461–4.

suggests that although staff may not have kept full account books during this time, they did make records of their gambling losses from 1891 to 1893.¹²⁹

The surviving *Oshirabe* entries for this period of 1892–3 mostly analyze the abstract symbolism of the *Fuji nankyō* transmission text and Rokurōbei's own revealed formulae. Knowing the context of the rapid collapse of his movement and widespread loss of faith in him personally, the lack of reference to contemporaneous events in the *Oshirabe* text is offputting. Earlier sections of the text from 1887–1891 had discussed Japanese folklore, Buddhism, Fuji pilgrimage traditions, Shinto funerals, and Rokurōbei's life experiences. A postwar biographer noted that these final years of *Oshirabe* were “toned down” from his earlier enthusiasm¹³⁰ and suggested that “rather than attacking the external, he emphasized the purification of the internal.”¹³¹ It is as if, after the disastrous fallout from the teachings he had articulated in the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, Rokurōbei felt unable to guide his movement, and after taking bad advice from the “worldly” short-hairs at headquarters too many times, he finally retreated into himself.

Conclusion: Rokurōbei's death, March-April 1894

On March 30, 1894, Itō Rokurōbei passed away. The cause of death is not directly stated in his hagiographies; we are told only that he dismissed those who

¹²⁹ Kanagawa-ken, *Mokuroku*, 102–103: “Hon'in yakuin kake denchō” 本院役員賭伝帳, “Yakuin kakebō” 役員賭簿. See also Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 19n35.

¹³⁰ Aoki, “Kyōso no bannen,” 10.

¹³¹ Aoki, “Shōden,” 71r.

thought him ill and told them that he was enduring another ascetic trial that God had prepared for him.¹³² His words come off all the more pathetic given the widespread loss of faith and trust at this time, which these hagiographies fail to mention. Many believers thought he would live to 106¹³³ or 125, and his premature death at the age of 66 came as a shock.¹³⁴ The Tenrikyō foundress Nakayama Miki, who had openly taught that the ideal human lifespan was 115 years, had similarly surprised her followers by passing away in 1887 at the age of 88.¹³⁵ This seems to evidence a popular belief that the proof of true healing techniques is in the long life of the healer, which may be traceable to the legendary Chinese physician Sun Simiao, said to have lived for over 100 years.¹³⁶

Maruyamakyō recorded that over 15,200 mourners attended Rokurōbei's Shinto-style funeral.¹³⁷ This figure appears reliable.¹³⁸ It accords with the memory of a non-member who recalled a long procession of ponytailed believers and streets so packed that it was hard for her (a small child) to squeeze between them to see the coffin.¹³⁹ Rokurōbei's funeral presumably served as an important opportunity to bring those still loyal to him back to Noborito and begin to consider what united

¹³² Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, 117; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 479. In one of the fictions of Deguchi Onisaburō (*Reikai monogatari*, vol. 37, ch. 13), a character says that Rokurōbei was “punished by God and died in agony,” causing Maruyamakyō to dissolve. No further details are given beyond this sophomoric jibe, so it is unclear whether Onisaburō was aware of a long illness.

¹³³ Motoki, “Ōishi,” section 6.

¹³⁴ Aoki, “Shōden,” 77v.

¹³⁵ Tenrikyō, *Life of Oyasama*, 240.

¹³⁶ Wilms, “Nurturing Life.”

¹³⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 490.

¹³⁸ See Appendix, where I distinguish between this low figure and dubious high figures.

¹³⁹ Ogiwara, “Fujijo (5),” 26.

them as a movement. If Rokurōbei's life mission could be articulated and honored, perhaps the Maruyama movement might find a new coherence.

But what was that life mission, exactly? We saw in Chapter Two that during his early ascetic trials, famous among believers, he was at odds with Shishino Nakaba, but as we learned in Chapter Three, Shishino had an important influence over the structure and direction of the Maruyama movement during its rapid expansion. The movement, initially grounded in popular Fuji *kō* ideas of healing, revelation, moral economy and thrift, had been pulled into a Shinto world and commingled with different values and concepts of success. Some concepts in the movement, like TENMEI-KAITEN, were provided by Rokurōbei, while others, like “body purification” (*miharai*) as the term for healing prayer and “missionary tour” (*junkyō*), were apparently introduced by Shishino. This fits a common pattern in Japanese new religions, where a charismatic “shaman”-type figure is managed by a second leader who organizes the movement and standardizes its teachings. The incidents of Chapters Two through Four also evoke common struggles caused by such joint leadership. As Tsushima Michihito writes,

[I]ntense conflict often arises between the two. To leaders of the prophet-savior type, the actions of doctrinal-organizational leaders often appear compromising, prioritizing societal adaptation or “secular” (*sezokuteki*) success over the realization of values. Conversely, to the latter, the former's assertions tend to seem overly inflexible, stubbornly rigid, and oblivious to the objective conditions around them.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Inoue et al., *Shinshūkyō jiten*, 112. My translation.

What is less common in Japanese new religions is the downfall of the savior-type during his own lifetime and active attempts to reject rather than fulfill his vision, as described in this chapter. Fusōkyō-Maruyama had always been an uneasy alliance, but when Rokurōbei attempted to use the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons to fill the power vacuum created by Shishino's death, it instead worsened divisions at the top. Church leaders and "worldly" bureaucrats guided the movement towards an umbrella concept of Shinto which downplayed Rokurōbei's unique role and teachings, and some grassroots members seem to have soured on Rokurōbei's salvation vision as he struggled to explain his worldview through the *Oshirabe*. Some in 1894 still kept their topknots, symbols of a unique Maruyama mission;¹⁴¹ others believed more vaguely that Rokurōbei had been able to heal sick bodies and harmonize cosmic cycles but doubted his organizational skills; still others had come to fully reject Rokurōbei's leadership and instead saw Maruyamakyō as a plan to bring Shinto funerals and patriotism to the masses.

These past two chapters have sought to contextualize what is called the "*Mi* Division Incident," which was said to have been centered in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1884–6 and caused largely by a single man named Nishigaya Heijirō. We have seen that the movement did not run aground from a simple prophecy failure in Shizuoka; the *Mi* Division Incident was merely the most extreme expression of movement-wide problems. After Shishino's death in 1884, the now-massive *kō* needed strong

¹⁴¹ Ponytails persisted through the early 1900s and were revived in the 1920s: Shōrai-sei, "Chōhatsu."

leadership, but Rokurōbei proved unable to provide it, other than the deeply problematic TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, which he was forced to basically recant in 1887 under pressure from local and national authorities. In the absence of a firm hand, the *kō* gradually lost its sense of unified purpose, and corruption ran rampant at Maruyamakyō headquarters in Noborito. Taima Seishi observed that by the 1900s, some rural churches had ceased cooperating with Noborito entirely; their members were still climbing Fuji independently at the time of his writing in 1958.¹⁴²

How to handle a church that had lost a great amount of faith in its founder and organization? Luckily for Maruyamakyō, from mid-1893, reformists began to posit new ideas of reform and service which relied on shared concepts of “Shinto” and “religious groups,” rather than appealing to any specific revelation.¹⁴³ Perhaps Maruyamakyō could find new ways to be useful to its members and to the Japanese nation, if it could depart entirely from earlier ideas of its uniqueness and remodel itself as a “Shinto religion.” Building on Shishino Nakaba and Takaoka Koreyoshi’s past articulations of a purely Japanese “National Teaching” instructing the world, this ideal of Shinto reform would prove to be a guiding light for Maruyamakyō headquarters as it struggled to reconstitute its history and win back rural membership.

¹⁴² Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 19, 21n41.

¹⁴³ Kimura, “Meiji kōki,” 49, 51.

CHAPTER SIX:
IN THE SERVICE OF SHINTO,
1894–1945

With the death of Maruyamakyō founder Itō Rokurōbei on March 30, 1894, his son-in-law and appointed heir Itō Kuniyoshi could anticipate extensive daily responsibilities. Since the 1870s, Rokurōbei had practiced daily healings, relieving the suffering of the faithful by rubbing them with a Fuji transmission text and inscribing hundreds of talismans by hand. Since 1886, Rokurōbei had also aided believers unable to physically come to his church by relying on a new practice called *kagemiharai*, in which he would imbue objects with his healing power using a golden light which was said to come out of his fingers.¹ These powers were said to have come from Rokurōbei's extensive purifications and austerities such as lengthy fasting, which at times had brought him close to death.

Kuniyoshi was slow to fill the shoes of his father-in-law. First, he declared a 49-day period of mourning before he assumed the post of second leader of Maruyamakyō.² When the mourning period ended, he quickly left Maruyamakyō headquarters in Noborito and sailed to the city of Pyongyang in the Korean kingdom of Chosŏn, which had just surrendered to a Japanese invasion. There, he joined a Shinto-inclined Japanese politician named Maruyama Sakura (his surname

¹ Shirosaki, "Sono 18," 10.

² Yuri, *Kyōsōden*, 496.

is a coincidence), who intended to perform a massive public ritual blessing the Japanese soldiers who had landed in Korea in June and were now preparing to fight and die to defend Japan's interests there. Sakura had requested the participation not only of Maruyamakyō but also of two other private Shinto-linked organizations, Jingūkyō and Tenrikyō.

This August 1894 ritual was a historic disaster, and the lengthiest document Kuniyoshi ever produced is also the most detailed and honest account we have of its failure. And yet, by joining Sakura's expedition, Kuniyoshi snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. Following reports of antisocial behavior and corruption, Maruyamakyō continued to receive close scrutiny from police and critics in the 1890s, and the ongoing association with Chamber of Elders peer Maruyama Sakura assured the group's legitimacy. From Rokurōbei's death through the end of the Second World War, Maruyamakyō emerged from the blows of prophecy failure, internal collapse, and external attacks to become a small but functional expression of Sect Shinto: an explicitly religious, miracle-affirming organization that also represented itself as a way to export the "Japanese spirit" to the world.

Like most Japanese new religious movements, after Japan's defeat in World War II, Maruyamakyō focused on the story of its independent-minded founder and downplayed the influence of the many institution builders who came after him. Neither group members nor outside scholars have ever attempted to describe the history of Maruyamakyō after 1894. In this chapter, I will interpret period sources through the lens of the larger story of imperial-era Sect Shinto. We will see that by

wedding its fortune to Maruyama Sakura, Maruyamakyō was endorsing specific beliefs about the destiny of Japan. Maruyamakyō's commitment to this destiny reaffirmed the early ambitions of its former administrative leader Shishino Nakaba to construct a National Teaching that "may reach even into foreign realms."

The origins and early history of Sect Shinto, 1882–1894

As described in Chapters Two and Three, after the 1868 Meiji Restoration, many popular religions and community organizations were reorganized under the rubric of "Shinto," generally with radical changes to their theology and worship practices.³ The intent, at first, was for Shinto funerals and public ceremonies to be held at both preexisting shrines and at these new organizations, called *kyōkai* or "churches." However, in 1881–2, Meiji authorities became concerned that this new concept of Shinto, which served as the basis of imperial legitimacy, was becoming beholden to private teachings and theories. In May 1882, Shintoized communities which conducted preaching, proselytizing, and funerals were separated from shrines.⁴ Six Shinto "churches" were recognized as independent organizations, and shrines were now defined as "nonreligious." Scholars such as Inoue Nobutaka, Trent Maxey, and Katsurajima Nobuhiro have described this 1882 event as the origin of the concept of Sect Shinto (*kyōha shintō*), although the separation of shrines from

³ Hardacre, "Creating State Shintō."

⁴ For the debate which led to this decision, see Nitta, "Non-Religion."

churches did not yet create “religions” with the same autonomy as Buddhism or Christianity.⁵

Shinto churches were now legally separated from shrines, but policy makers continued to consider them as having some special “Shinto” properties in opposition to private religion. In 1881, Shinto funerals were outlawed, and then in 1882 permitted only to those Sect Shinto churches that registered a separate legal corporation and built a separate building.⁶ These roadblocks represent a temporary cautiousness by legislators. From 1884, blanket permission was granted for private funerals, and Shinto sects were permitted to license their own preachers without government oversight. Legally, the Shinto sects were moving towards the autonomy granted to Buddhists and Christians. Socially, their position was still much contested.

The status of Sect Shinto in 1891 can be seen from a period debate between Yamazaki Taisuke, a medical doctor, and Isobe Mushagorō, who edited the scriptures of the sect Shintō Taiseikyō. As documented in a recent article by Kimura Yūnosuke, Yamazaki argued that Shinto originated in non-sectarian rituals to respect one’s ancestors. He attributed “ethical sentiments” to the rituals at the “ancestral mausolea” of “state Shinto” (*kokkā shintō*) and the “household mausolea” of “personal Shinto” which correctly carried on this tradition and distinguished them from “divinity (*shinmei*) imagined through religious sentiments,” which

⁵ Inoue, *Keisei*, 27; Okuyama, “State Shinto,” 126; Maxey, “*Greatest Problem*,” 162–3.

⁶ Yoshimura, “Shiu.” These funeral homes or *shiu* had a separate legal existence from *kyōkai* churches until 1939, although only 20 were ever built.

produced sectarian teachings—accretions on Shinto, not Shinto proper. Defending his sect in reply, Isobe was in agreement that Shinto did not originate as a religion but pointed out that its initial form had to be distinguished from the origins of Christianity as well as what he calls the “ancestor worship of savages,” invoking European colonial depictions of so-called African nature worship and totemism. Shinto was a distinct form which needed to be distinguished from these other forms. Therefore, this hypothetical original Shinto already constituted a “sect” and “teaching” by virtue of its unique Japanese traits and merited development into a religion.⁷

Even if this defense of sectarian Shinto carried some currency at the time, it still demonstrates the precarity of the category. Shinto’s defenders generally presented the tradition as nonsectarian from the beginning and purely public in its restoration, freed from private theories. To demonstrate their own legitimacy, sectarians also had to present their innovations as pure—both in theology and in practice. Some of the issues this raised are illustrated by Shintoists’ incensed response to Kume Kunitake, who argued in October 1891 that the original, non-religious Shinto was also monotheistic in nature (and thereby suitable for the rituals of a highly developed nation).⁸ Of course, if the ancient Shinto was monotheistic, then paying respects to Amaterasu and other imperial ancestors was a later innovation, and Kume accordingly argued that Ise Jingū enshrined Heaven,

⁷ Kimura, “Kume Kunitake,” 51–2.

⁸ Ikeda, “Kume Kunitake;” Kimura, “Kume Kunitake.” Incidentally, Kume’s argument was also used by Japanese Christians to defend Shinto at the 1893 Chicago World’s Parliament of Religions: Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism*, 192.

not a specific ancestor. Following shrine priest complaints, Kume was roundly condemned for this hypothesis and was fired from Tokyo Imperial University.⁹ Theology must have been a delicate matter for the Shinto sects of this time, many of which—including Maruyamakyō—prayed to a creator deity or triad of deities rather than a specific ancestor.

The most serious problem for these groups, however, was not their theology but their practice. Besides funerals, healings posed a problem. The desire to organize a nationwide *kyōdōshoku* system had caused the state to turn a blind eye to the ritual healings practiced within several of these sects, but with the end of this system in 1884, this restraint had been lost. Popular and newly arisen groups such as Tenrikyō, Renmonkyō, and Maruyamakyō were accused of betraying the “public” goals of Shinto for “private interests.” Their practitioners were depicted not as real Shintoists, but as con artists using the name of Shinto to delude the general public with promises of healing.¹⁰ Newspapers regularly lambasted these groups, and early religious studies scholars such as Anesaki Masaharu were initially uncomfortable with them.¹¹ This is probably why, as we saw in Chapter Three, ritual healing in the Maruyama movement was rarely mentioned in the many internal publications of the 1870s and 80s despite its centrality to everyday practice and recruitment.

⁹ Kimura, “Kume Kunitake.”

¹⁰ c.f. Nanba, *Fuhai*.

¹¹ Inoue, *New Religions*, 27–46; Isomae, *Religious Discourse*, 64.

Nevertheless, even activists on this issue must have been aware that the public desired more than non-sectarian, civic ritual from Shinto. Sarah Thal has written about how the split between “decorous, Shinto enactment of a proto-middle-class social morality” on one hand, and “individual pursuit of miraculous aspirations” on the other, joined together at Kotohira Shrine in 1894, when the Sino-Japanese War drove popular desire for “miraculous” response to prayers.¹² Shrines were not allowed to promise such answers and healings, but the “private” groups now labeled Sect Shinto to some extent could make such promises, with doctrines available to explain and regulate them.

Additionally, some shrine priests saw value in Sect Shinto for the customs it developed that had been forbidden to shrines. In 1868, the “restored” imperial government had reinstituted the ancient Jingikan (Department of Divinities) and pronounced “unity of rite and rule” (*saisei-icchi*), but over the years, the Jingikan had been abolished, priests had been forbidden to preach, and now the government seemed dangerously close to putting Christianity on an equal footing with Shinto. After the opening of the Imperial Diet in 1889, shrine priests lobbied elected legislators to bring back the Jingikan, and in 1893 secured signatures of approval from 120 out of 300 Diet members.¹³ But how would the Jingikan supply the household rites such as funerals which were currently the domain of Buddhism and

¹² Sawada, *Practical Pursuits*, 238–9; Thal, *Rearranging*, 203–236.

¹³ Maxey, “*Greatest Problem*,” 199–200.

Christianity? We will see that a few ideologues had high hopes for the rites that had been developed by the private Shinto sects.

Finally, Sect Shinto promised an imperial identity which could operate in a globalized world. In his seminal monograph on the formation of Sect Shinto, Inoue Nobutaka emphasizes that the concept of Sect Shinto was closely tied to globalization. Inoue invokes the concept of the “globe” as a borderless free market in which “religions” compete to capture the hearts of the global public. From early on, Sect Shintoists anticipated the need for a globalized, portable concept of loyalty to the gods and to the emperor.¹⁴ In Chapter Two, we saw a version of this idea articulated by Shishino Nakaba in his 1873 plan to convert the Fuji *kō* into a “state religion” or National Teaching (*kokkyō*). The 28-year-old Shishino had desired that through his institution building, “a century from now, our church may reach even into foreign realms.”¹⁵ In contrast to the dominant view of Shinto, Shishino enthusiastically positioned his National Teaching as an object of individual faith and conversion; this was how he planned to take the gods and emperor abroad.

The Maruyama movement was, from the start, based heavily in the preexisting beliefs and practices of the Fuji *kō*, groups which had been centered near Mount Fuji in the Tokugawa period. The greatest interest in the movement naturally came from communities in these specific locations, and more generally within Japan. Despite this hurdle, soon after the movement split from Shishino’s

¹⁴ Inoue, *Keisei*, 361–366.

¹⁵ Hirano, *Fuji shinkō*, 206.

Fusōkyō and was incorporated as Maruyamakyō in 1885, there was a concerted effort to demonstrate Rokurōbei's healing abilities to foreign dignitaries. In 1886, Rokurōbei reportedly healed the wife of Qing ambassador Xu Chengzhu, who sent a delegation to Noborito to thank him, as well as the Prussian military advisor Jakob Meckel, who sent a bouquet of flowers.¹⁶

Even during Rokurōbei's lifetime, Maruyamakyō was also participating in early attempts to bring Sect Shinto to the Korean kingdom of Chosŏn. The earliest attempt at this was Shintō Shūsei-ha, which did unspecified missionary work there in 1885–6.¹⁷ Starting in October 1890, Kurozumikyō began distributing talismans in Pyongyang, Inch'ŏn and Pusan, earning praise from the Japanese consulate in Pyongyang.¹⁸ In May 1891 a Maruyamakyō church was built in Busan and soon attracted seventy to eighty (probably Japanese) converts, according to an outside observer.¹⁹ Even shrine priests who eyed Sect Shinto with suspicion understood that these sects were a powerful means to export sympathy with Japan overseas. Commenting on Kurozumikyō's early efforts, a shrine priest named Yamaguchi Masaoki affirmed the value of Sect Shinto instructors for guiding the “lowest strata of society,” but belittled Kurozumikyō's evangelism in Korea as inadequate, saying that “the key areas for attempting missionary work overseas are not limited to Korea alone,” and warned that misbehaving sects would not be “officially recognized

¹⁶ Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 399–401.

¹⁷ Inoue, *Keisei*, 239; Kwŏn, “Kyōha Shintō,” 31.

¹⁸ “Chōsen Keijō e wareware Shintō kyōkai no secchi” 朝鮮京城へ我々神道教会を設置, *Yomiuri shinbun*, July 12, 1891, 3; Kwŏn, “Kyōha Shintō,” 37–8.

¹⁹ Katō Fuminori 加藤文教, “Chōsen-koku Pusan tsūshin” 朝鮮国釜山通信, *Meikyō shinshi* 3063 (May 12, 1892), 5–6.

as religions in wholly civilized nations.”²⁰ Evidently, some in the shrine priest world had an even greater vision for the orderly spread of new religious sects that operated under the name of Shinto.

During the 1880s, popular publications in Japan began to describe the Japanese as an “expansionist” people. Lacking much basis in premodern history, this expansionary rhetoric was driven by the experience of American-guided settler colonialism in Hokkaido, but soon it was also applied to encourage immigration of Japanese to America.²¹ Many Fuji *oshi* families, as their traditional means of income dried up, immigrated in large numbers to Hawaii, Seattle, and Los Angeles from 1905 onward.²² They would eventually be joined by a handful of Maruyamakyō leaders, fulfilling Shishino’s 1873 dream.

Itō Kuniyoshi’s networking with Maruyama Sakura, 1881–1894

Itō Kuniyoshi (1857–1906) was adopted by Maruyama *kō* member Itō Rokurōbei at the age of three. He was a teenager in 1870 when Rokurōbei began his salvation mission. In honor of his father’s mission, he wore his hair in a ponytail throughout his life.²³ By 1885 it was clear that Kuniyoshi would inherit Rokurōbei’s role as executive leader of Maruyamakyō; as we saw in Chapter Five, the Maruyama movement’s split from Fusōkyō was engineered with Kuniyoshi’s

²⁰ Yamaguchi M., “Shinshoku, kyōdōshoku,” 23.

²¹ Lu, “Eastward Ho!”; Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 17–33.

²² Yamanashi-ken, *Yamanashi kenshi minzokuhen*, 379.

²³ Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage,” 16.

assistance, so to some extent the job title was made for him. However, Kuniyoshi's initial activities as Maruyamakyō leader were driven not by Rokurōbei's idiosyncratic salvation mission, but by Fusōkyō founder Shishino Nakaba's well-cultivated Shinto networks.

In 1875, Shintō Jimukyoku, Shishino's place of employment, had established an academy in the Hibiya neighborhood of Tokyo. This was a successor institution to the educational functions of the then-recently disestablished Daikyōin and was meant to educate both the sons of shrine priests and future leaders of Shinto churches (*kyōkai*).²⁴ It held classes in shrine ritual, poetry, and classical Japanese, with readings from Motoori Norinaga, Hirata Atsutane, and other Kokugaku writers.²⁵ Although he was not an administrator at the academy, Shishino was devoted to cultivating it as a social network and was remembered for hosting parties there with food and liquor for the students.²⁶

Shishino appears to have brought 24-year-old Kuniyoshi to this academy in 1881. By hobnobbing there, Kuniyoshi developed friendships with future intellectual leaders such as Mikami Sanji (later a prominent historian) and Imaizumi Sadasuke (later cofounder of Kokugakuin University), but his most important connection was 22-year-old Maruyama Masahiko, who had just arrived in Tokyo with his recently paroled adoptive father, conservative *éminence grise*

²⁴ Tonami, *Meiji shoki*, 87.

²⁵ Tonami, *Meiji shoki*, 163–9; Maruyama Y., *Masahiko-den*, 24–6.

²⁶ Takeda T., “Kokugakusha,” 196–7. This is discussed briefly in English in Shimazono, “Lives of the People,” 114–5, but the Shintō Jimukyoku academy is casually mistranslated as a “student dorm.” Tonami, *Meiji shoki*, 148f, discusses the educational mandate of the academy.

Maruyama Sakura.²⁷ Within a few years, Masahiko's sister Sugabu was raising Kuniyoshi's son Tokuju, who was presumed to be a future leader of Maruyamakyō.²⁸ Shishino's earlier network building outside of the formal structures of Shinto affiliation and regulation had indirectly provided Maruyamakyō with a sort of godfather figure.²⁹

Maruyama Sakura had a particular vision of how Shinto might transform the Japanese polity, linked tightly to his many other projects. Where Rokurōbei had stepped into history by receiving the power of Mount Fuji, and Shishino began his career by removing Buddha statues from Fuji's sacred landscape, Sakura first made a splash by protecting the honor of mountains: in the 1860s he had condemned his own daimyo for allowing Englishmen to violate the sacred slopes of Mount Unzen in Nagasaki, and for his insubordination was thrown in prison.³⁰ When Meiji coup leaders came to free Sakura from prison in 1868, they found him wearing his left lapel over his right, a dress typically associated with a dead body, but which he explained symbolized the original purity of the East Asian peoples before Confucius imposed Chinese propriety on them.³¹ In January 1871, he helped hide two students who had attempted to murder Charles Henry Dallas and Augustus Ring, two guest

²⁷ Itō Iten, *Inage*, 187; Maruyama Y., *Masahiko-den*, 18.

²⁸ Maruyama, "Maruyamakyō," Shirosaki, "Sono 5," 9. The name of Tokuju's nurse can be ascertained by inspecting Sakura's family tree.

²⁹ Maruyama leadership claim that Sakura himself began collaborating regularly with Kuniyoshi around 1894, after Rokurōbei's death. (Tennangen-sei, "Maruyama Sakura," 19) However, Sakura's collaborator in Tenrikyō, Shimizu Yūnosuke, attended the birth of Kuniyoshi's son Kanju in 1888. (Itō Kuniyoshi, "Tenrikyō," 9) It seems hard to deny that Kuniyoshi was working with Sakura's network before 1894.

³⁰ Maruyama M., *Sakura-den*, 44; Walthall, *Useless Body*, 296.

³¹ Takagi Hiroshi, "Shinto kokkyōka," 48n41.

teachers at the Daigaku Nankō who had infuriated the students by keeping Japanese mistresses in their quarters. Dallas and Ring barely survived.³²

Sakura's xenophobic *modus operandi* can be seen from these early incidents as a quixotic defense of an imagined Japanese purity by any means necessary: keeping sacred mountains pure of foreign feet, keeping ancient dress pure of Chinese decadence, and keeping Japanese women pure of foreign violation. The elimination of the corrupting influence of Buddhism on the ancient way of the *kami* was part of this nativist program, and Sakura moonlighted at the Jingikan in 1869, but at first it was not as high as a priority as his desire to rapidly seize territory from Russia and Korea. In mid-1871 he was again imprisoned for attempting to steal a merchant vessel from the British firm Jardine Matheson to filibuster Korea with a volunteer army, and this time he received a life sentence.³³

In 1880, Sakura was paroled at the request of Navy Minister Enomoto Takeaki and moved to Tokyo, where he was asked to intervene in disputes surrounding the future of Shinto.³⁴ He started several associations, including a conservative newspaper, a political party, and an historical society, even while remaining continuously involved in Shinto affairs. In 1884 he was one of those paying last respects to Shishino Nakaba on his deathbed.³⁵ Besides drawing close to

³² British Foreign Office, "Japan Correspondence, 1856–1905," vol. 137 (1871), Nineteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, 36, 85–7, 92–4. Sakura's direct involvement can be inferred from the testimony of the spy Nakamura Rokuzō: Nakamura, *Rakkanshi*, 91–3.

³³ Kokuryūkai, *Seinan kiden*, vol. 1, 208ff.

³⁴ Sakamoto Ken'ichi, "Imaizumi Sadasuke," 304.

³⁵ Fukuda, *Kyōsoden*, 133.

Fusōkyō and Maruyama leadership, Sakura is also said to have praised Tenrikyō as “the modernization of Shinto” (*Shintō no gendaika*).³⁶ Given his background of fast-moving and often reckless nationalist activism, Sakura’s endorsements of Fusōkyō, Tenrikyō, and Maruyamakyō in the 1880s suggest that he was not particularly upset by the clashes between the latter two groups and secular authorities at this time, and that he saw the development of Shinto sects as a valuable step towards mass adoption of Shinto.

The War God Rite, 1894

Sakura’s Sect Shinto network building came to fruition in June 1894 when Japanese troops began landing in Korea with the intent of ending Chosŏn’s centuries-old relationship with China and attacking the Qing army directly. Sakura called for Sect Shinto ministers from Tenrikyō, Maruyamakyō, and Jingūkyō to hold a War God Rite (Gunjinsai) on Korean territory with army generals in attendance.³⁷ Prince Arisugawa had given imperial permission for the rite, but it was not yet clear how official it would be, given the 1884 disestablishment of the *kyōdōshoku* system licensing Shinto preachers; shrine priests would not have been able to propose a military rite themselves, due to the closure of the Jingikan.³⁸ True to

³⁶ Takano, *Shimizu*, 162.

³⁷ Itō Iten, *Inage*, 187. The War God Rite had been initially invented in 1867 by the revived Jingikan and was held annually through 1870, when the Dajōkan canceled it. Sakura’s version was revised to include, among other things, a chorus of schoolchildren singing *Kimigayo*.

³⁸ Shrines had been given a purposefully diminished administration and left to manage their own affairs. See Sakamoto, “State Shinto,” 272.

form, Sakura was pushing the limits of legal possibility. One Western reporter was told that “Mr. Maruyama Sakura, an official of the Imperial Household, and a renowned Shinto priest, has gone over to Korea *in his individual capacity*” (emphasis added). Would the generals recognize the rite as a public event? The reporter was additionally told that Sakura planned “to conduct the funerals of dead soldiers.”³⁹ Presumably the Sect Shinto leaders including Kuniyoshi, who had published a unique funeral rite for Maruyamakyō, would be called on for this second endeavor as well, since shrine priests were not allowed to conduct funerals.

Sakura’s friend within Tenrikyō was refused permission to travel by Tenrikyō’s spiritual leader Izō Iburi, but his eventual team included Kuniyoshi and some allies from within the Jingūkyō sect. Arriving in Pusan, they stayed at the Maruyamakyō church there.⁴⁰ Once in Pyongyang, Sakura received permission from Japanese ambassador Ōtori Keisuke and General Nozu Michitsura, commander of the division surrounding Pyongyang, to conduct the War God Rite as a public ritual, but all was not well. Kuniyoshi records that the Jingūkyō leader in charge of reading the *norito* prayer, Fujii Itsu (1853–1898), spent several days arguing with 24-year-old Jingūkyō member Konishi Senkichi (1870–1894). Konishi had initially been sent as a ritualist but now insisted that it was inappropriate for “private” Sect Shintoists to officiate a War God Rite as a public ceremony of the Japanese government. The argument culminated the night before the ceremony with Konishi

³⁹ “Priests in the Army,” *Japan Weekly Mail*, August 4, 1894. It does not seem accurate to describe Sakura as a “Shinto priest” by occupation.

⁴⁰ Itō Iten, *Inage*, 187–8.

stealing Fujii's calligraphed formal copy of the *norito* text, which was meant to be placed on the altar as an offering. When Fujii discovered on the morning of the rite that his text was missing, he drank himself into a stupor.⁴¹

The ritual site had already been prepared with *torii* gates and *shimenawa* ropes. With generals and officials, soldiers, Westerners, Koreans, journalists, and a chorus of Japanese schoolchildren already showing up, there was no time to reschedule. Sakura, Kuniyoshi, and the others attempted to continue the ceremony as normal as Fujii stumbled onto the seats of military officials, passed out multiple times, vomited, and slurred his words into an incoherent mumble during the *norito* reading.⁴² As soon as the crowd filed out, military police issued a warrant for Fujii's arrest on the grounds of disrespect towards the sacred symbols of Japan, and he hid from the law for a time while Sakura's party beat a hasty retreat back to Japan, without being able to demonstrate Shinto funeral rites as they had apparently planned.⁴³ Konishi, a wanted thief, spent two months evading police in Korean hamlets before he died, reportedly from eating rotten fruit.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Itō Iten, *Inage*, 190–5. The argument is also documented by the source Sakai, *Kijin den*, 57, which is biased towards Konishi. Kwōn, “Kyōha Shintō,” 43–5, has details on Konishi's initial charge. The exact reason why Fujii fell into despair over the loss of the *norito* text is not clear to me, but it would seem it constituted a ritual impropriety.

⁴² “Dai-Nihon guntai hisshō no saijō” 大日本軍隊必勝之祭場, *Chūgai shōgyō shinpo*, September 9, 1894, quoted in Itō Iten, *Inage*, 201. Fujii read from a messy draft of the *norito*, which was not placed on the altar.

⁴³ Itō Iten, *Inage*, 195–200. Fujii was eventually captured and served prison time. His son, Kaya Okinori (1889–1977), smuggled cocaine to China during World War II. Kaya was convicted as a class-A war criminal for his role in Japan's invasion but was freed by request of the CIA who used him as a fixer. He was likely a collaborator of fellow drug smuggler and CIA fixer Yoshio Kodama (1911–1984).

⁴⁴ Sakai, *Kijin den*, 58; “Konishi Senkichi-kun iku” 小西千吉君逝く, *Seika* 35 (November 1894), 54.

The failure of the ritual was caused in equal parts by Konishi's meddling and theft and Fujii's irrational despair. Despite this, the shrine priest world generally took sides with Konishi. "Mr. Maruyama tried to raise up Shinto," wrote the editors of *Kokugaku* magazine, but "he was sent off with sneers. Fujii Itsu's misconduct made the world despise us. Konishi Senkichi, though he might have become a leader with his robust martial spirit, passed away amidst dark clouds. Who now can take his place?"⁴⁵ The condemnation was being directed not towards Fujii alone but towards the concept of the ritual itself. Writing in *Kamunagara* magazine, Nishijima Mitsuru argued that Fujii's true act of *lèse-majesté* came not when he attempted to officiate while drunk, but, as Konishi had argued, when he decided to conduct an official rite despite his position as a Sect Shintoist. "Shinto is not a religious category; it is clear that rites must be performed by shrine priests, not by *kyōdōshoku*. Take Yasukuni Shrine, for instance: it employs shrine priests, not *kyōdōshoku*. Yet Fujii, heedless of the imperial will, sought to perform the rites himself. Thereby the War God punished him for his discourtesy [...] Reading the reports of the War God Rite," Nishijima concludes, "I am more convinced than ever

⁴⁵ "Shintōka wa ikan" 神道家は如何, *Kokugaku* 1 (December 1894), 66–7.

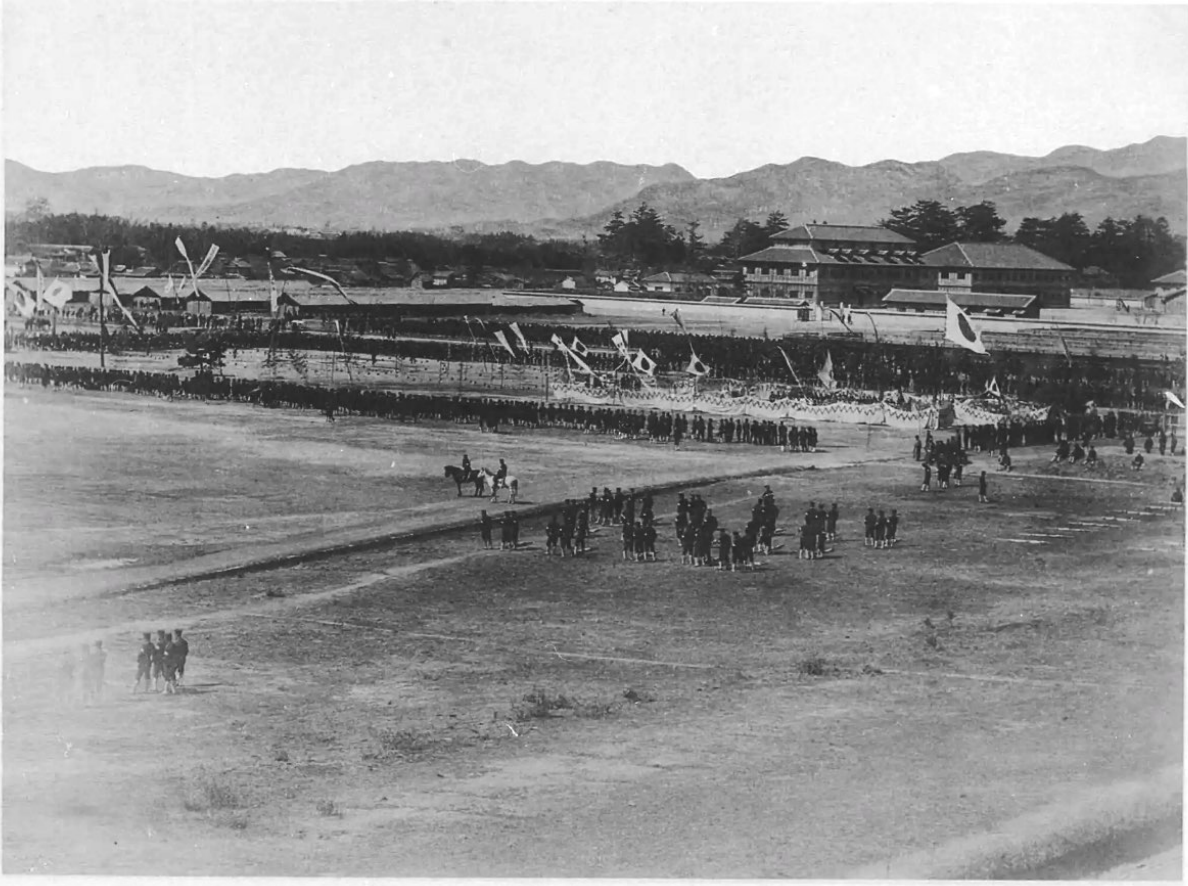


Figure 10: War God Rite officiated by Jingūkyō priests in Hiroshima. March 31, 1895. From Kamei, Sen'eki shasshinjō, vol. 2.

that the Jingikan must be restored.”⁴⁶ That is to say, official Shinto ritual had to be organized by an official government agency, not by Sect Shintoists who earned their living through private activities.

The Sect Shinto world had very different reactions. Upon returning to Japan, Sakura held additional War God Rites at locations throughout the country, with Maruyamakyō leaders and Kuniyoshi participating in some, and Jingūkyō ministers (less Fujii) participating in others.⁴⁷ Soldiers attended and marched at

⁴⁶ Nishijima Mitsuru, “Gunjinsai no ki wo yonde Fujii-shi no fukei o benji Jingikan no fukkō o nozomu” 軍神祭ノ記ヲ讀テ藤井氏ノ不敬ヲ辨シ神祇ノ復興ヲ望ム, *Kamunagara* 232 (April 1895): 54.

⁴⁷ Yuri, *Kyōsōden*, 497; Tennangen-sei, “Maruyama Sakura,” 20.

these private Shinto rites (Figure 10), and Maruyamakyō priests were able to hand out talismans to the soldiers, making them successful sites of Shinto proselytization.⁴⁸ A Konkōkyō source, while describing the ritual in Pyongyang as a “great blunder,” reports that their leaders felt compelled to send their own ministers to the war front, precisely in line with Sakura’s goals.⁴⁹ Kurozumikyō sent their own ministers to Pyongyang in October 1894 who imitated the War God Rite by constructing a ritual stage with *shimenawa* rope, Japanese flags and an altar to pray for the “pacification of Chosŏn.”⁵⁰ Jikkōkyō did not deign to remark on Sakura’s folly, but they did notice when the Jingūkyō priests returned to the front in March 1895 to minister to soldiers, and the Jikkōkyō president himself went there starting in May.⁵¹

Some general-audience newspapers whitewashed Fujii’s impropriety, while others reported on the sordid details, but it was rare for journalists to impugn the solemn national motives behind the botched “public” rite. One exception was the magazine *Nihonjin*, which claimed that Sakura’s patriotic initiative was a mere opportunistic reaction to the Higashi Honganji sect’s plan to use Pure Land Buddhism to comfort Japanese soldiers.⁵² The timeline makes this unlikely; both

⁴⁸ Itō Akiyoshi, *Niikura*, 58. Officiants included Maruyama Yūka and Fukagawa Namiho (see Table 2); the talismans were distributed by Niikura Hachirōbei.

⁴⁹ Satō, *Konkōkyō kyōgaku kōen*, 59.

⁵⁰ “Keijō ni okeru Shintō Kurozumikyō kyōkaijo” 京城に於る神道黒住教教会所, *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 10, 1894, 2.

⁵¹ Imai, “Kaigai fukkyō.”

⁵² “Maruyama Sakura to Gunjinsai,” *Nihonjin* 16 (October 15, 1894): 76–7.

groups boarded ships to Korea at almost the same time.⁵³ It seems more probable that Higashi Honganji and Sakura independently realized the unique opportunity presented by Japan's first overseas war in 300 years to demonstrate the utility of their respective sects.

For many within Japan, the Qing-Japanese War represented a fight for liberal government in East Asia against a reactionary enemy. The Christian convert Uchimura Kanzō predicted that “Japan's victory will mean free government, free education, free religion, and free commerce for 600,000,000 souls that live on this side of the globe.”⁵⁴ For Maruyama Sakura, and implicitly for his Sect Shinto allies including his most reliable friend Itō Kuniyoshi, the war represented something else. Through experiencing the perils of war, they thought, Japan might better understand the value of the Sect Shinto churches and move towards becoming an explicitly Shinto empire. Even if the Shinto sects did not accept Sakura's lifelong dream of reconquering Korea, they saw the value he had set through making sects available to the state. Despite the failure of the War God Rite itself, general-audience newspapers were muted in their criticism of Sakura, and Maruyamakyō was even able to proselytize to soldiers during the domestic War God Rites.

⁵³ It is true that Higashi Honganji began internally planning a Korea mission on July 9, but Sakura's delegation had already arrived at the Hiroshima port on July 24, before Higashi Honganji named their own missionaries on July 25 (they left on July 28) and indeed before the king of Joseon had even surrendered to the Japanese Army. Takaishi and Kuriyama, “Bukkyō,” 176; Kojima, Endō, and Takahashi, “Kindai,” 147–8; Itō Iten, *Inage*, 187–8.

⁵⁴ Jager, *Great Game*, 135.

Maruyama Sakura's Legacy for Maruyamakyō, 1895–1910

Maruyama Sakura cast a long shadow over Maruyamakyō. In 1895, Kuniyoshi named him the church's executive director. Sakura's son wrote that he revised the "tenets" (*kyōshi*) of Maruyamakyō to bring it in line with national progress.⁵⁵ Apparently Sakura offered some friendly advice to leaders on how to reinterpret the problematic divine phrase TENMEI-KAITEN as a call to Shinto restoration, which was not taken.⁵⁶ In 1899, Kuniyoshi and Sakura collaborated to open a "Far Eastern Language Academy," although Sakura succumbed to illness before this came to fruition. Surviving documents show that Sakura envisioned using the language school for explicitly political ends, to "negotiate with Korea and China so that they might be returned to us as protectorates or occupied territories ... and extend enlightenment and benefit the Emperor's cause within the homeland." The school's Japanese teaching program was linked to Sakura's desire to purify and strengthen the Japanese language and demonstrate its superiority to neighboring languages.⁵⁷

Even more revealing is how Maruyamakyō enshrined Sakura after his own death and the 1908 death of Kuniyoshi. When Japan annexed Korea in 1910, Maruyamakyō held a memorial service commemorating the tenth anniversary of Sakura's death and celebrating the fulfillment of his colonial ambitions for Korea. Sakura's son and Kuniyoshi's friend Masahiko spoke at the service and recalled the

⁵⁵ Maruyama M., *Sakura-den*, 229.

⁵⁶ Tennangen-sei, "Maruyama Sakura," 20.

⁵⁷ Maruyama M., *Sakura-den*, 242; Handa, "Maruyama Sakura," 126–8.

warm domestic reception of the War God Rite.⁵⁸ After the ceremony in Noborito, Maruyamakyō headquarters ordered memorials for Sakura to be conducted at churches across the country.⁵⁹ Although Sakura never professed any belief in Rokurōbei's salvation mission, the church organ *Kami no hikari* claimed that he had “conducted missionary tours (*junkyō*) in various regions for the sake of our church”—presumably meaning the War God Rites—and that many Maruyamakyō members had requested calligraphy, postcards, inscribed pottery, etc., from him on these tours and treasured these items ever since.⁶⁰

Months of eulogies and praise for Sakura were recorded in *Kami no hikari* throughout 1910, but negative reactions were not. Shortly after World War II, one Maruyamakyō elder bitterly recalled that “because of Sakura, Maruyamakyō was strongly guided in nationalistic directions and drew closer to ordinary Shinto.” This writer denied that Sakura had ever done anything like a missionary tour.⁶¹ Sasaki Chiyomatsu also recalled that many of those faithful to Rokurōbei left during Kuniyoshi's collaboration with Sakura.⁶² These negative assessments of Kuniyoshi's tenure may be the result of *post facto* regret in the wake of Japan's surrender, but considering the widespread dissent in 1892–4 seen in Chapter Five, it does seem

⁵⁸ Maruyama M., “Maruyamakyō.” In Masahiko's telling, Fujii Itsu was called away to Tokyo on urgent business, leaving Sakura and Kuniyoshi to lead the War God Rite in Pyongyang.

⁵⁹ “Kakuchi de okonaishi Tai-sai to Gappō-sai to Maruyama-ō-10-nen-sai” 各地で行いし泰祭と合邦祭と丸山翁十年祭, *Kami no hikari* 10 and 11 (November and December 1910). This list incidentally shows cooperative churches were operating in Ibaraki, Aichi, Chiba, Shizuoka, Tokyo, and at the branch church in Busan, Korea.

⁶⁰ “Maruyama ō iboku ni tsuite” 丸山翁遺墨に就いて *Kami no hikari* 9 (October 1910).

⁶¹ Tennangen-sei, “Maruyama Sakura,” 20. I suspect this is a pseudonym for Itō Iten; see Epilogue.

⁶² Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*, 255.

likely that there were also objections to Kuniyoshi's alliance with Sakura that went unrecorded at the time.⁶³ Rokurōbei had consistently opposed war throughout his life, and in his public sermons he had even condemned Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu as murderers.⁶⁴ It was apparently widely known at the time that just before his death, as relations with China were worsening, Rokurōbei had suggested to some of his followers that his lifelong slogan of peace and justice, *tenka-taihei*, should also be read backwards as *heitai-katen*: "the army will not win."⁶⁵

As Maruyamakyō emerged from a painful period of political persecution, institutional corruption, and widespread internal dissent, Sakura's vision of religious specialists performing important rituals for the nation in a time of war was inspiring to Maruyamakyō leadership, as it was for the leadership of Japan's major Buddhist and Shinto sects.⁶⁶ Although it is likely that there was some frustration over the radical shift away from Rokurōbei's pacifist mission, *Kami no hikari*'s posthumous portrait of Sakura as a Maruyamakyō missionary speaks to the long-term appeal of Sakura's use of Maruyamakyō to express his hopes for Sect Shinto. This appeal apparently extended to many rural branch churches as well and

⁶³ Despite extensive searching, I could not find any evidence as to whether the War God Rite was connected to the departure of Saitō and the Urushibaras from Maruyamakyō (see Chapter Five). A diary entry from March 1914 describes Urushibara Shika giving the reasons for her departure to church leaders, but the content of her talk is not recorded: Ujihara, "Tansei nikki," 459.

⁶⁴ "Shintō Fusō fusetsu no maki" 神道扶桑不説之巻, May 1884, Emura Eiichi Collection. Rokurōbei taught that Ieyasu ignored the teachings of Buddhism and killed 13,606 people.

⁶⁵ Many postwar sources attest to this: Itō Iten, "Kyōso no gonichijō," 4; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 63n4, 454; Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*, 217–8, 248; Aoki, "Shōden," 78r. But this anecdote was never published anywhere until after World War II.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Schroeder, *Revolution of Buddhist Modernism*, 153f.

encouraged members to see the colonization of the Korean peninsula as part of the fulfillment of Japan's divinely ordained destiny.⁶⁷

Maruyamakyō's Sacramento disaster, 1904–6

From its origins in 1850s Perry expeditions, the word “religion” served in Japan's international relations as a special type of visa, permitting the trans-Pacific flow of both ideas and people to convey them. As J. J. Storm writes in *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, religion was a “diplomatic category,” and the negotiation of its definition in America and Japan's treaty negotiations reflected “tactical efforts on the part of Japanese diplomats to quarantine Christianity and forestall missionary activity.”⁶⁸ The eventual 1854 Treaty of Peace and Amity proclaimed that “Americans in Japan shall be allowed the free exercise of their religion” and that the “Government of Japan has already abolished the practice of trampling on religious emblems.”⁶⁹ Teachings considered foreign and dangerous by many Japanese authorities were now permitted, foreigners were being allowed into the country to practice them, and the habitual denunciation of these teachings by Japanese official agencies was accordingly halted.

From the 1880s, America permitted free immigration from Japan. This immigration would later be restricted by the Gentlemen's Agreement and Alien

⁶⁷ Maruyamakyō's third leader Itō Iten would serve as Shinto representative at the funeral of King Kojong of Korea in 1917. This ritual also failed: Itō Iten, “Shimonoseki.”

⁶⁸ Josephson, *Invention*, 73.

⁶⁹ Josephson, *Invention*, 89.

Land Laws, but until 1907, America's West Coast was an open border, which prominent Japanese intellectuals saw as a valuable opportunity. Guidebooks appealed to Japanese readers with depictions of the West Coast as an fertile land empty for the taking, and its recently genocided Native American population was compared to the pacified and harmless Ainu.⁷⁰ Fukuzawa Yukichi, adopting the rhetoric of settler colonialism and racial supremacy from Western publications, called for Japanese to turn the West Coast into a "new Japan." Fukuzawa even personally paid for the start-up costs of a Japanese colony near Stockton, California.⁷¹ Christian and Buddhist institutions served as a key part of community building. Making use of bilateral agreements on "religious freedom," Buddhist missionaries established temples, built schools, and started publications, both the Japanese-language *Beikoku Bukkyō* and the English-language *Light of Dharma*, which attempted to correct Western misconceptions of Buddhism and even make converts.⁷² As late as 1903, however, there was still no outpost of Shinto on the West Coast.⁷³

In January 1904, Kuniyoshi's eldest son, Itō Tokuju, the intended heir of Maruyamakyō, arrived in Sacramento, apparently for the purpose of proselytizing Maruyama-style Shinto, although no records attest to his specific activities.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Lu, "Eastward Ho!", 540–1.

⁷¹ Azuma, *Our Frontier*, 32, 36.

⁷² Mitchell, *American Buddhism*, 38–44.

⁷³ California's first shrine was built in San Francisco in December 1904. There was a large Japanese community in Hawaii and some shrines were already built there by 1898. Maeda, *Hawai no jinjashi*, 6, 304.

⁷⁴ Shirosaki, "Sono 5," 9; Tokuju Ito, passenger record for 1904, "California, San Francisco, Passenger Lists, 1893–1953," FamilySearch Library.

Sacramento at that time had a small Japanese community of less than 1,000 people, mostly single male laborers living in a segregated six-block Japantown, which may have had less than ideal sanitary conditions.⁷⁵ Tokuju's name appears in a list of contributors to build an elementary school in Florin, a rural settlement which had even poorer infrastructure.⁷⁶ Mere months later, in October 1906, he died in Sacramento of typhoid fever.⁷⁷ This tragedy not only ended the Sacramento mission, but caused disaster for Maruyamakyō when Kuniyoshi himself unexpectedly died of illness in February 1908, leaving the organization headless.⁷⁸

Maruyamakyō had lost many devout members in the 1890s and by 1904 was heavily reliant on the Itō household for leadership. The death of the firstborn son and intended heir was a huge loss, which raises the question of why it was so important to send Tokuju across the Pacific in the first place.⁷⁹ Sasaki Chiyomatsu, a less reliable source, wrote that the America trip was meant as spiritual training (*shugyō*) for Tokuju.⁸⁰ What might have made Sacramento suitable for training? We may make sense of this statement by combining it with the reflections of Itō Iten,

⁷⁵ Wildie, *Sacramento*, 27.

⁷⁶ “Shōgakkō shinchiku kaidō shūzen kifu dai 4-kai hōkoku” 小學校新築會堂修繕寄附第四回報告, *Beikoku Bukkyō* 7, no. 1 (January 1906), 43. It is not clear if Tokuju lived in Florin or in downtown Sacramento.

⁷⁷ T. Ito, death record for October 10, 1906, “California, U.S., County Birth, Marriage, and Death Records, 1849–1980,” California Department of Public Health, Ancestry.com Operations.

⁷⁸ Maruyamakyō was legally administered for about two years by Kuniyoshi's widow Ino, who was and is not numbered as one of the group's leaders. Shirosaki, “Sono 6.”

⁷⁹ The official writings of Maruyamakyō staff have never discussed Tokuju. Maruyamakyō refused to answer my questions about Tokuju or his objectives in Sacramento. Communication with “Maruyamakyō representative,” December 15, 2024.

⁸⁰ Sasaki, *Minshū shūkyō*, 255. Sasaki gets the basic chronology wrong, asserting that Tokuju died after Kuniyoshi. He is clearly writing from memory and not consulting sources.

Tokuju's younger brother and the eventual third Maruyamakyō leader.⁸¹ Iten wrote that he was allowed to forego the various ascetic trials which Rokurōbei had practiced, such as fasting for lengthy periods or inhaling hot smoke into his lungs. Instead, his main training consisted of missionary tours (*junkyō*), which he took seriously, binding his hair into a ponytail like the ascetics of earlier generations.⁸² This demonstrates that missionary work was not only a productive activity but a crucial replacement for Rokurōbei's asceticism. The project to build a Maruyamakyō church in Sacramento, therefore, may have been intended as a great prize for Tokuju. He could have proven his ascetic devotion to missionary work by inaugurating the group's expansion outside Asia.

While many Sect Shinto groups dispatched missionaries to Korea, Taiwan and Hawaii at this time, Maruyamakyō is notable in sending its own heir abroad and far from the reach of these major overseas Japanese communities, with the intent of starting the first Shinto mission on the West Coast. This risky and ultimately unfortunate choice demonstrated the seriousness of leaders' commitment to the ideal of installing Shinto identity throughout the world. This has little in common with Rokurōbei's bodily practices and TENMEI-KAITEN mission of reforming the Japanese government on divine models, but it does follow exactly the written intent of Shishino Nakaba.

⁸¹ Itō Iten's birth name was Heishichi 平質. In his work for Maruyamakyō he was generally called "Itō Rokurōbei" at the time (the hereditary name used by heads of the Itō household). He is more recently called "Third Leader" in Maruyamakyō publications. For ease of understanding I will refer to him by his literary soubriquet Iten, under which name he published his non-sectarian writings.

⁸² Itō Iten, "Gyōjamage," 17.

A new narrative: Rokurōbei's hagiography and *Kami no hikari*, 1900–1910 onwards

In the examples of the War God Rite and the attempted expansion to Sacramento, we can see Maruyamakyō relying on Sect Shinto ideals constructed by either Maruyama Sakura or Shishino Nakaba. But neither of these men had been full believers in Itō Rokurōbei's ability to access the divine. It is therefore worth briefly interrogating, before we move on to Maruyamakyō's final imperial-era project, how Maruyama headquarters defined the movement and its founder in this period.

As mentioned in the Introduction, in 1894, Itō Kuniyoshi requested a philosopher named Aoikawa Nobuchika (Figure 11) to write a hagiography of his father Rokurōbei, which was finished in 1900.⁸³

Aoikawa had the most unusual profile of any of the Maruyamakyō staff. His hair was neither ponytailed nor cut, because he was born with alopecia, which was a source of emasculating mockery in Japan then as now.⁸⁴ After studying Kokugaku under Maruyama



Figure 11: Aoikawa Nobuchika.
From *Ōkurashō*, Jinbutsu.

Sakura in the 1860s, he authored a discourse on the unity of world religions, then

⁸³ Aoikawa et al., *Kiryaku*, vol. 2, inside cover.

⁸⁴ Aoikawa was mocked for his bald head even by his own students: Ogiwara, “Fujijo (5),” 38. (The female student cited was a friend of Itō Tokuju and Iten, who were both trained by him.)

studied Western philosophy intensely and wrote a treatise in 1874 on the Comtean Religion of Humanity, Mill's utilitarianism, British pantheism, and Darwinism, the first time any of these subjects had been handled in an East Asian language.

Aoikawa shared with the Shintoists an intense interest in harmonizing with the West, but decades before most of them, he saw Western intellectual trends moving away from Christianity and towards positions more sympathetic to Shinto and Buddhism. His book was published by the Daikyōin but was considered idiosyncratic by his colleagues, likely because of his wild speculations such as his claim that Jesus was a prophet of Amenominakanushi but was misunderstood by those around him and falsely divinized.⁸⁵

Aoikawa joined Fusōkyō-Maruyama around 1882—possibly at the request of Sakura or Shishino, given his lack of preexisting interest in Mount Fuji—but he left in 1884 during the power struggle discussed in Chapter Four and worked as a law clerk for many years; he was not present at Rokurōbei's funeral.⁸⁶ He remained in Sakura's orbit, however,⁸⁷ and returned to Maruyamakyō around 1894 to stitch and edit together years of doctrinal confusion, intrapersonal conflict, and financial scandal into a single coherent narrative of Rokurōbei's life. The resulting hagiography shows marks of Aoikawa's literary genius, and if Sakura was involved

⁸⁵ Shimao, "Shinkaronja," 96–7. This book has been previously mentioned in English in Godart, *Dharma*, 18f.

⁸⁶ "Aoikawa Nobuchika gonchūkyōsei ga igan menshoku," *Yomiuri shinbun*, June 22, 1884; Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 489–90.

⁸⁷ See his contribution to Maruyama M., *Sakura-den*, 328–9.

in spurring the project, the lack of theological commitments in Sakura's Kokugaku likely helped as well.

In Aoikawa's work, Rokurōbei stands alone as founder, selflessly sacrificing his body for the sake of the community. Nearly half of the text describes his early life and his pre-Fusōkyō mission from 1870–74. It does this while pushing the early Maruyama *kō* community into the background, depicting early members either as Rokurōbei's loyal followers or as shadowy, unnamed betrayers (see Chapter Two). Rokurōbei thereby comes across as a sole, independent founder within the narrative, despite his life of collaborations, first with *kō* members and then with Shishino as well. The half of the text which deals with the Maruyama movement's successes and troubles from 1875–1894 is highly abbreviated. All of Rokurōbei's actions are described as coming from a purely religious desire to help his followers, and the historical-political context of his activities is never mentioned. The movement's 1875–1884 publications and manuscripts (see Chapter Three) are ignored. The intense 1883–4 power struggle in Fusōkyō, which Aoikawa witnessed, goes unmentioned, much less the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons (see Chapter Four). Aoikawa does not need to offer an apologetic explanation for Maruyamakyō's financial scandals, the collapse in membership, and the eventual isolation of Rokurōbei from his own movement (see Chapter Five), since he simply omits these incidents entirely. Aoikawa's hagiography of Rokurōbei became the principal source

of the vast majority of Maruyamakyō sermons and pastoral writings before World War II and remains an overwhelming influence on the group today.⁸⁸

Not only did Aoikawa distill Rokurōbei's life into hagiography, he also wrote a series of roughly two dozen texts outlining Maruyamakyō doctrine for future leaders. In addition, he was in charge of the Maruyamakyō seminary school where Kuniyoshi's sons Tokuju and Iten learned how to lead the new organization. Yet it is unclear whether Aoikawa was really a "believer" in Itō Rokurōbei's teachings, or if he considered that question relevant. Aoikawa's seminary texts, which apparently fell into disuse after World War II, generally emphasized Maruyamakyō's continuity from earlier Fuji *kō* traditions.⁸⁹

Beginning in 1910, Maruyamakyō headquarters in Noborito began publishing a monthly magazine of pastoral literature, which paralleled the English-language name of the American Buddhist journal *Light of Dharma* with its name *Kami no hikari* ("Light of Divinity"). In the archives, *Kami no hikari* stands out as the main typeset work of the prewar period (Figure 12); most Maruyamakyō circulars and posters from this era



Figure 12: Cover of *Kami no hikari* issue 34. Collection of the University of Washington.

⁸⁸ For more information about my evaluation of Aoikawa's *Ichidaiki*, see the Introduction.

⁸⁹ See excerpts in Inobe, *Fuji no shinkō*, 88–9, and in Fujita, *Shintō*, 217f. Ōtani Masayuki has written that Maruyamakyō revised its doctrines after 1945, although there is little record of this in print.

are either handwritten or painfully etched onto mimeograph stencils, suggesting limited resources available to church leadership.⁹⁰ Taima Seishi writes that the third leader of Maruyamakyō, Itō Iten, launched *Kami no hikari* as part of his campaign for “harmony and care” aiming to bring back disaffected rural churches that had started abandoning Rokurōbei’s (and Shishino’s) teachings entirely in preference for Ninomiya Sontoku’s ideas (*hōtoku shisō*).⁹¹

As scholar Akae Tatsuya has observed in his study of Uchimura Kanzō’s Nonchurch Movement, newsletters allowed early twentieth-century Japanese religious groups to imagine themselves as exposing their internal thoughts to the world at large, although in reality their readership was understood to be Japanese.⁹² *Kami no hikari* frequently adopted a pastoral and confessional tone resembling Japanese Christian writings of the period.⁹³ Its articles linked contemporary philosophy, education, science, and politics to a vague, civilizational idea of “religion.” Some articles addressed theological topics, such as the meaning of TENMEI-KAITEN or how to handle members offering unpatriotic prayers to avoid conscription, which suggests some disputes over the purpose of the Maruyama movement were still smoldering decades after the 1891–4 crisis. Beginning in late 1927, though, the magazine discovered a newly revived concern: expansion into the West Coast of the United States. The promise and possibilities of this expansion for

⁹⁰ There is a binder of Maruyamakyō ephemera from this time at the Kanagawa Prefectural Library.

⁹¹ Taima, “Tenryū kagan,” 24n41.

⁹² Akae, “*Shijō no kyōkai*,” 97. For another example of the confessional quality of early twentieth-century religious magazines, see Schroeder, “Buddhist Love Story.”

⁹³ In 1917, *Kami no hikari* even printed a submission by Nitobe Inazō, the famous Christian convert.

both Maruyamakyō and Shinto seem to have thrilled *Kami no hikari* writers from 1927 through 1941.

Maruyamakyō in Los Angeles and Seattle, 1927–42

During the early Shōwa period (1926–45), Japan's new religions were increasingly eager, not only to serve the state as they had done in previous decades, but to launch organized projects for overseas settlement and conversion. Groups such as Tenrikyō and its small splinter Shinkyō came to settle and proselytize in Japan's puppet state Manchukuo with genuinely utopian ideas of spreading the Japanese Way to Chinese through bonds of friendship and promises of salvation.⁹⁴ As with Kurozumikyō in Korea a generation earlier, Tenrikyō attempted to use their healing techniques on the locals to demonstrate the power of their teachings, with the difference that they were now settlers backed by a colonial government.⁹⁵ Maruyamakyō, a much smaller sect, set its sights on a qualitatively different target: missionary work in the United States, which was now barred to Japanese immigrants. No Japanese group could found a new settlement in the United States, but perhaps missionary healers from a small, dedicated group could raise consciousness among Japanese-Americans.

The question of immigration caused a weakening of Japan-U.S. relations in the 1920s, and missionaries who traveled between the two countries were active in

⁹⁴ Sugihara, *Sensei*, 100–1.

⁹⁵ Nagaoka, *Shinshūkyō*, 183.

trying to mend the fault. White supremacists in California were incensed by the presence of Japanese immigrants permitted under the “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” and in 1924 Congress banned immigration from Japan altogether. Some members of the Japanese public, in turn, were infuriated at being targeted on racial grounds, and one man slit his belly in front of the American embassy. The campaign to reverse the ban was led by a Protestant clergy association, some of whose East Coast leaders had spent time as missionaries in Japan. In return, one California newspaper accused the clergymen of opening the doors to Japanese “invasion” in order to maintain their privileges in Japan.⁹⁶

In this context, trans-Pacific religious activity took on a new meaning. A religious presence overseas was not just about providing salvation, or marriage and funeral rituals. It was also a way to engender a fresh image of the missionary’s country in the host country. American missionaries now saw themselves as responsible for repairing frayed relations, although direct renunciation of their country’s racist culture was rare.⁹⁷ Japanese missionaries in America could give non-Japanese a new appreciation for Japan or equip Japanese immigrants with a new level of connection to their identity.

In 1927, a new Maruyamakyō outpost was founded in Seattle by two married converts, Hirashima Matatarō and Shizuko.⁹⁸ Almost immediately, *Kami no hikari*

⁹⁶ Hirobe, *American Prejudice*, 68, 100.

⁹⁷ Hirobe, *American Prejudice*, 225.

⁹⁸ Matsufuji, *Shiatoru annai*, 41. Matatarō had moved to Seattle from Los Angeles, where he had been converted to Maruyamakyō by Suguro Keisaburō, about whom see below. Matatarō in turn converted Shizuko, who was formerly a member of Kurozumikyō.

featured the Seattle Branch Church as a rare photograph on its usually unadorned cover (Figure 13). The spread of Maruyamakyō to Seattle was much more than an exotic tale of distant lands. It demonstrated that the central Maruyama church in Noborito, through successful education and administration, could turn the movement into a Sect Shinto church which could be exported overseas.

Maruyamakyō was thus tied to the decades-old national goal of nurturing successful colonies on America's West Coast. Over the following years, *Kami no hikari* printed updates from the



Figure 13: The Maruyamakyō Seattle Branch Church and its founder Hirashima Matatarō, circa 1927. Front cover of *Kami no hikari* 153 (October 1927).

Seattle Branch Church almost monthly as the Hirashimas steadily won converts. In 1932 it reported 541 members, which if accurate would have made it the second largest Japanese religious group in the city.⁹⁹

Missionary work on the West Coast also included conversion of non-Japanese to Maruyamakyō—and this, too, carried political nuances. The December 1934 issue

⁹⁹ Itō Kazuo, *Hyakunenzakura*, 749, and *Issei*, 647. This figure is likely self-reported. Miyamoto, *Social Solidarity*, 99, reported in 1936 that there were only 120 Japanese affiliated with “Shinto” in Seattle total, including Maruyamakyō and Seicho-no-ie (Tenrikyō, with 60 churchgoers, was counted separately). This figure seems much more reasonable, but I cannot rule out a rapid decrease from 541 in 1932 to less than 100 in 1936 following the death of Hirashima Shizuko.

of *Kami no hikari* reported that one “Armando Contreras,” described as a “Spanish prince” living in Hollywood, had been converted to Maruyamakyō from Catholicism after Maruyama missionary Suguro Keisaburō healed his wife by the rubbing of a transmission text. For *Kami no hikari*, Contreras and his wife represented the possibility of Maruyamakyō gaining “white believers” (*hakujin no shinja*) and gaining visibility in “white society.” It is noteworthy that the author specifies “white” rather than American, acknowledging the legal realities that the United States had reserved immigration for persons deemed “white” and that West Coast states were actively restricting non-white land ownership through the Alien Land Laws. The article concludes by quoting a prophecy of Rokurōbei’s that “the Rising Sun will be flown over a united world,” again uniting the Maruyama mission with Japanese ultranationalism.¹⁰⁰ Although this single alleged conversion had no long-term consequences and indeed Contreras’s existence cannot be verified, the way in which it was presented shows that Maruyamakyō believed its healing powers offered transformative possibilities and could even heighten Japan’s standing vis-à-vis America.

A few months later, *Kami no hikari* reported on the untimely death of Hirashima Shizuko of the Seattle Branch Church.¹⁰¹ In 1936, Furuhashi Tatsu (1892–1980), who had worked at Maruyamakyō headquarters in Noborito for 23

¹⁰⁰ Bandō Satoru 坂東覚, “Sekai ittai” 世界一体, *Kami no hikari* 227 (December 1934): 7–9.

¹⁰¹ “Ko Hirashima Shizuko toji o shinobimatsurite” 故平島静子刀自を偲びまつりて, *Kami no hikari* 230 (March 1935); “Mrs. S. Hirashima, Local Pioneer, Dies,” *Japanese-American Courier*, September 1, 1934, 4.

years, was dispatched to America to replace her. An urgent notice was stapled to an already-complete *Kami no hikari* issue to alert readers that Tatsu had been approved to leave, and the subsequent issue featured a lengthy article celebrating Tatsu's departure and emphasizing the distinctiveness of her visa. "The United States forbids entry of Japanese except for tourists and students up to two years. Missionaries are the only exception," the author wrote, offering an explanation that the United States broke from Britain over the question of freedom of religion. We further learn that the Maruyamakyō staff underwent a long and difficult process to obtain American recognition as a religious body (evidently it was a top priority to replace Hirashima Shizuko with a new missionary), and that Tatsu's missionary visa amounted to a "certificate by the United States government authenticating Maruyamakyō as a world religion (*sekaiteki shūkyō*)."¹⁰²

More than simply showcasing Maruyamakyō's aspirations to become a "world religion," this article demonstrates the *function* of the idea of "world religion" in this context, which has implications beyond Maruyamakyō's internal history. In an era where most Japanese corporations would be unable to dispatch staff to work at their American partners or branches, Maruyamakyō was able to obtain a permanent placement for Tatsu because, under American law, their subset of Shintō Honkyoku was deemed qualified to license its employees as "ministers of religion." In the eyes of Maruyamakyō staff, this qualification allowed them to serve

¹⁰² "Furuhashi moto naijikain no to-Bei" 古橋元内事課員の渡米, *Kami no hikari* 243 (August 1936): 6–9.

Shinto and Japan in a unique way. A visa for a Maruyamakyō minister could bring the Rising Sun to America and perhaps even to American citizens. The religious visa therefore allowed Maruyamakyō to fulfill the 1873 vision of Shishino Nakaba: not only to turn loyalty to the gods and emperor into a church institution, but to render it portable across national borders and bring its enlightenment abroad. In an era of heightened international tensions, the category of “religion” carried special promise.

Weaponization and internment of the Seattle Branch Church, 1940–5

As Japan’s occupation of Manchuria expanded into an invasion of central China, the United States and Japan were increasingly on unfriendly terms. From the 1920s onward, the FBI had been monitoring Japanese religious workers in America on the grounds of potential subversion or intelligence activities. In the 1930s, General George Patton suggested arresting most of Hawaii’s Shinto and Buddhist leaders as “hostages” to ensure the compliance of the Japanese-Hawaiian population, and in 1940, these Buddhist and Shinto priests were marked as “Group A” individuals, at the highest risk of subversive activities in the event of war.¹⁰³ The vast majority of these religious workers were indeed arrested in 1942 and incarcerated alongside other ethnic Japanese, both citizens and foreigners, in an American gulag archipelago.

¹⁰³ Williams, *American Sutra*, 35–37.

Was the Seattle Branch Church indeed subversive? To answer this question, we must first observe that nearly all Japanese religious groups had eagerly supported Imperial Japan's overseas conquests for many decades, beginning with Maruyamakyō's and Higashi Honganji's 1894 work in Korea, discussed above. This was consciously built on a centuries-old history of Buddhist institutions offering spiritual support for the Japanese state and vice-versa.¹⁰⁴ In the Meiji period, Buddhist political activity had been shaped first by the *kyōdōshoku* system, and then by the *kanchō* system emerging from it, both of which served to curtail political dissent within the sects.¹⁰⁵ However, Nagaoka Takashi has emphasized that these systems were not simply imposed on an unwilling populace, even for the new religions. In the case of Tenrikyō, new doctrines were developed out of a genuine desire by believers to provide aid to the state and meet the needs of the Japanese people.¹⁰⁶

Maruyamakyō headquarters in Noborito had certainly grown more political in the 1930s. In 1934, on the 40th anniversary of Rokurōbei's death, headquarters put out a small booklet to explain how his teachings applied to the "crisis" affecting Japan and the world. The Rising Sun, formerly a symbol of Fuji for Maruyamakyō, was now said to represent Amaterasu Ōmikami, the Sun Goddess and divine ancestress of the emperors. The pamphlet attributes sayings to Rokurōbei which had never before appeared in Maruyama literature: "We honor the Sun because we

¹⁰⁴ Kleine, "Interdependence."

¹⁰⁵ Schroeder, "War Support," 56, 71, and *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ Nagaoka, *Shinshūkyō*, 18ff, 195–247.

honor His Majesty the Emperor;” “A mind which hungers for drink, food, luxuries, money, material things has no trace of Japanese spirit [*Yamato-damashii*].”¹⁰⁷

These quotations are discordant with the bulk of Rokurōbei’s writings, in which he depicted the emperor as a fallible human and a servant of the Japanese people. The phrase *Yamato-damashii* does not occur at all in Rokurōbei’s *Oshirabe*, nor in the 1921 collection of sayings *Maruyama kyōso gosuikun shō*.¹⁰⁸

After Japan’s invasion of central China in 1937, the pages of *Kami no hikari* grew vociferous. “Japan is just, our justice is truth, and our truth is justice,” wrote Itō Mutsuo, one of Kuniyoshi’s sons and a prolific writer of sermons. “China has gone barking mad [*hakkyō shita*] ... these Chinese are insane [*kichigai*].” These words for insanity are considered slurs in modern Japanese. Mutsuo belittled the Chinese for insisting on “so-called independence” (*jishō dokuritsu*), and concluded that “all that matters is the annihilation of these savage Chinese.”¹⁰⁹ Mutsuo had been involved in communist and anarchist movements as a student in 1918–23, so we may assume that he wrote these words with full understanding of the ideological options available to him.¹¹⁰ In an era depicted as a life-or-death crisis for Japan, Mutsuo preached jingoism to his small flock, demonstrating Maruyamakyō’s value in defending the nation.

¹⁰⁷ Maruyama kyōso 40-nensai sanpaikai, *Hijōji to Maruyamakyō*, 18.

¹⁰⁸ Shida T., *Gosuikun shō*.

¹⁰⁹ Itō Mutsuo, “Shina yōchō.”

¹¹⁰ Ōhata, “Itō Mutsuo,” 12–13; Kobayashi T., *Kawasaki*, 83.

In 1940, the Seattle Branch Church hosted a talk on the subject of the Japanese national identity (*kokutai*) by one Koga Jirō.¹¹¹ Just before his return to Japan, the church co-sponsored another talk of Koga's titled "Japan's Intent in Confronting the World."¹¹² The content of these talks is not recorded, but can be surmised from Koga's activities upon returning to Japan: he published a book introducing Japanese readers to the fascist Silver Shirt movement of William Dudley Pelley, and explained in this book and to newspapers that Pelley was the best hope to rescue America from "Jewish" control.¹¹³

These signs of apparent antagonism towards the American government did not constitute a plot against America. Rather, they demonstrate the increasingly anxious position of Issei (first-generation Japanese) immigrants, who were tied to a country which was already legally hostile to their ethnicity and was also increasingly hostile to Japan as a nation. As Yuji Ichioka writes, "Issei patriotism was not at all out of the ordinary in the American immigrant experience. It did not entail fifth column activities to subvert the socio-political fabric of American society, nor espionage or sabotage on behalf of the Japanese government."¹¹⁴ Writing for Seattle's Japanese-language Issei newspaper, Koga grandiloquently cited Washington and Lincoln as ideals of American virtue, and implored Nisei (second-generation Japanese-Americans) to "rectify the present America." The Nisei alone,

¹¹¹ "Koga Jirō-shi kōen" 古賀治朗氏講演, *Taihoku nippō*, June 28, 1940, 5.

¹¹² "Nittei" 日程, *Taihoku nippō*, August 6, 1940, 5.

¹¹³ Yoshinaga, "Inbōron," 66.

¹¹⁴ Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Nationalism," 274

he inveighed, had the power to demonstrate that “the traitorous freedom of private greed is not the real America.”¹¹⁵ Koga’s dream—and probably the dream of the Seattle Branch Church—was not a destruction or betrayal of American society but the reunion of American and Japanese interests.

In the eyes of Americans, though, the Seattle Branch Church’s beliefs crossed a line. In 1942, Hirashima Matatarō and his second wife Tatsu were arrested and interned as Alien Enemies along with many other Japanese citizens residing in America. The Hirashimas were interrogated about the political consequences of their religious beliefs, and both admitted to believing that the sun goddess Amaterasu was the ancestor of the Japanese people. The FBI translated Maruyamakyō literature and found passages disturbing in the wartime context, such as the following:

“The Hino-Marū [Rising Sun] is the spirit of the Imperial Ancestors” is the belief taught in the teachings of Maruyama, and also to worship it morning and night. The founder of the Maruyama Church mentioned that “to respect the Sun is to respect the Emperor.” We must look up to it and respect it every day. We must be thankful for the Imperial favors granted us.¹¹⁶

Rokurōbei’s unusual belief in the emperor’s duties to the people, which figured so large in his speeches and even in the *Oshirabe*, has vanished in this excerpt. Following the doctrinal innovations described in this chapter, the teachings of the Maruyama group had become indistinguishable from fervent nationalism, at

¹¹⁵ Koga Jirō, “Nisei kyōdō no rinen” 二世教導の理念, *Taihoku nippō*, June 14, 1940, 5.

¹¹⁶ “Hirashima Matataro,” Alien Enemy Case File #146-13-2-82-584, Department of Justice, RG 60, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. The original FBI report from which this translation was excerpted is no longer extant, according to a NARA researcher.

least in the eyes of American authorities. The only peculiarity of Maruyama practice noted by the FBI was Hirashima Tatsu's ingestion of paper talismans with water.¹¹⁷

Matatarō had been severely injured in a traffic accident in 1937, and his Department of Justice record shows that he was in a state of constant pain throughout his wartime internment and was hospitalized twice. He had been rendered half-blind by the accident and required the assistance of other inmates for daily tasks. Unfortunately, the findings of the FBI about Maruyamakyō were reenforced by an official suspicion of Shinto which made Matatarō's release from internment impossible during the war. On the various loyalty questionnaires given to Japanese-American detainees, describing oneself as Christian added two points to the loyalty score, Buddhism subtracted one point, Tenrikyō subtracted three points, while "Shintoist" or Shinto priest was grounds for automatic disqualification.¹¹⁸ The Army Service Commands warned that "membership in any Shinto sect is absolutely fatal to [a] subject's loyalty."¹¹⁹ The North American bishop of Tenrikyō was incarcerated for an unusually long time even after the end of the war, until he withdrew his suit in 1947 and chose to self-deport.¹²⁰ As late as August 30, 1945, the Hirashimas' petition to remain in America was deemed to

¹¹⁷ "Hirashima Matataro," Alien Enemy Case File.

¹¹⁸ Williams, *American Sutra*, 197–8.

¹¹⁹ Muller, *American Inquisition*, 43.

¹²⁰ Yamakura, "Tenrikyo," 155

have “little to no merit” as both were seen to be priests of “the Japanese Government sponsored religion of Shintoism.”¹²¹

However, Maruyamakyō ended up with a different outcome from that of Tenrikyō: in December 1945, the Hirashimas’ petition was given to a three-person hearing board who unanimously called for their release. One adjudicator noted neutrally that Matatarō was “a minister of the Shinto faith.” The second related a finding that “only one or two of the rather recently founded Shinto sects have a political aspect” (which may be a generous reading of influential scholar D. C. Holtom’s enthusiasm for Japan’s new religions¹²²) and concluded that “the internment of the Hirashimas was not warranted at any time.” To this judge, the wartime suspicion of Sect Shinto had been baseless from the beginning. The third adjudicator, Edwin Dickinson, could not even describe Matatarō without condemning the entire internment program:

In appearance, both he and his wife are something out of the colored plates of the National Geographic. If either he or his wife have ever been or could ever conceivably be a subversive threat or menace to our institutions, then our institutions indeed rest upon an unsubstantial foundation. The parties are utterly harmless and I can conceive of none other than racial grounds and the excitement of the period as reasons for their internment.¹²³

The sympathy for Matatarō’s suffering in this judgment blurs into condescension and inaccuracies. First, the FBI’s investigation of Matatarō found that he paid for his church using rent payments on land that he had acquired or

¹²¹ “Hirashima Matataro,” Alien Enemy Case File.

¹²² About which see Morrow, “Patriotism,” 18.

¹²³ “Hirashima Matataro,” Alien Enemy Case File.

been given in colonial Korea. Matatarō was not an imagined helpless, primitive colonial from “the colored plates of the National Geographic;” he was himself a colonizer and landlord.¹²⁴ Second, it may be seen above that both Maruyamakyō headquarters and its Seattle Branch Church promoted many nationalist views during the build-up to Pearl Harbor, as did Buddhist and Tenrikyō groups at this time.

But, as Akihiro Yamakura notes in his study of wartime American Tenrikyō, the expression of minority political views is constitutionally protected in the United States if the speaker is a citizen; even for foreign residents, to abridge basic speech rights would seem to be a betrayal of American values.¹²⁵ Presumably, the end of the war caused the adjudicators to reevaluate the Seattle Branch Church: whatever its doctrines had been during wartime, and whatever its funding sources, this small organization that hosted prayer meetings, ceremonies, and healings had never posed a threat to American domestic tranquility or foreign policy. The incarceration of its ministers only put an elderly, disabled man and his wife through years of misery.

The Hirashimas reopened the Seattle Branch Church after their release, and in 1947 they ordered a hundred copies of Itō Kuniyoshi’s liturgy text *Shinkyō* from

¹²⁴ “Hirashima Matataro,” Alien Enemy Case File.

¹²⁵ Yamakura, “Tenrikyo,” 157; Kagan, “When Immigrants Speak.” Further, see lower court rulings in the cases *AAUP v. Rubio* (January 2026), *Öztürk v. Hyde* (February 2026), and *Kordia v. Noem* (March 2026).

Noborito.¹²⁶ Both in Japan and in America, an *après-guerre* “Rush Hour of the Gods” had begun, and although this did not lead to a new wave of members for Maruyamakyō, it did create a new burst of energy, as the group now belatedly embraced Rokurōbei’s peace mission by joining the anti-nuclear movement. In the concluding chapter, we will see how the reconfigured religious freedom of the postwar period created deep confusion in the Maruyama movement over how to handle their complicated history and consider what this tells us about religion-state relations.

Conclusion

Nagaoka Takashi’s research on the history of Tenrikyō has shown that after the death of founder Nakayama Miki, the faith community built up traditions of interpretation that harmonized the beliefs of the community with the perceived needs of the nation, making missionary work possible as well as justifying Tenrikyō to state authorities. Rather than Tenrikyō leaders being helpless victims of a monolithic “State Shinto” imposed by outside elites, they were actively developing novel practices such as *hinokishin*, selfless service to the nation, which demonstrated the value of Tenrikyo to Japanese society.¹²⁷

Nagaoka avoided investigating the life and deeds of Nakayama Miki, but in the case of the Maruyama movement, Itō Rokurōbei’s own behaviors presaged what

¹²⁶ Untitled notice in *Kami no hikari*, January 1948, 31. *Shinkyō* was Kuniyoshi’s replacement for *Shintokukyō*, regarding which see Chapter Three.

¹²⁷ Nagaoka, *Shinshūkyō*, 246, 302.

would come after his death. Rokurōbei had condemned military leaders in public speeches throughout his life and warned that “the army will not win” just before he died. Although records are scarce, it appears that his views had been consistent enough, and strongly worded enough, that the about-face after his death engendered some dissent and anger among members. His general condemnation of state violence recalls the response of Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers, to the Continental Army’s demand for male members to serve in the American Revolution: “You will never kill the devil with the sword.”¹²⁸

Unlike Lee’s brazen defiance of authority, which caused her to be imprisoned for several months and set an unforgettable example for her community, Rokurōbei’s pacifism was successfully kept quiet until the end of World War II. This was made possible by Rokurōbei himself. Recognizing the internal and external pressures on his group, Rokurōbei relinquished the desire for institutional reform found in the TENMEI-KAITEN sermons, and his writings in the *Oshirabe* lacked concrete political sentiments. His view of the Japanese emperor as a ritual servant of the people, which had been presented clearly in earlier oral sermons, was rendered ambiguous in the *Oshirabe*. His statement “the army will not win” was offered privately as an unwritten, esoteric implication of his more neutral public slogan of “peace and justice on earth,” leaving it to the judgment of the community whether his beliefs should be promoted more widely. Maruyamakyō’s continued pursuit of legitimacy in the Shinto world after Rokurōbei’s death, as well as the

¹²⁸ Campion, *Mother Ann Lee*, 94.

desires of Maruyama leaders to work for Japan's material and political success on the world stage, caused Rokurōbei's pacifism to be swept under the rug. That submission to Shinto authority, and to nationalist dreams of overseas expansion, made the outcomes reported in this chapter possible.

EPILOGUE:

1952, and thereafter

In 1951, the Religious Juridical Persons Act (*shūkyō hōjin hō*) came into effect. It was the second law reforming Japan's religious system during the Allied Occupation and made it much easier for branches to break away from sects.¹ At long last, Shintō Maruyama Kyōkai was allowed to gain full legal independence as the religious juridical person Maruyamakyō. The Maruyama movement was now able to tell its own story, but there was confusion at Maruyamakyō headquarters over what that story ought to be and how it related to Shinto, Japan's imperial past, and the past activities of the Maruyama movement itself. The narrative of the Occupation was that a political ideology called "State Shinto" had been foisted on the unwitting Japanese people by a small "coterie of elites."² This had not been the experience of members of Sect Shinto groups like Maruyamakyō, which had often understood this "restoration" of "pure" Shinto to be part of their salvation mission.³

Yuri Jun'ichi, who would later revise and expand the hagiography of founder Itō Rokurōbei, published an article in Maruyamakyō's official newsletter *Kami no hikari* in 1952, urging members to keep hoisting the Rising Sun flag. "As you know,"

¹ Woodard, *Allied Occupation*, 101. This function of the Religious Juridical Persons Act is arguably the origin of the scholarly category of "new religions" (Thomas, *Faking Liberties*, 231f).

² Thomas, *Faking Liberties*, 237–240.

³ This has especially been argued by Konkōkyō theologians Satō Mitsutoshi and Watanabe Jun'ichi (Nagaoka, *Sōryokusen*, 25–29) and Tenrikyō insider scholar Kaneko Akira (*Kindai Nihon*, 102ff).

he wrote, “since Maruyama’s object of worship features the Rising Sun, some scholars who tend to lump everything together claim that ‘Maruyama is a faction of State Shinto that emerged by riding the wave of early Meiji nationalism.’”⁴ Yuri traced the origin of the Rising Sun symbol to the Edo period Fuji faith, attempting to locate political purity in an era most prewar Maruyama leaders had considered corrupted by Buddhist misunderstandings. Yuri still maintained that Rokurōbei had found the proper, divinely inspired way to merge the Rising Sun with the symbol of Fuji as an object of worship. He urged members not to feel ashamed to display the flag: “Japan has made colossal mistakes since its founding, but these were due to the careless misunderstandings of scatterbrains, not the fault of the national Rising Sun flag.”⁵

The lack of certainty over Maruyamakyō’s mission, history and symbolism took on much deeper dimensions in a revived debate over topknots which also took place in 1952. The first article on this topic was written by the group’s then-president Itō Iten. It appears Iten sometimes published in *Kami no hikari* under pseudonyms, and his use of his real name for this article signaled that he was formally permitting Maruyama members to discuss the politics of topknots in the newsletter for the first time. Iten defined Maruyama’s *gyōja* topknots as a type of ponytail, explained their religious significance, and called out by name the 1890s-era administrators who opposed them:

⁴ Yuri, “Hinomaru,” 6.

⁵ Yuri, “Hinomaru,” 4.

Encountering the joy of being bound with our Founder [Rokurōbei] through hair, I felt profound satisfaction and peace in my own form [that was now] expressing the Straight Path [*itten-hitosuji no michi*], bathing in the ocean of faith.

The former officials of our headquarters—Takaoka, Takagi, [Hiro]se, Tsuchiya, Maruyama [Yūka], Fukagawa, and the rest—were all short-haired. These men were labeled “worldly” by the Straight Path faction and considered vulgar individuals who did not truly understand the teachings of our Founder. Furthermore, this worldly faction generally shunned the Straight Path faction, calling them “Holy Law lunatics [GOHŌ *kichigai*].” *I believe that due to these points, Maruyamakyō had significant setbacks after the passing of our Founder.* [emphasis added]

御開山様と一つ髪を結っているという喜びと一天一筋の道を表現している自分の姿にこよない満足と安心を持つて信心の法海に浴していた出会った。

昔の本院の役員で、高岡、高木、原瀬[sic; 広瀬]、土屋、丸山、深川などの連中は皆散髪であつた。これ等の人は一天一筋組から世上という名を挙げられ、ほんとうの御開山様の教がわかつていない俗物だとされていた。又此の世上組は一天組を∴法きちがいと云う凡に敬遠していた。こゝらに丸山教の御開山様帰天後の大きな頓座[sic; 頓挫]が有つた様に思う。⁶

The final sentence of this excerpt is a key statement of Iten's own opinion as third president and as first leader of the newly independent Maruyamakyō. Iten recognizes that to tell Maruyamakyō's story as something distinct from the aspects of its history now denigrated as “State Shinto,” the sect needed to draw on the example of the “Holy Law lunatics,” but he is not sure what specifically could be imitated. He closes his essay with a tongue-in-cheek suggestion that in the postwar era, Maruyamakyō leaders might want to imitate the pompadours now being sported by young men. This light-hearted ending suggests that Iten was not literally encouraging Maruyamakyō leaders to adopt ponytails or pompadours but

⁶ Itō Iten, “Gyōjamage,” 15–16.

instead wished to open a discussion on how to separate Maruyamakyō's divine mission from so-called elite, ultranationalist ideology.

This reflection was bound to be hard work. We discussed in Chapter Two how there was indeed a lengthy and serious confrontation between the movement's two Meiji cofounders, Itō Rokurōbei and Shishino Nakaba. The chant that sits at the center of Maruyamakyō practice today, TENMEI-KAITEN, emerged from an erased 1884 protest by Rokurōbei, as was explained in Chapter Four, and through that protest Rokurōbei had also sanctified the ponytails of his most loyal followers. But as we saw in Chapter Three, the Maruyama movement during its rapid expansion in 1875–1884 was deeply embedded in both Fuji faith and Shinto authority; the two ideas were inseparable. It was and is very rare to see an open discussion of Maruyama movement history in the sect's newsletter *Kami no hikari*. By signaling such an open discussion, Itō Iten was not only puzzling through the doctrines and practices covered in Chapter Three, but also opening the Pandora's Box of issues which we saw in Chapters Four, Five, and Six: financial mismanagement, belief in immanent apocalypse, power struggles, abandonment of earlier ideals, and sanctification of the government's invasive wars.

In the following issue of *Kami no hikari*, an elder from the Noborito area attempted to keep these recollections going, describing his memories of two “Holy Law lunatics” (he repeats Iten's phrase) who kept their ponytails and paid homage

to Rokurōbei by getting drunk regularly.⁷ It is true that Rokurōbei's love of liquor had been downplayed by prewar Maruyamakyō writers, but it is hard to see what kind of larger values could be derived from the practice. In the next issue, surprisingly, *Kami no hikari* printed a dissent against Iten's project by an elderly member in rural Shizuoka. This member, Kondō Shigeichi, hesitated to reproduce what he acknowledged to be a "dim memory," but it is to our benefit that he did, since it presents not only an alternative way of thinking about ponytails, but also about the very meaning of the Maruyama movement.

"My father was called Kondō Karazō," Kondō explained, "and he was a fourth-rank minister in our sect. We were in Ōishi Yahei's unit beneath Nishigaya Heijirō." Nishigaya, the leader of the *Mi* Division, had caused endless headaches for Maruyama leaders with his zealous fundraising and apocalyptic prophecies, as described in Chapters Four and Five. The now-obscure Ōishi was one of his underlings and was eventually imprisoned for an unspecified "shameful crime."⁸ Kondō then recalled:

At its peak [...] the majority of us were driven by faith in miracles and unleashed greed. All the believers at that time had topknots—some *gyōja* ponytails [*gyōjamage*], some *chonmage*—and it was said that unless one bore Heaven [i.e. a topknot] atop one's head, one was not a true believer.

一番盛んな時は [...] 奇跡的信仰と欲の皮の突破つたものが大半でありました[。]その当時の信徒は皆髷を伸ばして行者髷もありチヨン髷もありみな頭に一天を頂かねば本当の信徒ではないという位いでありました。⁹

⁷ Morozumi Ryōsaku 両角両作, "Gyōjamage ni tsuite" 行者髷について, *Kami no hikari*, August 1952: 10–11.

⁸ Nanba, *Fuhai*, 33.

⁹ Kondō, "Mage," 25–6.

Here, topknots are not a celebrated mark of independence; rather, they become an ambiguous mark of overenthusiasm and undisciplined faith. It is noteworthy that where Itō Iten painted a heroic picture of *rōnin*-like ponytails, Kondō in his rebuttal insists that some believers preferred *chonmage*, the servile haircuts of Tokugawa-era retainers. Mountain ascetics—Fuji *gyōja* such as Rokurōbei—did not use *chonmage*. It is hard to know why *chonmage* might have been preferred to ascetic ponytails, but perhaps members looked forward to a restoration of feudal privileges. By recalling such hair bindings in Shizuoka, Kondō cast the meaning of non-Shinto Maruyama identity into doubt. By publishing his memories, *Kami no hikari* acknowledged an undercurrent of members within the movement who in retrospect saw their initial interest as driven by “faith in miracles and unleashed greed.” When the *Mi* Division caused mass disturbances, Kondō continued, “Maruyama Sakura came from [Noborito] headquarters to quiet it.”

All the Maruyamakyō believers in the district assembled and he taught us the correct way to believe. He rebuked us all, saying that if we want to bear Heaven in our hearts, we must abandon the rigidly formal *chonmage* and embrace a bright new era. That very day, my father and the rest rushed to barbers in Iida town to shave their heads, and they took home the hair as souvenirs. [...] With Maruyama Sakura’s visit, Maruyamakyō’s proper, bright faith was accompanied by a fading into the shadows of the faith in miracles and unleashed greed, and we had no more news from Nishigaya and Ōishi [...] ¹⁰

It will be recalled from Chapter Five that many Maruyama members in Shizuoka had been shocked by the Meiji prohibition on topknots and petitioned for

¹⁰ Kondō, “Mage,” 26.

its revocation; furthermore, the prohibition had applied only to the Shizuoka area, and topknots were never even criticized in the Tokyo-Kanagawa area. By praising what he remembers as “Sakura’s visit,” Kondō was indicating that in his experience, these widely held objections against an inconsistent policy had played in to the hands of the dangerous, overzealous Nishigaya clique. We are to understand that properly educated, Shintoizing authority had been necessary to steer the Maruyama movement away from “miracles” and “greed” and onto the righteous path of “bright faith.”

Kondō further noted that after this single visitor from Noborito in the 1880s, the Maruyama group in his village had no further visits until 1913, when Iten’s own missionaries brought local members back into regular communication with the central church. If Kondō’s memory is correct, one of the Maruyama movement’s rural hotspots was completely neglected during the 1890s and 1900s; this is surprising but speaks to the movement’s loss of direction in 1891–4, as described in Chapter Five. Kondō closed the letter by telling Iten and the other contributor that he was looking forward to seeing them at future church-wide meetings in Noborito; perhaps this was a sort of apology for submitting an objection and dredging up difficult old disputes. However, the following issue brought a rather harsh correction from someone writing under the pseudonym “Tennangen,” entitled “It Wasn’t Maruyama Sakura:”

In a previous issue of this newsletter, Reverend Kondō wrote that during the *Mi* Division Incident, Maruyama Sakura came to Iida and everyone was made to cut their hair, but that is an error. The *Mi* Division Incident

happened during the Founder [Rokurōbei]’s lifetime, and the Second Leader [Iten’s father Kuniyoshi] had not yet begun his association with Maruyama Sakura.¹¹

“Tennangen” elaborates by sharing many details from the private life of second Maruyamakyō leader Kuniyoshi, his relationship with Sakura, and the tragedy of the War God Rite, all discussed in Chapter Six. Judging by the tone and the private details being shared, it seems that “Tennangen” may have been Maruyamakyō’s third leader Iten, switching to a pseudonym to save face in a discussion he himself had opened. The writer concludes that the identity of the visitor to Iida in the 1880s was probably staff member Maruyama Yūka and not Sakura, but a statement in the middle of the article makes it clear why he felt a correction was warranted:

Elders may remember that Maruyamakyō then conducted many War God Rites within Japan itself. Through such circumstances, Maruyamakyō was strongly guided toward nationalism because of Sakura and drew closer to ordinary Shinto. And now, as Yuri-sensei wrote [in the article excerpted above], there are people who say, “Maruyama is a faction of State Shinto that emerged by riding the wave of early Meiji nationalism,” but those people judged Maruyamakyō based on these sorts of [collaborations with Sakura]; they have not seen *the true Maruyamakyō*.¹² (emphasis added)

Kondō’s only intention had been to offer an alternative perspective on ponytails, but by relying on his “dim memory,” he had accidentally praised Iten’s father’s controversial collaboration with militarism and nationalism as the solution to the *Mi* Division Incident. The reality was more complex, but this must have been

¹¹ Tennangen-sei, “Maruyama Sakura,” 19.

¹² Tennangen-sei, “Maruyama Sakura,” 20.

too many cans of worms for the monthly newsletter to open at once, especially when we consider that in 1952 the reputation of Noborito headquarters was still dubious in the eyes of some rural churches.¹³ Members with long memories may have recalled that in 1910, under Iten's early tenure, Maruyamakyō had idolized Sakura and urged regional churches to memorialize him, as described in Chapter Six. In any event, after this apparent correction of the facts by "Tennangen," the open debate over Maruyamakyō's history and meaning abruptly ended; there were no further contributions on this topic in 1953 or thereafter.

The struggle for a "true Maruyamakyō" was part of a familiar pattern in postwar Japanese religions. Casting off the ideology of a failed cause, many Japanese new religions attempted to "restore" an imagined pure message of the founder. In Tenrikyō, this realignment was led from the top by brilliant administrative leader Nakayama Shōzen, who struggled to address misunderstandings of the idea of "reconstruction" by other Tenrikyō leaders.¹⁴ In Ōmoto, the sect's cofounder Deguchi Onisaburō believed that he had been reprimanded by God for his excessive imitation of militarism, but postwar leaders recast him as a hero persecuted by the "State Shinto" government.¹⁵ In the pages of *Kami no hikari*, Itō Iten attempted a similar "restoration:" a rewrite of Maruyama history to separate Itō Rokurōbei from what had now been designated as "State Shinto." Like these other leaders, Iten expected that he would have to work with his

¹³ Taima, "Maruyama kyōdan," 19, 21n41.

¹⁴ Nagaoka, *Shinshūkyō*, 279f.

¹⁵ Nagaoka, *Shūkyō bunka*, 100, 105f.

community to negotiate new meanings. Unlike them, he seems to have been unprepared to grapple with the movement's past difficulties and trials, which were significantly different in character from those of Ōmoto and Tenrikyō.

In the writings of Iten and “Tennangen” we can see several omissions. Itō Kuniyoshi's participation in Maruyama Sakura's War God Rite set the tone for all Maruyamakyō teachings from 1894 onward; in their publications, Kuniyoshi's son Iten and other Itō family members such as his brother Mutsuo had promoted explicitly political doctrines which conflicted with Rokurōbei's teachings. We saw in Chapter Six that those who disagreed with these doctrines were most probably silenced. Maruyamakyō never offered an explicit acknowledgment of the Itō family's involvement in sanctifying Japan's wars, in 1952 or at any time thereafter. If Iten had been moving towards such an admission in 1952, he was stopped in his tracks by the reaction from rural members such as Kondō Shigeichi.

In this final contribution, “Tennangen” still insisted on some sort of division between Rokurōbei and bureaucratic authorities such as Shishino. It was natural to seek out such a truth by imitating Rokurōbei, who had had important disagreements with the bureaucrats, even though these had generally not been resolved in his favor. Even in the 1920s, some male practitioners had desired to imitate Rokurōbei by growing out their hair and wearing Japanese dress similar to his.¹⁶ But discussions like these reveal a distinction between seeking out a

¹⁶ Shōrai-sei, “Chōhatsu.”

realization or revitalization of some of the ideals expressed by the founder, and imagining a purer historical time when some segment of the community demonstrated a divinely guided ideal to be reenacted in the present day. The history of religion in imperial Japan cannot be described as a small clique of “State Shinto” outsiders imposing their religion onto unwilling believers, and this is more amply illustrated by Maruyamakyō than it is by Tenrikyō or Oomoto. The “Holy Law lunatics” did not provide an ideal that could be returned to, and after 1952, the pages of *Kami no hikari* never again praised the topknots worn by that first generation.

The responsibility of religion scholars

This study has reconstructed the history of the Maruyama movement from the origins of Itō Rokurōbei’s salvation mission in 1870 through the Maruyamakyō organization’s legal independence in 1952. I believe that my work adds considerable context to past studies of the movement, but my aim has not especially been to confront or overturn them. For the most part, I have committed myself to documenting the Maruyama story because I believe the topics it touches on, including healing practices, modernity, religious administration, sectarian and national identity, and the ritual sanctification of war, are all perennially interesting in their own right, and that the more context we can provide for these subjects, the better it will be for our collective understanding. That being said, this history also offers a possible intervention in an ongoing dispute over the method and purpose of

Japanese religious studies, so I would like to close with some thoughts on why the concept of “State Shinto” continues to be important in present-day scholarship and politics.

In the twenty-first century, some Japanese historians have attempted to understand the purported secularity of imperial Japan on its own terms and reject the *post-hoc* label of “State Shinto” as an anachronistic, foreign imposition. This methodological development, initiated by conservative scholar Nitta Hitoshi, has now been embraced in an edited volume by Yamaguchi Teruomi, *Sengoshi no naka no “Kokka shintō”* (2018). It is true that the Japanese state, like nearly all modern states, developed an internal logic and discourse behind its frame of secularity, and there is something to be said for investigating this logic on its own merits.

Yamaguchi’s contributors discuss the concept of “State Shinto” as a chapter in religious studies which was initiated by the Occupation and maintained under the influence of the leftist counterculture of the 1960s. By tracing the genealogy of “State Shinto” rhetoric, they attempt to put an end to the concept.

However, this academic debate has high political stakes. “State Shinto” has become a common term to describe the self-censorship, fanaticism, and political repression of the early Shōwa period (1926–1945), and conservative calls for prayers at Yasukuni Shrine, *et cetera*, are condemned by progressives as a dangerous “return” to “State Shinto.”¹⁷ Over the past quarter-century, Shimazono Susumu, a

¹⁷ Okuyama, “Rethinking,” 181.

preeminent scholar formerly of the University of Tokyo, has been at the forefront of defending the concept of State Shinto as applicable to both prewar and postwar contexts. Shimazono feels it is especially important to preserve the concept of State Shinto to indicate a historical infringement by “religious” beliefs and practices on the legitimate “secular” role of government.¹⁸

Shimazono wants to argue that imperial-era “State Shinto” was a state religion, but legally, the boundaries of religion are determined by a government in pursuit of a secularism. If the Japanese government wants to declare that prayer to the imperial ancestors is not religious, this is their legal prerogative. Religion scholars may wish for a better law that provides more consistent justice and rights to citizens, but if we want to correctly understand the successes and failures of past administrations, we must separate our prescriptive vision from our descriptions. Shimazono’s insistence that State Shinto was just one “religion” among others leads to a curiously narrow depiction of period religious groups, for instance:

Even children indoctrinated with the principles of State Shinto at school would later find other religions and sects to have more resources to turn to for their spiritual life. In this sense, State Shinto and other religions coexisted based on a relation of a kind of division of roles. People engaged in the propagation of State Shinto admitted that they were unable to offer sufficient resources to people to help them maintain a peaceful state of mind, and that they had to leave such matters to the teachings and practices offered by religious organizations and sects and their communities.¹⁹

¹⁸ Shimazono, *Sengo Nihon*, 115–124.

¹⁹ Shimazono, “Religious Structure,” 1094.

This description relies on twentieth-century religious studies scholars' idealization of popular religions as alternative spheres of authority, epitomized by the grassroots "cosmology" and "common morality" that Yasumaru Yoshio attributed to the Maruyama movement. We can see from the 1952 discussion above, and hopefully from the analysis of the previous chapters, that the history of the Maruyama movement betrays no such "division of roles" between Fuji faith and Shinto authority. Although Itō Rokurōbei at times suggested divisions between his Fuji-inspired salvation mission and the more "orthodox" ex-samurai bureaucrats who called for a stronger role for Shinto in government, the leadership around him eventually rejected such divisions. Shishino Nakaba conceived of Fusōkyō-Maruyama as a way to *fulfill* the Shintoists' desires for a National Teaching, and for several decades Maruyamakyō obtained external legitimacy and internal support by promising that fulfillment.

The concern of Shimazono and his progressive colleagues with providing a theoretical basis for securing freedom of conscience for the people of Japan is merited. The history of the Maruyama movement, however, does not justify Shimazono's complaint that State Shinto was a state religion. Rather, it more closely follows the thesis of prewar religious scholar Anesaki Masaharu, who argued in 1920 that popular enthusiasm for Ōmoto was caused by the government's *denigration* of privatized "religious" sentiments, which made the public themselves seek out officially tolerated Shinto ideas associated with the sacrosanct imperial institution in order to bolster the legitimacy of their private dispositions. Anesaki

cited government restrictions on religious education and even censorship of religious ideas in newspapers.²⁰ This was not a religious view being dictated by the state to the public; the public articulated new visions for state, society, and meaningful life, using the tools available to them under a limited secularism.

Anesaki spoke from broad experience with the policy situation of his own time period, and his hypothesis applies well to this case. Shishino Nakaba offered his National Teaching as the only option for Itō Rokurōbei, who was eventually forced to take it, despite strong mutual antagonism, due to coercive measures. The Meiji government, eager to use “civilization and enlightenment” to crush preexisting healing practices, subjected Rokurōbei to two years of persecution, imprisonment, and police surveillance; it even seems possible that Shishino himself may have been partially responsible for Rokurōbei’s sufferings (see Chapter Two). Even after Shishino acknowledged Rokurōbei’s impressive commitment to Fuji, he continued to wreak havoc on the Maruyama *kō* until Rokurōbei, cornered, submitted to him and began fundraising for him. Although Shishino was supposed to be encouraging faith in Fuji, he understood that the new government’s restrictive secularism was useful to force the faithful towards Shinto authority.

Even after merging with Fusōkyō, the Maruyama *kō* continued to face the possibility of persecution, due to members’ belief in the healing power of Fuji. Here, again, administrative and bureaucratic systems directed them towards appeal to

²⁰ Morrow, “Boundary Work,” 129.

Shinto authority. “Shinto” was represented not only as legitimate but the most legitimate of ideas: Shishino imagined Fusōkyō-Maruyama as an organization that would one day constitute Japan’s National Teaching. As Anesaki suggested, these ideas led to excess. Shishino’s National Teaching idea gave Maruyama members (and perhaps even Rokurōbei) a false promise that their healing prayers, ponytails, funerals, or military rituals symbolized their destiny to align the Japanese state with some cosmic order. We can understand, through this, why the *Mi* Division initially prophesized that Shishino, not Rokurōbei, would become the emperor of Japan: the hereditary emperors had their ritual functions, and Rokurōbei had his insights and healing powers, but Shishino was the leader of the organization fated to bind them all together.

Following Anesaki and Shimazono, we may propose that in the case of the Maruyama movement, hostile attitudes towards religion encouraged both administrators and individual believers to demonstrate the value of the movement through zeal for the National Teaching, the belief in imminent theocracy evidenced in the *Mi* Division Incident, and the political jingoism of later decades. What Shimazono calls “State Shinto” was not, however, an objectively religious imposition onto objective boundaries of the secular or onto conceptually independent religions, but the byproduct of a strictly secularized climate that narrowed the possibilities of thought and expression for both traditional and new religions, with deleterious effects on both the individual conscience and the public sphere.

Such a climate can be produced by laws against specific practices, as was the case here. It can also be produced through nonlegal avenues, for instance, by elite denigration of the backwards, irrational habits of the masses. Being told that they have no place in mainstream politics, marginalized actors may be drawn towards fringe political movements which tell them that the corrupt current regime will be swept away in a great cataclysm and that they will soon be handsomely rewarded for their steadfast faith. They may be urged to look for hidden patterns which confirm that they are being supported in high places. This may take the form of the *Mi* Division in 1880s Shizuoka; it may also take the form of QAnon in 2020s America. Although these prophecies may fail, causing some particular movement to lose its credibility, the seekers will not cease hoping for radical change.

Just as the history of the Maruyama movement casts doubt onto the idea of sanctifying the practices of the lifetime of the founder, it should also cast doubt onto the idea of religious faith as something that can be enacted outside of political contexts. The 1930s leaders of Maruyamakyō and its Seattle Branch Church did not produce and perform a warped or inauthentic religion, but one which spoke authentically to the society of its time; a society which, casting aside prior forms of healing and teaching as inexpedient, encouraged believers in the power of Fuji to express themselves in terms of Japanese exceptionalism. One of the tasks of religious studies scholars in the present day is to demonstrate these kinds of historical patterns and accurately describe the effects of rhetoric and policymaking around religion.

APPENDIX:

Membership in Fusōkyō, Maruyama *kō*, and Maruyamakyō, 1879–1899

Year	Citation	Notes
1870	20 <i>sewanin</i> (<i>Kōshin</i> stone in Noborito)	
1873	Eight male <i>sendatsu</i> as well as Rokurōbei named in survey (Andō Katsushige manuscript discussed in Chapter Two)	Women, if any, not counted.
1874	36 to 63 participants in second Fuji climb	36-42 participants in Urushibara Shika's diary. 63 participants in a dubious report in Inoue, "Fuji <i>kō</i> toritadashi."
1875	January: 128 core members donate 200 yen (Yuri, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 264, 269n5; Taima, "Maruyama <i>kyōdan</i> ," 14)	
1876	June: 50,000 attend Shishino Nakaba's <i>tenpaishiki</i> ritual in Noborito (Fukuda, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 51)	Public ritual. I could not locate newspaper coverage.
1879a	February: Rokurōbei mentions over 10,000 Fusōkyō members in mutual aid agreement (see Chapter Four)	
1879b	September 16: Rokurōbei performs a Fusōkyō <i>tenpaishiki</i> ceremony attended by 36,000 (Yuri, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 306)	
1880a	April 17: 1,500 Maruyama <i>kō</i> members line up at opening ceremony of Hibiya Daijingū wearing one-tooth <i>geta</i> wooden sandals, bamboo hats, Fuji hiking poles, and holding banners (<i>Tōkyō akebono shinbun</i> , April 19)	
1880b	June 1: Over 50,000 members for all of Fusōkyō per legal requirement (Takeda, "Kokugakusha," 192; Nagata, "Fusō <i>Kyōkai</i> ")	Shishino arranged to impose this legal requirement on himself, so it probably reflects a conservative estimate of Fusōkyō membership
1880c	July 1: celebration is held in Noborito upon reaching 100,000 "Maruyama believers" (Yuri, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 308)	As this contradicts Rokurōbei's 1884 figure, perhaps 100,000 Fusōkyō members is meant here.
1880d	August: 8,000 Maruyama <i>kō</i> members purify themselves in Tama River and climb Mount Fuji in light blue vestments (<i>Yomiuri shinbun</i> , August 20)	

Year	Citation	Notes
1880e	September: “Over 10,000” Maruyama <i>kō</i> members (<i>Yomiuri shinbun</i> , September 2)	
1881	10,000 attend <i>tenpaishiki</i> ceremony in Fujisawa	
1882a	April 15: 7–8000 Maruyama <i>kō</i> members, dressed in identical pale yellow kimonos and wearing <i>geta</i> sandals, listen to an address by Rokurobei. (Ueda, <i>Nikki</i> , 77)	
1882b	August: 30,000 attend an ascetic practice by Rokurōbei and lecture by Shishino at Yamada Church (Itō Akiyoshi, <i>Niikura</i> , 19)	
1882c	Numbered Fusōkyō membership cards, used on the Fuji pilgrimage in 1882–4, go up to at least 50,000 (surviving cards in secondary market).	
1884	October: 60,000 or 70,000 Maruyama <i>kō</i> members claimed in a manuscript attributed to Rokurōbei. (“Tenmei-kaiten F”)	Modified to 600,000–700,000 by a later scribe (“Tenmei-kaiten C,” 98)
Circa 1884–5	6,000 believers in <i>Mi</i> Division, Shizuoka. (Katagiri, “Takinosha”)	An unusual source: the author was a believer in Shizuoka at the time and later served Noborito as an accountant.
1885	Believers raise 15,000 yen to build Kurihara Kyōkaijo in Shizuoka. (<i>Tōkai gyōshō shinpō</i> , January 10, 1886)	Block-print receipts are mass produced for donations as small as one yen.
Circa 1885–6	78,000 members in Shizuoka’s <i>Mi</i> Division? (Suzuki Masayuki, “Minshū shisō,” 61)	No date given. This figure does not appear in Suzuki’s later PhD thesis.
1886	400,000 members reported to Shinto Honkyoku (“Maruyama Kyōkai,” <i>Kaitsu zasshi</i> 33 [January 1887], 6)	There was an interest in inflating the figures to demonstrate the importance of the <i>kō</i> to Shinto Honkyoku.
1887a	Only 3,201 members in all of <i>Mi</i> Division (Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 15)	It is not clear what sort of internal document this is based on.
1887b	Around 2,620 members nationally donated to build a stone gate in Noborito (Taima, “Maruyama kyōdan,” 15n18)	Broken down by region but missing distant regions like Nagasaki.
1887c	September: 248,945 members <i>outside of Shizuoka</i> reported in a secret internal census (Nanba, <i>Fuhai</i> , 26). Broken down by prefecture, e.g. 2,000 members in Nagasaki, 3,000 members in Mie	This is the most detailed breakdown available. There is no explanation for why Shizuoka is missing.

Year	Citation	Notes
1889a	August: 16,000 join first Fuji climb since 1886 (or 1885?) (Yuri, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 435)	
1889b	Independence petition cites 600,000 members, which is crossed out and replaced with 1.3 million (<i>Kanagawa kenshi shiryōhen</i> , vol. 13, 289)	Date of the “correction” is unclear.
1889c	1000–1200 believers in the eastern end of Shizuoka (<i>Tōkai eiri shinbun</i> , February 10, 1889, quoted in Itō Yōjirō, “Inshi,” 3)	
1889d	1.36 million members and 10,000 in attendance at a ritual in Noborito (<i>Kaitsū zasshi</i> 134 [November 1889], 5–6)	10,000 is smaller than 1876 figures.
Circa 1890	700,000 members, including 300,000 in Shizuoka, according to an unpublished manuscript by Maejima Toyotarō, documentarian of Freedom and People’s Rights Movement (Haraguchi, <i>Meiji zenki</i> , 364)	Haraguchi gives no date. Maejima cites existence of churches in Gunma, but not too many elsewhere, which seems to date this to about 1890. In any case these numbers seem to come from Maruyamakyō headquarters.
1891a	April: 1.2 million members (Aoikawa, <i>Kiryaku</i> , vol. 2, 100)	
1891b	December: Maruyamakyō demands <i>Shizuoka daimu shinbun</i> pay for 700,000 postcards to distribute to believers as compensation in libel case (<i>Asahi shinbun</i> , December 11, 1891)	Contradicts 1891a
1892a	500,000 members (<i>Asahi shinbun</i> , February 27, 1892)	
1892b	1.38 million households reported to parent organization Shintō Honkyoku, including 328,000 in Shizuoka (Yuri, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 517).	Yuri (“Shōzen,” 8) believed this figure reflected losses after the Mi Division incident and implied two million members or more. I place no value on this figure.
1892–3	Multiple signs of internal collapse and disorder	See Chapter Five
1894	April: 15,200 mourners at Rokurōbei’s funeral (Yuri, <i>Kyōsoden</i> , 490)	
Circa 1895	10,000 members following departure of Urushibaras and Saitō (Takagi, “Shūkyōteki kō,” 214)	This number has been virtually unchanged since the 1890s.

The following is my personal reading of the data presented above.

I speculate that in 1880, Shishino Nakaba estimated Fusōkyō to have reached 100,000 members. Although this was not a count of the Maruyama *kō*, it would have been deeply exciting to true believers in the Maruyama *kō* as a validation of Rokurōbei's mission to bring divine wisdom to the Meiji government. Following this was the Great Missionary Tour in Shizuoka in late 1882. Perhaps reports of these mass events created excitement in the Shinto world. Having acquired this exciting reputation, the “short-haired” bureaucrats at Noborito headquarters from 1885 onward may have become less interested in verifying membership and more interested in exaggerating the size of their movement to their superiors at Shintō Honkyoku. The result of this was years of inflated figures. The reported “members” are many times greater than the number who participated in recorded Mount Fuji climbs with Rokurōbei.¹

If we are tracking only those who genuinely wanted to learn from and imitate Rokurōbei, we should consider the Fuji climbs to more closely track membership. The climbs were themselves suspended at the group's height, probably from 1885–

¹ I am here positing a type of adherence based on trust in Rokurōbei and his teachings, which is however not how the Maruyamakyō administration envisioned its own membership. As noted by Suzuki (“Minshū shisō,” 378n7), Maruyamakyō post-1885 intended to distinguish between three kinds of members: *shinto* 信徒 (“believers”—in what, we are not told), *kyōto* 教徒 (who had committed to bury their dead rather than cremate), and *kyōshi* 教師 (“teachers”). But Suzuki reports that these idealized labels were mixed up in the Maruyamakyō archive (which I was unable to access during my research) and were unhelpful to him. Chapter Five has more details on why Maruyamakyō developed a sense of adherence separate from trust in Rokurōbei.

1888, and probably due to logistical impossibility.² While we are therefore missing key data points, we have an important correlation to make: there were 8,000 climbers in 1880, but possibly 50–100,000 Fusōkyō members in that year.³ The Maruyama *kō* was the most numerous and enthusiastic group within Fusōkyō, but there were other Fuji *kō* involved in 1880. Maruyama Fuji climbs were open to both sexes, but traditionally only men climbed Fuji. Perhaps some women climbed, but we should also assume that some believing men stayed home on account of work/family duties, expense, sickness, or old age. As a very rough and speculative compromise, let us multiply the number of climbers by four to obtain a guess at dedicated believers.

If one-fourth of active Maruyama *kō* members climbed Fuji, then the *kō* had as many as 32,000 believers in 1880 and 64,000 in 1889. This rough, optimistic estimate is more concordant with the 15,200 mourners who showed up for Rokurōbei's funeral in 1894, but more than anything, it strikes a balance between the small number of leaders the group was able to recall in later generations with the sizable donations it was able to accumulate in the 1880s. Comparing with the above figures, perhaps we can imagine an upper limit of 70,000 believers at Maruyamakyō's peak in 1884–8, which coincidentally is what Rokurōbei himself believed (I arrived at this estimate before discovering “Tenmei-kaiten F”). If we

² Yuri, *Kyōsoden*, 435. I think it unlikely that the Maruyama *kō* held a Fuji climb in summer 1885 when they were in the process of splitting from Fusōkyō.

³ I am basing this on 1880b, 1880c, and 1882c—numbered membership cards that have large numbers like 30,000 or 40,000 and can be seen on Yahoo Auctions. Although, there was an old tactic in communist parties of starting the numbering from a large number like 40,000...

stretch this optimism to its limit, this upper limit can be made to agree with the internal census of 1887. If each committed believer counted his or her spouse, minor children, and elderly parents, as is sometimes done in religious adherent statistics, we can almost imagine 70,000 active members becoming 250,000 persons in “member” households, although the 1887 census which reports this number omits Shizuoka and includes dubiously large figures such as 2,000 members in Nagasaki, etc.

The group publicly advertised itself as having 600,000 to 700,000 members in 1889–1891, which abruptly became 1.38 million in 1892. These inflated figures proved useful for various purposes, such as justifying the 1889 independence petition, or demanding a large fee in their 1891 libel case against *Shizuoka daimu shinbun*. I consider it highly unlikely that the group ever grew beyond 70,000 believers at its height in 1884–8. Given the small numbers reported for *Mi* Division by Katagiri and Taima, even this number should be seen as an absolute maximum. The inflated figures ended at Rokurōbei’s funeral because the group had collapsed sufficiently that there was no need to maintain the façade.

Glossary

Special Maruyama and Fuji *kō* characters are printed with Kakugyō-kei Moji Mincho font developed by Ōtani Masayuki, released under the IPA Font License.

aikokushin 愛国心

Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神

Amenominakanushi 天之御中主神

Aoikawa Nobuchika 葵川信近

Arisugawa 有栖川

Bamanroku 馬万六

bunmei(-kaika) 文明(開化)

Busō Konmintō 武相困民党

busshū 仏醜

chonmage 丁髷

Daikyōin 大教院

danka 檀家

Eboshi iwa chokuden 烏帽子岩直伝

eisei 衛生

fu 符

Fudō Myōō 不動明王

Fukagawa Namiho 深川浪穂

Fukami Hayao 深見速雄

fuku kyōmuchō 副教務長

Fujidō 不二道 or 富士道

Fuji Issan Kōsha 富士一山講社

Fuji Issan Kōsha seiyaku 富士一山講社誓約

Fuji Issan Kyōkai Kōsha kisoku 富士一山教會講社規則

Fuji kō toritadashi kakiage 富士講取糺書上

Fuji nankyō 富士南經, in later texts 富士率經
Fuji nankyō kindōki 富士南經近導記
Fujisan no sho 富士山之書
Fuji shindōki 富士信導記
Fuji shinjin (no gi) 富士信心(の義)
 Fujitake Jinja 富士嶽神社
 Fujizuka 富士塚
 Furuhashi Tatsu 古橋タツ
fusegi 防ぎ
 Fusōkyō 扶桑教 or 扶桑教
gagaku 雅樂
gai shūkyō 外宗教
genri 原理
genze-riyaku 現世利益
 GOHŌ ∴法
gohōden 御宝伝
gon-chūkōgi 権中講義
gondaikyōsei 権大教正
Gozaroku 蕤六
 Gunjinsai 軍神祭 (sometimes given incorrectly as 軍人祭)
gyō(ja) 行(者)
 Haruna *kō* 榛名講
heitai-katen 兵隊勝てん
higyō 非行
hinin(gyō) 非人(行)
 Hirashima Matatarō 平島又太郎
 Hirashima Shizuko 平島静子

Honda Asakichi 本多浅吉
Ichikawa Chūjiro 市川忠次郎
Ikigami no shisōshi 生き神の思想史
Inoue Nobutaka 井上信孝
Isobe Mushagorō 磯部武者五郎
itan jasetsu 異端邪説
Itō Iten 伊藤葦天
Itō Kuniyoshi 伊藤国義, in early sources 伊藤国吉
Itō Rokurōbei 伊藤六郎兵衛, in one early manuscript 伊東六郎兵衛
Itō Rokuzō 伊藤六蔵
Itō Sonshi 伊藤尊師
itten-hitosuji no michi 一天一筋の道
itten ni musubu 一天に結ぶ
Jikigyō Miroku 食行身禄
Jikkōkyō 実行教
Jiyūtō 自由党
Jōjudake 成就岳
junkaiin 巡回員
junkyō 巡教
Kakugyō Tōbutsu 角行藤仏
kagemiharai 影身祓
Kami no hikari 神の光
Kindai minshū shūkyōshi no kenkyū 近代民衆宗教史の研究
kin'en 禁厭
Kitaguchi Sengen-sha 北口浅間社
Kiyomiya Denzaemon 清宮伝左衛門
Kiyomiya Yonekichi 清宮米吉

kō 講

Koga Jirō 古賀治朗

Kōgakusho 皇学所

Kojiki 古事記

Konkōkyō 金光教

Konohanasakuyahime 木花之佐久夜毘売 (many variants)

kōsha 講社

kōshin (*kō*) 庚申(講)

kokka no kyō 国家の教

kokkā shintō 国家神道

Kokka Shintō to minshū shūkyō 国家神道の民衆宗教

kokkyō 国教

Kokugaku 国学

Kondō Karazō 近藤唐藏

Kōshu Kaidō 甲州街道

Kuhonbutsu Jōshinji 九品仏浄真寺

KŪTŌ(-ANZEI) 九十(安清)

kuyōsei 九曜星

Kyōbushō 教部省

kyōdōshoku 教導職

kyōgika 教義化

Kyōha Shintō 教派神道

kyōhō 教法

kyōkai 教会

kyōkaijo 教会所

Kurozumikyō 黒住教

majinai 禁厭 or まじない

mamori 守り

Maruyama *kō* 丸山講

Maruyamakyō 丸山教

Maruyama Sakura 丸山作楽

Maruyama Yūka 丸山有香

miharai 身祓

miitsu 御稜威

mikanzane 御神實

Mi kumi jiken み組事件 or 美組事件

minkan shūkyō 民間宗教

minshū shūkyō 民衆宗教

Mishiye みしゑ

Mitsuboshi *kō* 三星講

miroku 身禄 or 弥勒 or ミロク

Morimoto Tokusaburō 森本徳三郎

Moto-no-chichihaha 元の父母 or 元の驛價

NAMU 率愈

namu-amida-butsu 南無阿弥陀仏

NAMU-AMITA-USU 南無安身田宇す, later 率愈あ身田宇す

Niikura Hachirōbei 新倉八郎兵衛

Nihon shisō taikei 日本思想大系

Nihon shoki 日本書紀

Nishigaya Heijirō 西ヶ谷平次郎

nokemono 除け者

Nomuroku 呑六

ohiraki お開き

Ōishi Yahei 大石彌兵衛

ōsei-fukkō 王政復興
oshi 御師
Okuyama Hansōbō 奥山半僧坊
ominuki 御見抜き
Ontake *kō* 御嶽講
ōsei-fukkō no seisei 王政復興の聖世
Oshirabe お調べ
ōtabusa 大髻
Ozawa Gonzaemon 尾沢権左衛門
Ozawa Hikochi 小沢彦遅
Renmonkyō 蓮門教
rokkon-shōjō 六根清浄
Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛
Saitō Fukutarō 斉藤福太郎
saisei-icchi 祭政一致
sakaki 榊
sandai dōjō 三大道場
sangaku shinkō 山岳信仰
sangen 参元
SAN-MYŌ-TŌ-KAI-SAN 参明藤開山
Sasaki Chiyomatsu 佐々木千代松
sejō 世情
sekaiteki shūkyō 世界的宗教
seiun ippen 世運一変
sendatsu 先達
Sengen 浅間 or 仙元
Sengen Jinja 浅間神社

senkyōshi 宣教使
sewanin 世話人
sezokuteki 世俗的
shihō shiden no dōjō 四方四殿の道場
shinkō shūkyō 新興宗教
Shinkyō 神経
Shinkyō genri ron 神教原理論
Shinri (magazine) 神理
Shinrikyō 神理教
shinsui 神水
Shintokukyō 神徳経
Shintō Honkyoku 神道本局
Shintō Jimukyoku 神道事務局
Shintōka 神道化
Shishino Nakaba 宍野半
Shishino Tsuyako 宍野津也子 or 艶子 or ツヤ子
shōhai 賞杯
shokoku taihei 諸国泰平
Shōmen Kongō 青面金剛
Shōtoku Kōgyō ichidaiki 聖徳孝行一代記
shugen 修験
shugyō 修行
shukubō 宿坊
shūkyō hōjin hō 宗教法人法
Takaoka Koreyoshi 高岡惟善
Takazaki Ichizō 高崎市蔵
takiage 焚き上げ

Tanaka Yoritsune 田中頼庸
tansei 丹精, later たんせい
tenka-taihei 天下泰平
tenkai-taihei, kokudo-annon 天下泰平・国土安穩 *tenmei-kaigo* 転迷開悟
 TENMEI-KAITEN 天明海天
Tenmei-kaiten bunmei-kaika ōzumo torikumi 天明海天文明開化大相撲取組
Tenmei-kaiten gokui no tsume 天明海天極意のつめ
Tenmei-kaiten no benkai 天明海天之弁解
Tenmei-kaiten no hiraki 天明海天の開き
tennō-heika 天皇陛下, or Rokurōbei's preference 天農平我
tenpaishiki 天拝式
 Tenrikyō 天理教
 Tohokami *kō* 吐菩加美講
tonaebumi 唱え文
tsuma 妻
tsumadate 爪立
tsūzoku dōtoku 通俗道德
 Urushibara Shika 漆原しか or シカ
 Urushibara Yūjirō 漆原雄次郎
 Yajima Kyūbei 矢島久兵衛
yamabushi 山伏
 Yamaguchi Masaoki 山口正興
 Yamatomi (*kō*) 山富(講)
 Yamazaki Taisuke 山崎泰輔
yanagi no Rokuzō 柳の六蔵
 Yasuda Zenjirō 安田善次郎
yonaoshi 世直し

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Kankō 寒虹
Kanpō 官報
Kōbun shinshi 公聞新誌
Kokugaku 国学
Meikyō shinshi 明教新誌
Minkan denshō 民間伝承
Nōnin shinpō 能仁新報
Seika 精華
Shinri 神理
Shizuoka daimu shinbun 静岡大務新聞
Shizuoka shinbun 静岡新聞
Taihoku nippō 大北日報
Taiyō 太陽
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