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WHEN MEN BECOME GODS: APOTHEOSIS, SACRED SPACE, AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN JAPAN 1486-1599



In 1486, the ritual specialist Yoshida Kanetomo proclaimed that Ōuchi Norihiro was the Great August Deity of Tsukiyama (Tsukiyama *daimyōjin* 築山大明神), and had this apotheosis sanctioned by Go-Tsuchimikado, the emperor (*tennō* 天皇) of Japan. Ōuchi Norihiro would not seem to be a likely candidate for deification. Although he was an able administrator, and a powerful western warlord, he left few traces. Save for codifying a few laws, and promoting international trade, his most notable act was the rebellion that he initiated against the Ashikaga, the shoguns, or military hegemon of Japan, in the last weeks of his life. Early in this campaign, Norihiro succumbed to illness and died on a small island in Japan's Inland Sea, leaving his son Masahiro to continue the conflict against the Ashikaga.

This deification, which was formalized some two decades after Norihiro's demise, was in and of itself not something unique. Japan's emperors had long been known to have sacerdotal authority, with several sovereigns in the 7th century being referred to as manifest deities (*akitsumigami* 現神), although this moniker fell out of favor in the 8th century¹. To be made a god, the court and its constituent ritual advisors had to recognize one as such. The court and its officials, who had long asserted the authority to bestow ranks and titles to gods, could transform men, most notably those who died with a grudge, into gods as well.

¹ Later sovereigns tended to emphasize their cosmic authority with the Buddhist notion of a *kinrin-ō* (金輪王) or a Universal Golden Wheel Turning monarch (*cakravartin*) who ruled by moral suasion.

The impulse for apotheosis arose not from the glorification of perfect individuals, but rather from fear, for it was thought that those who had been somehow wronged would haunt the world as malevolent spirit (*onryō* 怨靈). These *onryō* could best be pacified by receiving formal recognition as a god, as this honor would assuage their spirits and eliminate their lingering rancor.

One well-known example of this process concerns Sugawara Michizane, a banished official who became a god of learning some two generations after he died in 903. In another early case, the wronged emperor Sutoku was feared as a particularly potent *onryō*, whose transformation into a deity did not prevent him from being perceived as instigating disorder. Late in life, Sutoku was upset enough with his political marginalization to copy sutras in his own blood, thereby making his grudge known². He was not alone in possessing such rancor. Others would threaten to become malevolent spirits in the advent that their testaments were not followed, but none asserted divinity outright³.

In fact, an institution existed to manage the gods. Japan had since ancient times had the Ministry of Divine Affairs, or *Jingikan* (神祇官), a bureaucratic organ responsible for officially recognizing gods as being significant enough to merit rites emanating from the court, or locality, and at times, bestowing ranks and honors on deities as well. These officials could also recognize that certain angry spirits in need of pacification were in fact gods, and by doing so, transformed the *onryō* of Michizane and Sutoku into gods, but this process took years to accomplish, and only occurred rarely.

Norihiro himself never asserted godly status, or for that matter, acted in a way that suggested that he was wronged in any way. He successfully ruled the Ōuchi territories and his son Masahiro experienced considerable political and military success. The circumstances regarding Norihiro's apotheosis thus profoundly differed from that of earlier cases. Instead of the venerable Ministry of Divine Affairs, it was a shrine official, Yoshida Kanetomo, who issued the document making Norihiro a god. Unlike the earlier cases, for which the original paperwork does not survive, if in fact it ever exists, a copy of Kanetomo's missive survives; it gives the process a bureaucratic precision and finality that are absent in the earlier cases.

2 See *Sutoku Copies the Sutras in Blood and Writes a Curse at the End with His Death*, in: *Before Heike, and After: Hōgen, Heiji, Jōkyūki*, transl. R. Tyler, Charleston 2012, pp. 96-100 for a vivid reference to Sutoku in chronicles. Contemporary court diaries confirm that belief in Sutoku's vengeful spirit was widespread. Yoshida Tsunefusa wrote about it in his *Kikki* on 7.16.1183 (Jūei 2), see T. Yoshida, *Kikki*, ed. R. Takeuchi, Tokyo 1934, II, pp. 53-54.

3 For the 2.17.1299 (Shōan 1) reference, see T. Conlan, *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth-Century Japan*, Ann Arbor 2003, p. 172; *Kakujitsu denchi kishinjō*, in: *Kamakura ibun*, ed. R. Takeuchi, Tokyo 1984, XXVI, doc. 20109, 2.17.1301 (Shōan 1), p. 344.

The process of Norihiro's apotheosis has attracted minimal attention from scholars in Japan, but the ramifications are profound⁴. Scholars have hitherto associated the deification of political leaders with establishment of absolutist political authority by generals, a process that was thought to have begun late in the 16th century. Asao Naohiro first argued that a troika of leaders – Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (?-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) – had their authority legitimated and sustained by being declared as gods⁵. Most narratives of the 16th century are influenced to some degree by Asao's argument that the three "great unifiers" of Japan, Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu, established absolutist political authority by being declared as gods. Asao Naohiro's argument has its supports and detractors⁶, as the question of whether Nobunaga or his followers attempted to classify himself as a god remains debatable, due in no small part to the fact that he was assassinated and his line was nearly extinguished, but no one question the apotheosis of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu⁷.

Some scholars, such as Bito Masahide, have perceived the apotheosis of powerful political figures as constituting an unprecedented development in late-16th-century Japan⁸. Willem Boot has argued to the contrary that this process was of greater antiquity, and suggested that the deification of Nakatomi no Kamatari, the 7th-century progenitor of the Fujiwara lineage, as the Tōnomine *daimyōjin* in 1464-1465 represents its oldest example⁹. Boot is correct here in that the bureaucracy of apotheosis, performed under the aegis of the Yoshida family of shrine attendants, originated in the latter half of the 15th century. Yet rather than the example of Kamatari, the 1486 deification of

4 T. Yamada, *Chūsei koki chiiki kenryoku ni yoru bushi no shinkakuka*, "Nenpō Chūseishi kenkyū" XXXIII (2008), pp. 61-84, first wrote an essay on this process, but it was mentioned in T. Hagiwara, *Chūsei Saishi soshiki no kenkyū*, Tokyo 1965.

5 For an English translation of his work, see N. Asao, *Shōgun and Tennō*, in: *Japan before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500-1650*, eds. J.W. Hall, N. Keiji, K. Yamamura, Princeton 1981, pp. 248-271.

6 Supporters include H. Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs 1570-1680*, Princeton 1985, while detractors include J. Lamers, *Japonius Tyrannus: The Japanese Warlord Oda Nobunaga Reconsidered*, Leiden 2000.

7 In the case of Hideyoshi, for the best study of his deification and its significance, see A.M. Watsky, *Chikubushima: Deploying the Sacred Arts in Momoyama Japan*, Seattle 2004, esp. pp. 202-230. For a recent Japanese study, see H. Toyotomi, *Kami ni natta Hideyoshi*, Nagahama 2004.

8 M. Bito, *Thought and Religion: 1550-1700*, in: *The Cambridge History of Japan, IV: Early Modern Japan*, ed. J.W. Hall, Cambridge (UK) 1991, pp. 373-424, esp. pp. 393-395.

9 W.J. Boot, *The Death of a Shogun: Deification in Early Modern Japan*, in: *Shintō in History: Ways of the Kami*, eds. J. Breen, M. Teeuwen, Honolulu 2000, pp. 144-166, esp. pp. 157, 162. For more on the Tōnomine *daimyōjin*, see S. Kuroda, *Fujiwara Kamatari, jikū o kakeru: Henshin to saisei no Nihonshi*, Tokyo 2011, esp. pp. 210-214.

Ōuchi Norihiro became the template for the posthumous deification of the unifiers, with the links to the apotheosis of Hideyoshi being most clear (the only variation being that this latter case took place merely a year, rather than twenty years after his death, as had been the case for Norihiro)¹⁰.

Unlike the widely known example of Hideyoshi, however, the case of Norihiro remains obscure, for the Tsukiyama shrine where he is housed as a god remains a dilapidated structure that barely survived to this date. Nevertheless, his 1486 apotheosis suggests that arguments about deification serving as a central element of early modern absolutist authority and as an ideological keystone for the late-16th-century “unifiers” need to be reevaluated.

Assessments of the significance of the apotheosis of powerful figures such as the unifiers tend to fall into two camps: either this process is perceived as a means to legitimate absolutist politics, or it is described as a personal, private matter that did not sanction politics. Among scholars, the former approach is dominant, but a minority perceive apotheosis primarily as a “religious matter”, the driving force of which was “a deeply felt personal belief”¹¹. Both arguments, however, suffer from limitations, because the former expresses rites as a subset of politics, and thus, a façade to legitimate authority, while the latter suggests to the contrary that “religion” constituted a personal sphere of belief, but one divorced from politics.

In fact, in ancient and medieval Japan, “religion” and “politics” were indistinguishable. Linguistic evidence reveals that political and sacerdotal authority were one, for political and religious rites were described by the same homonym (*matsurigoto*). The existence of this term alone highlights the inadequacies of the durable notion of the separation of church and state to describe the political structure of Japan, because the *tennō* was simultaneously the most sacred figure, and also the pinnacle of political authority in Japan.

This enduring sacerdotal authority of Japan’s sovereigns has led some to describe the Japanese polity as if it were analogous to European kingship, with generals or shoguns, acting as “secular” leaders¹², but this proves

¹⁰ For the role of Yoshida Shintō and the deification of Hideyoshi, see T. Hagiwara, *Chūsei Saishi...*, p. 613; see pp. 673–677 for listing of the Yoshida Shintō documents (*Sōgensenji* 宗源宣旨) deifying individuals, with Norihiro being the case most analogous to Hideyoshi. The Tsukiyama *daimyōjin* is the fourth record listed here.

¹¹ W.J. Boot, *The Death of a Shogun...*, p. 162.

¹² For such sentiments, see K. Grossberg, *From Feudal Cheiftain to Secular Monarch: The Development of Shogunal Power in Early Muromachi Japan*, “*Monumenta Nipponica*” XXXI (1976) 1, pp. 29–49, while for metaphors of the emperor as resembling the Roman Pope, see M. Jansen, *The Rise of Revolutionary Nationalism*, in: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, eds. Th. de Bary, C. Gluck, A.E. Tiedemann, II: 1600–2000, New York 2005, p. 963.

misleading. Indeed, these generals, the Ashikaga, strove to blur the distinction between themselves and Japan's emperors by adopting similar rituals so as to elevate their authority; furthermore, for much of the 15th century, ritually the Ashikaga behaved as if they were Japan's sovereigns. Thus, although the Ashikaga blurred the lines of sovereignty, they did not usurp the authority of emperors as much as supplant them, but they did not rely on claims of outright divinity. Here again, Norihiro's apotheosis was something new.

HELPING HOMELESS GODS AND THE RISE OF THE YOSHIDA

During the cataclysmic Ōnin War (1467-1477), two entrenched armies, one nominally under the command of Ashikaga Yoshimasa, the shogun or nominal hegemon of Japan who exercised authority on behalf of the emperor and the court, and the other led by Ōuchi Masahiro, gutted Japan's capital. Ashikaga authority withered in the aftermath of this war, and Ōuchi power waxed, for their city of Yamaguchi, located in Japan's west, survived and expanded in the aftermath of the collapse of the center.

The destruction of so many important cultic sites in the capital led to a crisis in divine affairs, as it had long been assumed that deities required a structure to house their essence, or "divine presence" (*shintai* 神体). With so many shrines destroyed, some feared that the gods of Japan would aimlessly wander throughout the archipelago. Some in fact claimed to see gods flying about, looking for a suitable abode to reside after the destruction of their shrine¹³. In this crisis, the withered institutions of the *Jingikan*, itself largely destroyed, could not effectively respond.

Yoshida Kanetomo, an ambitious scion of a family of shrine attendants, solved this crisis by creating a special purified place, the *Saijōsho Daigengū* (齋場所大元宮), to house all of the deities of Japan, particularly those who had been displaced by the destruction of their shrines¹⁴. This site of ritual purity, and dorm for the gods, was built on Mount Yoshida in eastern Kyoto. Kanetomo resided in the eastern wards of the capital, in one of the few regions that the Ashikaga controlled during the decade long Ōnin War. In 1473, the sixth year of the conflict, the beleaguered shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa relied upon Yoshida Kanetomo to break this stalemate by cursing the armies led by Ōuchi Masahiro, and fomenting dissent in their ranks¹⁵.

13 T. Hagiwara, *Chūsei Saishi...*, pp. 645-646.

14 It would burn down during the conflict, but would later be rebuilt.

15 S. Inoue, *Bunmei gonen izen no Yoshida Kanetomo Saijōsho: Toku ni sōgen jiki o megutte*, "Waseda Daigaku Daigakuin Bungaku Kenkyūka kiyō. Tetsugaku, shigaku hen" XVII (1990), pp. 43-54, esp. p. 48; T. Inoue, *Kinsei no jinja to Chōtei ken'i*, Tokyo 2007, p. 29.

By creating the *Saijōsho Daigengū*, Yoshida Kanetomo initiated a process whereby he asserted overarching authority in all affairs relating to Japan's indigenous gods. Kanetomo, as a member of the Yoshida family, effectively supplanted the institutions of the *Jingikan*, and asserted authority over divine affairs. Through the Yoshida monopolization of divine authority, the nature of belief of Japan's gods became formalized into the corpus of belief known as Shintō today.

As the Yoshida were relying on their control over divine affairs, Ōuchi Masahiro, who occupied the western wards of the capital, countered the Yoshida curses by bringing his tutelary deity, Hokushin Myōken Sonjō-o daibosatsu (北辰妙見尊星王), to his encampment in western Kyoto. Masahiro enshrined a manifestation of the Northern Star in the form of a Buddhist avatar. He expressly relied on the Buddhist manifestation of a Northern Star deity, and thereby sidestepped the question of Yoshida influence entirely. Nevertheless, deities were thought to appear in either the guise of Japanese deities, or *kami*, or their Buddhist manifestations, and Masahiro otherwise described the Northern Star avatar as a god. In his request to move the gods, or *kanjō* (勧請), Masahiro wrote: "The glory of the gods increases with the fervor of belief, and people are able to protect their glory through their benefice"¹⁶.

Masahiro installed Myōken, the Northern Star deity, in western Kyoto, where he was encamped. This act proved threatening to the Ashikaga, because by bringing his god to Kyoto, Masahiro was able to imprint his ancestral deity on the religious fabric of the capital, and this act implied that the Ōuchi would retain a permanent presence in Kyoto. This proved particularly problematic for the Ashikaga, because he inserted his god in the vicinity of the Ashikaga ancestral shrine of Samegai Wakamiya Hachiman, one of three crucial cultic sites for the regime, where Hachiman, a god of war was housed¹⁷. This shrine constituted one of the crucial sites for legitimation of the Ashikaga, as it represented the historical abode of Minamoto Yorimitsu, the progenitor of the Ashikaga line. Over the course of the 16th century, Samegai Wakamiya went from being a shrine devoted to Hachiman to a mixed Myōken and Hachiman shrine to one where astral deities were ascendant, in a process mirroring the trajectory of Ōuchi and Ashikaga fortunes¹⁸.

¹⁶ *Shintei zōho kokushi taikai*, XXVII, Tokyo 1965, pp. 144-145.

¹⁷ *Wakamiya Hachimangū monjo kiroku*, "Gerin" XXVII (1978), 3.4.1475 (Bunmei 7) Ōuchi Mashahiro kinsei, p. 16.

¹⁸ This is most notable in the 1540s. In 1547, Ashikaga Yoshiharu refers to this as a Rokujō Myōken Hachiman shrine, which was built at the site of the Ōuchi residence. See the 5.20.1547 (Tenbun 16) Ashikaga Yoshiteru (sic) *migyōsho*, p. 22. Even in the early 20th century, links to Northern Star belief lingered. See R. Tanaka, *Kyoto no omogake*, Kyoto 1931.

Myōken's star continued to wax during the latter years of the Ōnin War, as Ōuchi success became evident. At some time later in the conflict, Masahiro's forces destroyed the *Saijōsho Daigengū*. In the ninth month of 1476, negotiations between the Ashikaga and the Ōuchi began in earnest to end the war¹⁹. The Ashikaga rebuilt a competing Hachiman shrine, that of Chinjufu Hachiman, and moved it, with the help of Yoshida Kanetomo so as to maintain some semblance of authority²⁰. For Kanetomo's efforts, Hino Tomiko, the wife of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa, also provided the Yoshida with funds in 1478 for the rebuilding of the *Saijōsho Daigengū*, which had been largely destroyed during the Ōnin War²¹.

In spite of these efforts to restore the religious sites of Kyoto, Ashikaga cultic control remained tenuous, and some members of the monastic nobility left Kyoto to worship in the Ōuchi core city of Yamaguchi, a clear recognition of the ritual and political significance of this new site. Starting in the sixth month of 1476, the Kyoto monk Chikai worshipped at Kōryūji's Hikamisan, praying monthly to Myōken, performing *hōraku* (法樂), and flipping and reading the Golden Sutra of Victorious Kings (*saishōōkyō* 最勝王經) for the health of Ashikaga Yoshimasa and his son, and peace in the realm. Yamaguchi was becoming, due to the dissemination of the Myōken franchise, a ritual core. Chikai wrote how no temples could compare to Kōryūji and marveled at the peace and prosperity of Yamaguchi, where he performed an elaborate rite, the *saishōōkyō*, for: "peace, fertility of the land, the elimination of starvation and illness, and prosperity for all"²².

The Ōuchi maintained shrines and temples so as to provide order in the provinces, but they remained cognizant of the larger political and sacerdotal significance of these cultic sites. After establishing Myōken worship in western Kyoto, the Ashikaga confirmed Ōuchi lands and offices, and prayed to their gods so as to persuade the Ōuchi to leave the capital. When Masahiro did, the war ended, revealing his centrality in the conflict.

19 T. Yamada, *Shiryō shōkai Kunaichō shoryōbu zō Sagara Taketo shōsatsu maki no shōkai to hon'yaku*, "Yamaguchi kenshi kenkyū" XVIII (2010), pp. 72-89.

20 T. Hagiwara, *Chūsei Saishi...*, pp. 634-635. The third Ashikaga shrine, located at Shinomura to the northwest of Kyōto, suffered ruin at this time.

21 Hino Tomiko provided 20 thousand *hiki* in the third month of 1478 (Bunmei 10). T. Hagiwara, *Chūsei Saishi...*, p. 635.

22 *Kōmyōbujī kankei monjo*, Chikai kansu kian, in: *Kujō ke monjo 6*, *Shoji'in kankei monjo*, Tokyo 1976, p. 218-234, esp. pp. 226-229. Chikai can be documented as later praying for the Ashikaga when Ashikaga Yoshihisa was in a campaign (*dōza*) in Ōmi. See *Tōji hyakugo monjo*, IX hako ni, doc. 83, 9.6.1488 (Chōkyō 1) Muromachi dono ondōza kitō kechiba kaishō (廻請), pp. 57-58. Chikai (智海) can be documented as performing rites at Tōji and Chinjufu Hachiman through 1499. See <http://hyakugo.kyoto.jp/contents/result.php> (last accessed: 21 October 2016).

YOSHIDA POLITICS AND THE APOTHEOSIS OF THE ŌUCHI

Yoshida Kanetomo profoundly influenced the institutional structure of shrines, regularized previously inchoate beliefs and practices, and influenced the course of politics in the 15th and 16th century. One hitherto unacknowledged avenue of development of Yoshida Shintō arose when Yoshida Kanetomo shifted his attention from the Ashikaga to the Ōuchi when he helped deify Ōuchi Masahiro's father Norihiro as the Tsukiyama *daimyōjin*. For almost eighty years, this relationship proved profitable for both parties, for the Yoshida also moved important gods to Yamaguchi, thereby cementing their primacy as the arbiters of all Shintō affairs, and the authority of the Ōuchi as gods among men.

In 1482, Yoshida Kanetomo relied on forged imperial edicts (*rinji* 綸旨) to assert his position as the arbiter of all Shintō affairs. He then issued *sōgensenji*, or edicts that posited him with the full authority of the Ministry of Divine Affairs²³. With his position so enhanced, Kanetomo rebuilt his *Saijōsho Daigengū* as a hostel to collect and house the gods, which had been destroyed during the latter years of the Ōnin war. Hino Tomiko gave Kanetomo 2 thousand *kanmon* for this structure in 1484²⁴.

At the *Saijōsho Daigengū*, Amaterasu and Toyo-uke, the gods of the Outer and Inner Ise shrines, occupied a special role, and they alone of the deities merited their own sub-shrines within the precincts. Yoshida Kanetomo claimed that these deities sought refuge with him after the burning of the Ise shrines, and emperor Go-Tsuchimikado thereupon confirmed that the "true essence" (*shintai*) of the Ise gods was housed at the *Saijōsho Daigengū*²⁵. Go-Tsuchimikado's edict – one that conveniently was not forged – served to bolster Kanetomo's claims that he was the "ritual guarantor of political legitimacy"²⁶. Kanetomo asserted that he was the arbiter of rituals for the protection of the state because he could "prove" that the highest-ranking gods had flown to his shrine.

Once his position had been so established, Kanetomo shifted his attention away from the Ashikaga and the Hino to the Ōuchi. His 1473 curses against Masahiro were forgotten, or atoned for, when he deified Masahiro's father

23 T. Inoue, *Jingi kanrei (kanryō) Chōjō Yoshida ke*, in: idem, *Kinsei no jinja to Chōtei ken'I*, Tokyo 2007, pp. 31-36. For more on *sōgen senji*, see ibidem, pp. 77-95.

24 See T. Inoue, *Bunmei gonen izen no Yoshida Kanetomo no saijōsho*, p. 43; A. Grapard, *The Shintō of Yoshida Kanetomo*, "Monumenta Nipponica" XLVII (1992) 1, p. 43 for contributions from the Hino and Uesugi.

25 See A. Grapard, *The Shintō of Yoshida Kanetomo*, p. 43; T. Hagiwara, *Chūsei Saishi...*, pp. 645-646.

26 A. Grapard, *The Shintō of Yoshida Kanetomo*, pp. 47-48.

Norihiro as the Tsukiyama *daimyōjin* in 1486²⁷. Kanetomo, by doing so, emphasized his power over all shrine related affairs, including deification, and secured a patron independent of the crumbling Ashikaga bakufu, while Masahiro was able to honor his father, who died an enemy of the court and the Ashikaga, as a god.

Japan in 1486 was in considerable need of new gods, temples, and shrines, as this year witnessed a second wave of destruction that magnified the damage of the Ōnin War. Tōji, the most significant temple in Kyoto, for it functioned as a clearing house for prayers by monks of rival sects, was burned by mobs in 1486²⁸. During that same year, the most significant shrines at Izumo, and the Outer Shrine at Ise were destroyed, with the Inner Shrine, site of the sun goddess Amaterasu, the progenitor of the imperial line, burning in the following year²⁹. And with the displacement of so many gods and the destruction of their shrines, the west came to stand out, for its most important shrines were intact, and well taken care of, and this led to an exodus of gods, and the creation of new gods, to the west.

A NEW SENSE OF DIVINITY: TURTLES TABOOS AND THE SACRALIZATION OF YAMAGUCHI

Norihiro's apotheosis led to significant transformation of the social and geographic rubric of western Japan as Yamaguchi, their core city, and the surrounding western provinces, became increasingly defined as a distinct sacred area. The newly recognized Tsukiyama god became the protector of this territory, and his descendants had the added prestige of having a god as an immediate ancestor. Most immediately, this led to more sweeping regulations of Yamaguchi that focused on ritual purity, for prohibitions that had been confined to shrine precincts gradually became applied to much of the city.

The first regulations stem from the period of Yamaguchi's increased ritual prominence during the final years of the Ōnin War. The deification was not a mode of legitimation as much as establishing a new structure of territorial control. In 1475, Masahiro prohibited the hunting of any animals on Hikamisan, even those that a hunter had wounded and pursued from other regions³⁰. In 1478, he demanded that the shrine precincts for the Ima

27 T. Yamada, *Chūsei kōki chiiki kenryōku ni yoru bushi no shinkakuka – Ōuchi Norihiro no shinkakuka to "daimyōjin" go no kakutoku*, "Nenpō Chūsei shi kenkyū" XXXIII (2008), pp. 84-85.

28 M. Tomita, *Ōnin no ran*, Kyoto 1989, p. 3.

29 These shrines would not be rebuilt for over a century. K. Haga, *Sanjōnishi Sanetaka*, Tokyo 1960, p. 56, provides an overview of this destruction.

30 *Buke hō*, I, Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, III, Tokyo 1965, p. 48 for Hikamisan regulations of 11.13.1473 (Bunmei 7). The animals here were referred to as *ryō* 獵.

Hachiman shrine were to be kept clean³¹, but nine years later, Masahiro ordered that Yamaguchi itself had to be cleaned much in the same manner as these shrines³². A cluster of laws issued in this same year served to regulate conduct, prohibiting the playing of instruments in public, or people wandering around Yamaguchi at night³³.

In 1489, Masahiro forbade the killing of snakes and soft-shelled turtles (*tochigame* 鼈) – animals that served as messengers for Myōken – throughout Yamaguchi and prohibited falconers from using them as food for their birds³⁴. Masahiro ruthlessly punished those who disobeyed his injunctions, threatening some with imprisonment or death, thereby revealing that the need to purify Yamaguchi, and protect its sacred animals, transcended concerns of non-violence per se. These prohibitions suggest that Yamaguchi became a purified area, and this sentiment can be confirmed in Jesuit writings from 1558, when one long term Portuguese resident explained that Yamaguchi was a purified area where people would not eat meat – and that he thereby did not so partake for seven years, a sign that these taboos were long lasting and strictly enforced³⁵. Thus Yamaguchi became a purified, sacred space, protected by both Tsukiyama, and Myōken.

The apotheosis of Norihiro transformed Ōuchi patterns of succession from fraternal, and often decided through force of arms, to linear, with the heir of each generation designated as Kidōmaru, a name that suggested that each Ōuchi heir was an incarnation of Myōken³⁶. Their enhanced status strengthened bonds of lordship. Ōuchi warriors, such as Sagara Taketō, swore oaths to Tsukiyama *daimyōjin*, revealing that they based their word not on the Northern Star, but rather the newly deceased Ōuchi lord³⁷. Tsukiyama served

31 Ibidem, p. 49.

32 Masahiro stipulated that from the Tsukiyama shrine to Matsubara, and another gate, were to be cleaned on the final day (*misoka* 晦日) of the month, with laborers assessed on all at the level of one per 100 koku of revenue; *ibidem*, p. 76. The location of Matsubara is unknown, but refers to the area south of the Ōuchi mansion, incorporating much of central Yamaguchi. S. Takahashi, *Bushi no sadame: Michi o meguru Kamakura Sengoku bushi no mōhitotsu to tataikai*, Tokyo 2012, pp. 168-169, 181-182.

33 *Buke hō*, I, Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, III, pp. 80-81.

34 Ibidem. For an earlier example, limited to temple precincts, Ōuchi Moriakira had prohibited the killing of animals within Kokuseiji on 2.10.1404 (Ōei 11). *Buke hō*, II, Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, IV, Tokyo 1998, pp. 96-97 Ōuchi Moriakira Kokuseijijō kaki an.

35 *Nihon kankei kaigai shiryō Iezusukai Nihon shokanshū Yakubun hen*, Tokyo 2014, III, p. 156 for the 1.10.1558 Melchior Barreto letter.

36 This was first recognized by J. Ōta, *Ōuchishi no Hikamisan Nigatsu-e shinji to tokusei*, in: *Kyūshū chūsei shakai no kenkyū*, Tokyo 1981, pp. 205-242, esp. p. 219.

37 *Mōri ke monjo*, IV, Tokyo 1924, doc. 1556, pp. 458-465 for Sagara Taketō's reference to the Tsukiyama *daimyōjin*.

as a deity that enforced oaths by Ōuchi retainers, and protected the newly purified Yamaguchi itself³⁸.

THE ERA OF ŌUCHI DOMINANCE

The deification of Norihiro, coupled with the insertion of Myōken in the capital, ensured the enduring Ōuchi influence central and western Japan. This did not translate into their actual movement to the capital, but rather their continued political influence from afar, something which has hitherto not been recognized. During the period from Norihiro's apotheosis through 1551, the Ōuchi shifted the crucial cultic sites and gods of Japan to the west, and this religious recalibration allowed for their attempt to move the court to western Japan.

A 1493 coup by Hosokawa Masamoto caused the shogun Ashikaga Yoshitane to flee to Yamaguchi, where he sought the aid and support of Ōuchi Masahiro. Yoshitane pressured Masahiro to restore him as the shogun, but Masahiro relied on signs, including a hawk eating a dog and a mouse nesting in a horse's tail, to refrain from attacking the capital, and, symbolic of the Yoshida-Ōuchi alliance, his judgment not to return to Kyoto was upheld by Yoshida Kanetomo³⁹. Confirming the relative decline of the Ashikaga, Yoshitane worshipped at Hikamisan and Kōryūji. To succeed in the capital, the Ashikaga shogun now needed to worship Ōuchideities in Yamaguchi⁴⁰.

Ōuchi Masahiro died in 1495 and was succeeded by his son Yoshioki (1477-1528). As Yoshioki consolidated his authority in the west, Ashikaga Yoshizumi, the puppet of Hosokawa Masamoto, saw his authority weakened to the point that in 1500 he had to demand court edicts calling the destruction of Ōuchi, which proved to be singularly ineffective⁴¹. Yoshizumi then asked Kanetomo perform divination so as to ascertain whether he would be successful against his rivals Yoshioki and the deposed shogun Yoshitane⁴². Kanetomo refused, and, the court revealed its sympathies with the Ōuchi when it adopted the era

38 This was epitomized by references to his sword having been buried at Tsukiyama so as to prevent invaders from sacking the town. *Bōchō fūdō chūshin an*, I-XXIII, Yamaguchi 1961-1965, XIII, p. 38. See also T. Yamada, *Chūsei kōki chiiki kenryoku ni yoru bushi no shinkakuka*, "Nenpō Chūseiishi kenkyū" XXXIII (2008), pp. 61-84.

39 *Kujōke Rekidai kiroku*, Tokyo 1990, II, pp. 150-153.

40 *Bōchō fūdō chūshin an*, IX: *Mitashiri jō*, pp. 588-594, about how Ashikaga shogun worship here with Yoshioki.

41 *Dazai Tenmangū shiryō*, Dazaifu 1993, XIV, pp. 122-123 for a 3.30.1500 (Mei'ō 9) Ashikaga Yoshitaka (Yoshizumi) migyōsho addressed to the Ōtomo.

42 This episode is discussed in: A. Grapard, *The Shintō of Yoshida Kanetomo*, p. 44.

name *bunki* 文龜 (“cultured turtle”) for the years 1501-1504, which constituted homage to the Myōken bodhisattva, the tutelary Ōuchi deity⁴³.

Nevertheless, after 1504, the court once again changed the era name away from one favored by the Ōuchi, and people affiliated with Ashikaga Yoshizumi, such as Kujō Masamoto, who had fled the capital in 1501, thereupon returned. In response, or so it would seem, Ōuchi Yoshioki thereupon reached out to the Chosŏn leaders of Korea for aid in rebuilding the “Third Shrine”, otherwise known as the Kameyama Hachimangū shrine, of Nagato⁴⁴. Yoshioki’s appeal to a power outside the Japanese court for patronage was unprecedented, and suggests that the boundary between the two states, at least during the time of Yoshioki, was permeable. Ultimately, however, Yoshioki decided to focus his attentions to Japan’s capital in the east, and led an army to the Kyoto to restore Ashikaga Yoshitane, and oust Yoshizumi after Hosokawa Masamoto’s death.

REVISITING MYŌKEN IN THE CAPITAL

Ōuchi Yoshioki occupied the capital for a decade from 1508 through 1518. In 1511, at Funaoka, near where Myōken was worshipped in western Kyoto, Yoshioki won a resounding victory over the Hosokawa. A commemorative portrait of Yoshioki attributes his victory to Myōken, and explains how a shooting star in the west predicted his victory. Nevertheless, in 1518, Yoshioki returned to Yamaguchi, and began a campaign to make it, rather than Kyoto, the ritual and political center of Japan. He had yin yang (*onmyōdō* 陰陽道) specialists confirm how the city befitted the four directional deities (*shijinsō-ō* 四神相応), which constituted one of the crucial markers of a capital⁴⁵. Yoshioki also transferred Amaterasu, the sun goddess, and Toyo-uke, a deity associated with the Northern Star, to Yamaguchi, where he reconstructed both the Inner and Outer Ise Shrines at a place called Kōnomine.

No other lord could succeed in moving the most important gods of Japan, and this act was impossible without the aid of the Yoshida, and the court. Although the Yoshida worshipped the Ise deities along with all of the other gods of Japan at their *Saijōsho Daigengū*, these Kōnomine structures

⁴³ *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei*, III: *Kōryūji monjo*, Yamaguchi 2004, doc. 36, 4.13.1501 (Bunki 1) Ōuchi Yoshioki kishinjō, p. 240.

⁴⁴ *Zenrin kokuhōki Shintei Zoku Zenrin kokuhōki*, Tokyo 1995, p. 304-306 for 2.10.1506 (Eishō 3).

⁴⁵ *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei*, III, doc. 242, 11.1521 (Daiei 1) Ōuchi Yoshioki keihaku utsushi, pp. 327-328 for reference to Yamaguchi as being hallowed land befitting the four directions (*shijinsō-ō no rei chi nari* 四神相応の靈地). See also *Bōchō fūdō chūshin an*, XIII: *Yamaguchi saiban*, II, Yamaguchi 1961, p. 373.

constituted the only imperially sanctioned sites (Daijingū) that housed Amaterasu and Toyo-uke for most of the 15th and 16th centuries, as both shrines did not exist at Ise from 1486 through 1585⁴⁶. The ability to transfer Amaterasu and Toyo-uke further strengthened Yoshida power vis-à-vis the Ise shrine attendants, and made them the ultimate arbiter of all shrine affairs.

In the case of the Ōuchi, this movement of the Ise gods to Yamaguchi led to their increased prominence as a source of divine support. A battle flag survives from the time of Yoshioki, which reveals the central deities of Ōuchi rule, and Amaterasu possesses the most central role. The five deities in this flag also included Myōken, in Yamaguchi, and Usa, located directly south from Kōryūji. To the west, Sumiyoshi, of Nagato, was privileged, and, as a sign of contested authority in Hakata, Shika no Umi shrine was listed as well (see fig. 1).

The shrines associated with these deities represent the most important sites during Yoshioki's age. At this time, the sea itself appears as the geographic core of the Ōuchi domains, for it represents the midpoint between the various shrines that served as important cultic sites for the Ōuchi. This would change, however, in the 1540s, as Yoshida Kanemigi traveled to Yamaguchi and visited most of its shrines in order to systematize and regularize Shintō practices in the Ōuchi domains. Kanemigi aided the Ōuchi in creating a clear network of shrines that made Yamaguchi the manifest core, not only of the Ōuchi territories, but also for all of Japan (see fig. 2).

THE SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF THE WEST

After Ōuchi Yoshioki's death, his son Yoshitaka employed Yoshida Kanemigi to come to Yamaguchi, itself a sign of Yamaguchi's centrality. Kanemigi was in a strong position because Emperor Go-Nara recognized Kanemigi's role in monopolizing all shrine affairs in 1533⁴⁷. Kanemigi regularized rites for Tsukiyama, and also had shrine attendants belonging to multiple shrines performing Myōken rites at Hikamisan. Analysis of the location of the shrines mentioned in Kanemigi's records reveals a marked change in the geography of Ōuchi cultic sites. In contrast to the earlier mapping, Yamaguchi's centrality is unquestioned, for it occupies the intersection of two north/south and east/west axes. The inclusion of Ōi shrine to the north, in what is now Hagi, means that Yamaguchi is now a central, rather than the northern point of this axis, which extends south from Yamaguchi to Usa.

⁴⁶ The Outer and Inner shrines were destroyed at Ise in 1486-1487. The Outer Shrine was not rebuilt until 1563 and the Inner Shrine was not restored until 1585.

⁴⁷ N. Kaburagi, *Yoshida ke no dōtō danzetsu ni tsuite*, "Shintōshūkyō" CCXX-CCXXI (2011), pp. 49-50.

Yoshitaka's authority allowed him to incorporate three important shrines into his realm: Itsukushima and the Ōyamazumi shrine, the Ichinomiya or First Shrines of Aki and Iyo provinces in the east, and Hakozaki in the west. This meant that the east/west axis of these shrines expanded laterally as well, revealing that Yoshitaka now fully controlled the strategic islands of the western Inland Sea beyond Itsukushima and Ōyamazumi shrines in the east, as well as the harbor of Hakata itself in the west. Indicative of their significance, Yoshitaka rebuilt both Itsukushima and Hakozaki at this time, and it is worth noting that at this time, no other region would have such a concentration of major shrines still standing.

Having made the west a cultic and political center, the elites of Kyoto increasingly congregated in the west, as numerous courtiers took up residence in Yamaguchi. Yoshitaka's displacement of the Ashikaga became manifest in the 1540s, as the Ashikaga had become ritually subservient to the Ōuchi even in their home base of Kyoto⁴⁸. In 1548, the shogun Ashikaga Yoshiteru was the nephew of the Ōuchi lord, and possessed markedly inferior status and court rank to him as well. A 1551 picture scroll portrays Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder of the Japan's first warrior government, the Kamakura bakufu (1185-1333), as praying to Myōken as well, suggesting that this deity was becoming the star of the warrior gods. Yoshitaka now had made Yamaguchi a central location, and one where important rites of state were long performed. He rebuilt crucial shrines, and effectively made Yamaguchi the ritual and economic core of Japan.

The deification of Norihiro as Tsukiyama served to regularize Ōuchi succession, as each successive heir was given the name Kidomaru, with links to Myoken. It would seem as if both the earlier star worship and the deification of Norihiro as Tsukiyama blurred. Surviving sources from the writings of Yoshida Kanemigi reveal, however, that the Tsukiyama rites, which occurred next to the Ōuchi mansion, consisted of a procession where a *mikoshi* or palanquin for the god, was surrounded by warriors, and transported from the shrine to a temporary abode⁴⁹. This was presumably quite the spectacle, and Yoshida Kanemigi in his explanation would write how these ceremonies typically occurred during the new year, thus making them the preeminent rite of their day. These rites were of considerable display, and laws would prohibit people from excessively congregating on the grounds near these shrines⁵⁰.

48 Epitomizing this, see the 5.20.1547 (Tenbun 16) Ashikaga Yoshiterumigyōsho, where Yoshiteru recognized this shrine as "Myōken Hachiman". *Wakamiya Hachimangū monjo kiroku*, "Gerin" XXVII (1978) 4-5, doc. 35, p. 22.

49 *Yoshida bunko* 42-383, unpublished manuscript, "Tsukiyamasha Sairei shidai". For a more fragmentary version in Kanemigi's hand, see *Yoshida bunko* 65-306. For a transcription, see K. Shimai, *Yoshida bunko no Kanemigi jihitsu hon ni tsuite 1*, "Biblia" XXV (1963), p. 30.

50 *Bukehō*, I, Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, III, law 146, 6.1492 (Entoku 4), p. 96.

The Ōuchi marked their territory by building or patronizing shrines and temples. Although at times the Ōuchi relied on existing cultic sites, the insertion of their favored astral deities served to mark that region as Ōuchi territory. Likewise, the yearly performance of rites at Kōryūji, which were paid for by revenue from specific territories, and included nearly all the important Ōuchi retainers, served to forge the communal bonds of Ōuchi rule. The apotheosis of the Tsukiyama deity, and the movement of the Ise gods also established Yamaguchi as a core region during the 16th century. With so many eastern shrines destroyed, and much of central Japan in ruins, the centrality of the prosperous, integrated west, was obvious to contemporaries. Yoshitaka was, to Japan's Ming and Korean traders, the King of Japan⁵¹. Kyoto courtiers, monks and shrine attendants traveled to Yamaguchi, where the rites of state continued to function.

The arrival of the Portuguese, led by Francis Xavier, in Yamaguchi in 1549, led to a rupture in 1551, when the last great Ōuchi lord Yoshitaka was killed in a coup, led by his father-in-law Naitō Okimori, who later dramatically converted to Christianity⁵². In the resulting turmoil, all of Yamaguchi was consigned to the flames, including the "palace of the King"⁵³. So great was the damage that the Jesuits suggested that the city would never recover, an observation that proved prescient⁵⁴.

Most who destroyed the Ōuchi were sympathetic, or ultimately converted to Christianity, but one cannot conclusively know what led several men – most particularly Miyoshi Nagayoshi, Matsunaga Hisahide, and, for that matter, Oda Nobunaga – to turn away from the earlier framework of power. These warriors let rites fall into abeyance, built castles on mounded tombs (*kofun*), allowed dead emperors rot under the hot summer sun, destroyed ancient temples such as Tōdaiji or Enryakuji, and brought much death and ruin to Japan. Although they excelled at violence and warfare, they achieved only fleeting success. None would establish a stable political structure until a generation had passed, and men once again strove to become gods.

51 Several volumes survive with Yoshitaka's seal on them as King of Japan, including the *Sok samgang haengsil-to* 續三綱行實圖, printed 1514. See P. Kornicki, *Korean Books in Japan: From the 1590s to the End of the Edo Period*, "Journal of the American Oriental Society" CXXXIII (2013) 1, pp. 72-73. I am indebted to Professor Kornicki for bringing this to my attention. For an illustration, see *Tōyō bunko no meihin*, Tokyo 2007, pp. 240-241.

52 *Nihon kankei kaiga ishiryō Iezusukai Nihon shokanshū*, III, p. 107 for the 11.7.1557 Cosme de Torres letter describing Naitō Okimori's conversion.

53 *Ibidem*, p. 107 for an initial description of the destruction; p. 158 for reference to the burning of the palace in a 1.10.1558 Melchior Barreto letter of 1.10.1558.

54 *Ibidem*, p. 162.

CONCLUSION

Apotheosis did not serve as the basis for absolutist political authority in 16th-century Japan, for developments that were perceived as being new to the late 16th century in fact arose a century earlier. This does not, however, suggest that “religious” beliefs were limited to personal belief, or for that matter, served as a mechanism to legitimate authority. To the contrary, the case of the Ōuchi reveals that they used their wealth to enact rites which combined their followers into a community of belief. The movement of gods, or construction of religious institutions, served to determine the boundaries of their authority, and privileged western Japan as constituting the most sacred space of Japan from the mid-15th through the mid-16th century.

Nevertheless, the arrival of Christianity, and plots by rivals within the Ōuchi organization, their polity collapsed, and its constituent rites fell into abeyance. Sporadic attempts to reestablish them would meet with little success until Toyotomi Hideyoshi reestablished political authority late in the 16th century. His actions have been perceived as constituting the unification of Japan, but this is misleading, for the constituent elements of “unification” had largely existed during the centuries of Ōuchi hegemony.

ABSTRACT

Explores a symbiotic relationship between Yoshida shrine specialists and the Ōuchi lords of Western Japan, and argues that the apotheosis of Ōuchi Norihiro in 1486 stabilized their domains at the time when Japan’s central authority collapsed. In an age where the distinction between “religion” and “politics” did not exist, and the concept of “secular” was inconceivable, Norihiro’s deification became an important template for the exercise of authority. Apotheosis did not, however, serve as the basis for absolutism in 16th-century Japan, as some scholars have asserted, for developments that were perceived as being new to the late 16th century in fact arose in 1486. The case of the Ōuchi also reveals that they used their wealth to enact rites which combined their followers into a community of belief, and forged their territories into a sacred space centered on their capital at Yamaguchi. The movement of gods and the construction of religious institutions served to determine the boundaries of their authority, and privileged Western Japan as constituting the most sacred space of Japan from the mid-15th through the mid-16th century.

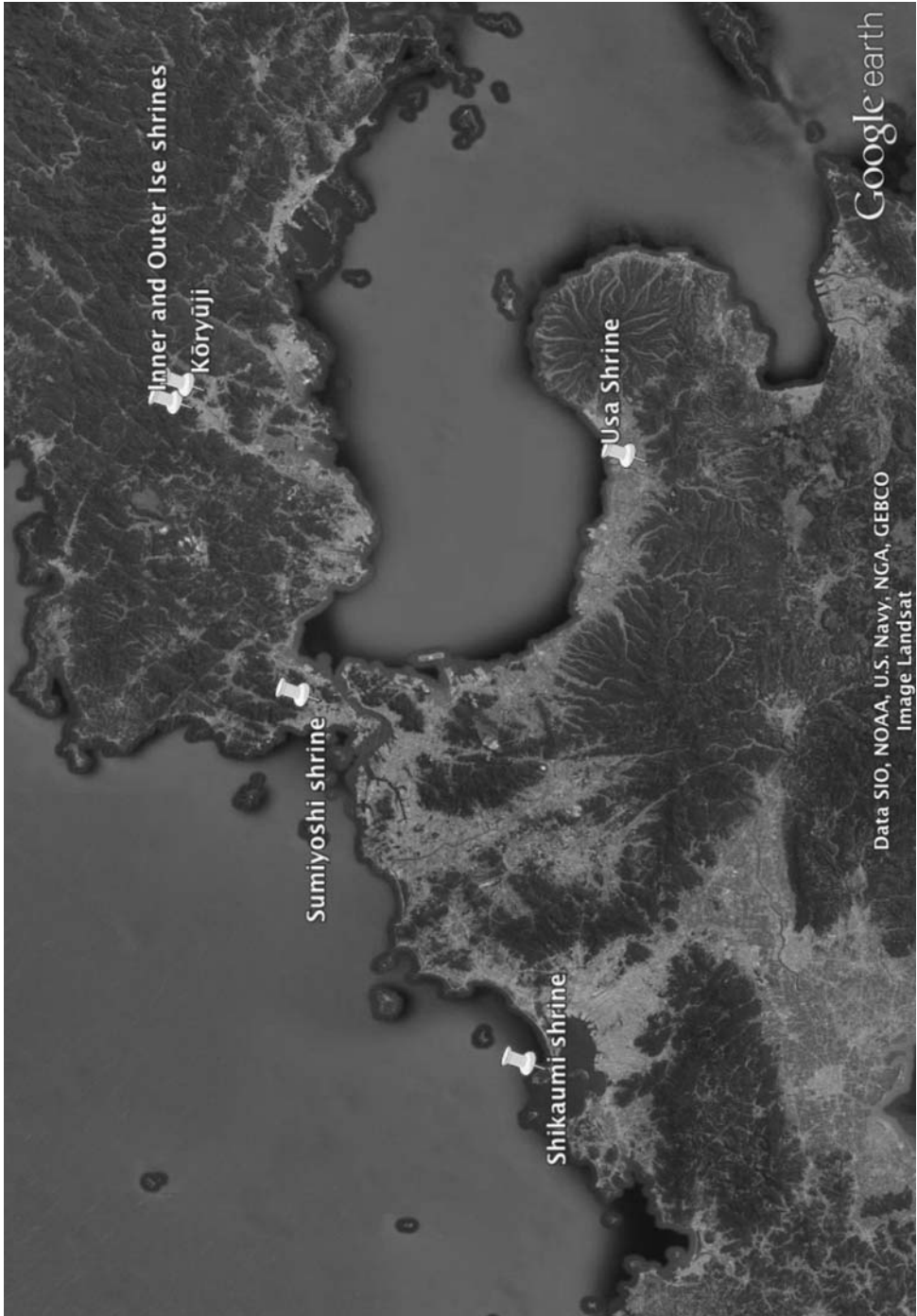


Fig. 1. The Shrines Depicted in Ōuchi Yoshioki's Battle Flag (circa 1508).

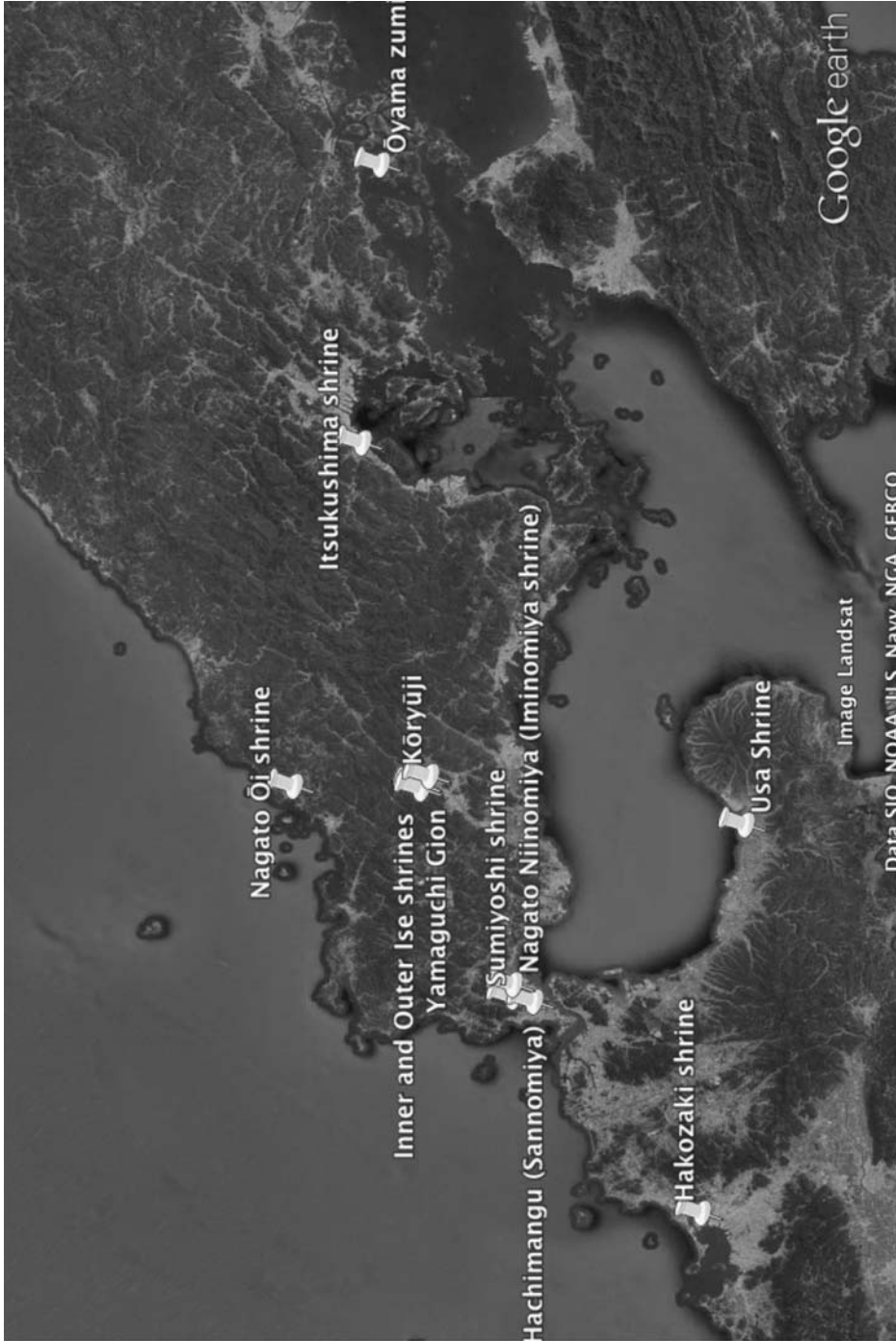


Fig. 2. The Shrines Worshipped by the Ōuchi in the 1540s.