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The Failed Attempt to Move the Emperor to Yamaguchi and the Fall of the Ōuchi

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This article seeks to explain the sudden fall of the Ōuchi in 1551. It argues that the Ōuchi, the lords of the West, were established as a powerful force in sixteenth-century Japan, and that their home city of Yamaguchi reflected their wider influence and prosperity. In 1551, however, this came to a sudden end with the suicide of Ōuchi Yoshitaka and the swift fall of the family. This development, which has never been properly explained, stems from an ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to move the emperor to Yamaguchi, and thereby transform the city into Japan's new capital. Opposition from rival warriors, courtiers, and some members of the Ōuchi organization led to the overthrow and death of Yoshitaka, along with the slaughter of all the courtiers who had traveled to Yamaguchi. The resultant turmoil coupled with the death of most of the key participants caused this epochal event to have been largely forgotten.

The Ōuchi were arguably the most powerful lords in sixteenth-century Japan. Immensely wealthy, they dominated the tally trade with China and their home city of Yamaguchi reflected their glory. When the Portuguese arrived in Yamaguchi in 1550, they described it as 'a leading city in Japan'.[1] In 1552, Francis Xavier (1506–52) wrote that, 'Juan Fernandez and I went to a land of a great lord (*grande senhor*大領主) of Japan which is called by the name Yamaguchi. It is a city of more than ten thousand inhabitants and all of its houses are made of wood.'[2] Melchior Nuñez Barreto compared Yamaguchi to Lisbon, itself a city of a 100,000 residents.[3] Yamaguchi was clean and orderly; it was also remarkably cosmopolitan.[4] The city played host to a community of Ming traders, and it functioned as an important regional entrepôt. [5]

Viewed from the outside, the position, and influence, of the Ōuchi was unmistakable. According to one chronicler, the 'people from other lands thought that the Ōuchi were the Kings of Japan [*ihōjin wa Ōuchi dono o motte Nihon kokuō to omoeri* 異邦人ハ大内殿ヲ

[1]Costelloe, *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, 384.
[2]Ibid., 331. The translations found in Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, *Nihon kankei kaigai shiryō yakubun hen 1.1*, 77–117, particularly 87, were relied upon.
[3]See *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 1, 1025, for the 1558.1.10 letter from Cochin by Padre Melchior Nuñez Barreto. See also Lach, *Japan in the Eyes of Europe*, 677.
[4]*Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū*, Vol. 3, 1478 (Bunmei 10).4.15, 49-50 for the upkeep of Ima Hachimangū, and 76 for a 1487 (Bunmei 19).3.30 law stipulating the monthly cleaning of Tsukiyama shrine. See also Takahashi, *Bushi no sadame*, 181-82. For evidence of the public restrooms, see *Ōuchi shi yakata ato*13, 2, 154. The relevant excavation (series 36) is mentioned on 131–66.
[5]Even after the Ōuchi collapse, people 'from the Great Ming' lived in Yamaguchi and purchased property there as late as 1565, shortly before an Ōuchi restorationist movement resulted in much of the town being incinerated. *Hagi han batsu etsu roku*, Vol. 2, 766–68.

以テ日本国王ト思ヘリ].[6] These 'people' included the Ming emperor, who dispatched messengers to their city of Yamaguchi [*ikoku no mikado mo Ōuchi no kensei o kikoshimeshi chokushi o tamawari* 異国ノ帝モ大内ノ権勢ヲ聞シ召勅使ヲ給ハリ].[7]

Yamaguchi's prosperity was all the more striking because it contrasted so sharply with Kyoto, the imperial capital which had experienced a sharp decline. In the late fifteenth century and responding to instability in the capital a number of key rites were transferred to the Ōuchi's home city – 'the rites of the realm shifted to … Yamaguchi (*tenka no matsurigoto wa Bōshū Yamaguchi ni utsuri* 天下ノ政事ハ防州山口ニ移リ)'.[8] A high-ranking monk (deputy sangha prefect *gon daisōjō* 権大僧正) named Chikai marveled at the peace and prosperity of Yamaguchi, where he performed an elaborate rite, the Golden Sutra of Victorious Kings (*Saishō ōkyō* 最勝王経) for 'peace and fertility in the land, the elimination of starvation and illness, and the prosperity of the people' in 1476.[9] Chikai was not the only prominent visitor from Kyoto. Sesshū, heir to many crucial artistic traditions, chose to reside in Yamaguchi, and under Ōuchi patronage crafted the masterful *Long Scroll of Mountains and Water*, a magnificent work that extends for 50 feet.[10]

In 1551, however, the fortunes of the Ōuchi changed and did so dramatically. A coup in that year led to the death of Ōuchi Yoshitaka (1507–51) and the beginning of the end for the family, which collapsed in 1557. The consequences were far-reaching for the Ōuchi territories but also for the wider region. Yamaguchi never recovered and its residents experienced starvation two years after Yoshitaka's fall.[11] Court rites fell into abeyance, warriors slaughtered their rivals with impunity, and merchants could no longer ply their trade. The city was thrice burned, in 1551, 1557 and 1569, so that within a generation of 1551 'no sign of its earlier prosperity remained'.[12] Trade with the continent suffered as well, as the Ōtomo, Sagara, Shimazu, and the Portuguese strove to supplant the Ōuchi as the preeminent traders in East Asia, leading to extensive warfare and piracy on the high seas.[13] And northern Kyushu, which had known a modicum of stability, collapsed into profound turmoil, as the Ōtomo, Shimazu, and Ryūzōji, the last of whom had been part of the Ōuchi organization, vied to fill the ensuing political vacuum.[14]

The reason for the sudden and dramatic collapse of the Ōuchi has long remained a mystery. Yoshitaka's ultimate destruction has been remembered as an example of negligence, or 'weakness', but personal failings cannot account for a rebellion by all

[6]Kasai, *Nankai tsūki*, 135.
[7]*Chūgoku chiranki*, 436. For reference to a mission by the Ming emissary Zheng Shungong (鄭舜功) after Yoshitaka's demise, see Kasai, *Nankai chiranki*, 228–29 and Matsuda, *Japan and China: Mutual Representations in the Modern Era*, 170–71.
[8]Kasai, *Nankai tsūki*, 135.
[9]*Kujō ke monjo*, 218–34, particularly 226–29.
[10]See Hata, 'Bunmei jū-hachinen no Ōuchi shi to Sesshū Tōyō', 250.
[11]See Frois's *Nihonshi*, translated in *Yamaguchi ken shiryō chūsei hen jō*, 466. This passage does not appear in the later edition of *Yamaguchi kenshi*.
[12]Frois so compared Yamaguchi in 1586 with what it had been like before it was ruined. *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 1, 961.
[13]Kage, 'Kenminsen to Sagara Ōuchi Ōtomo shi', explains how the Sagara and Ōtomo tried to take over Ōuchi trade after Yoshitaka's destruction. Ultimately, the Portuguese seem to have been the greatest beneficiaries of the ensuing turmoil. See Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacon*, 21 for the Portuguese account of 1555. I am grateful to Adam Clulow for bringing this to my attention.
[14]For insightful commentary on the significance of the 1551 Ōuchi collapse, see Horimoto, 'Sengokuki Hizen no seiji dōkō to Gotōshi', 5–9.

three major deputies of the Ōuchi organization. Instead, the turmoil arose because Yoshitaka, at the peak of his powers, was involved in an attempt to move the emperor from Kyoto to Yamaguchi.[15] While preoccupied with these preparations, a cabal of Ōuchi deputies rebelled against Yoshitaka, killing him, his seven-year-old son, and a coterie of courtiers who already resided in Yamaguchi, in the autumn of 1551.[16] This article will explore Yoshitaka's attempt to move the emperor to Yamaguchi, explain how and why it has been forgotten, and suggest that it has profound consequences for the study of Japanese history.

Ōuchi Yoshitaka and the Kyoto Court

A warlord, trader and courtier, Ōuchi Yoshitaka was one of the preeminent figures of his day. He dominated trade with Korea and China and controlled northern Kyushu and western Japan. His wealth and power fostered links with influential warriors. Yoshitaka was the brother-in-law of Hosokawa Mochitaka (?–1553), a scion of the deputy shogun (*kanrei* 管領) family, and of Ashikaga Yoshitsuna (1509–73), one claimant for the position of shogun.[17] His ties to the court were deeper and more intimate than those of comparable daimyo. Yoshitaka had taken a wife from the Madenokōji family of administrative nobles before divorcing her. His subsequent primary consort was a daughter of Otsuki Takaharu, scion of a powerful family who was responsible for drafting most important court documents.[18] An influential courtier, Yoshitaka had attained the second rank in 1548, even though he never traveled to or resided in Kyoto. Because of this, he possessed the status and connections to communicate directly with Emperor Go-Nara and he used these to discuss the movement of nobles and shrine attendants to the west.[19] The nature of the exchange suggests that Yoshitaka and Go-Nara easily transmitted messages without any need for intermediaries, a level of communication possible only for courtiers of the highest rank.

Yoshitaka enhanced his authority by funding court rituals in Kyoto, including esoteric Tendai *taigensui* (太元帥) rituals, New Year's *sechie* (節会) rites, and Go-Nara's enthronement ceremonies in 1535, which cost 2,000 *kanmon* (200,000 *hiki* 疋), the equivalent to one province's tax revenue for a year.[20] Yoshitaka also bestowed approximately 5,000

[15]Arnesen's *The Medieval Japanese Daimyō* attributes the coup to Sue Harukata's disgust with Yoshitaka's 'weakness'; see 218–19. Sue Harukata had previously adopted the name Takafusa, but changed his name during the time of the coup. He will be referred to as Harukata in this narrative, but the name Takafusa appears in earlier documents, and some article titles, and denotes the same individual.

[16]The following courtiers perished in Yamaguchi during the autumn of 1551: Nijō Tadafusa (1496–1551), a retired Regent; Sanjō Kin'yori (1498–1551), a former Grand Minister of the Left, Lower First Rank; Jimyōin Motonori (1492–1551), a Counselor; and Otsuki Takaharu (1496–1551), a Secretary of the Council of State. *Kugyō bunin*, vol. 3, 428–30.

[17]In terms of court rank, wealth, and political influence, Mochitaka and Yoshitsuna paled in comparison with Yoshitaka. See Nagae, *Miyoshi Nagayoshi*, 119–20.

[18]Tōin, *Sonpi bunmyaku*, vol. 2, 263. This daughter had been adopted by the noble Hirohashi Kanehide (1506–67). The Otsuki monopolized the position of *taifu no sakan* (大夫史), also known as the secretary (*geki* 外記) of the Council of State.

[19]*Hakozakigū shiryō*, docs 377–78, 784–85.

[20]Yoshitaka also spent another 10,000 *hiki* (100 *kanmon*) for the rebuilding of the eastern gate of the southern enclosure of the palace (*Jikkamon*日華門) that same year. *Go-Nara tennō jitsuroku*, vol. 1, 414–17, 432–37, 476–77. Also see vol. 2, 1022–23, 1036–37, 1056–59, 1088–89, 1092–94 for how Yoshitaka paid for ceremonies in 1550–51. This amount for the enthronement ceremonies constituted the rough equivalent of five million dollars, while 10,000 *hiki* would likewise represent a quarter of a million dollars.

hiki for the repair of the palace in 1542, paid for sacred dances (*mikagura* 御神楽) in 1548, and granted the court 200 *kanmon* yearly to finance all major ceremonies.[21] These payments, which were beyond the means of competing daimyo who provided lesser amounts, continued through 1550 when Yoshitaka increased the sum to 300 *kanmon*.[22] Ōuchi largess allowed emperor-centered rites to continue in Kyoto, but turmoil in the central provinces in 1550 delayed the transmission of these funds by over half a year.

Yoshitaka's increasing intimacy with the court developed against a chaotic backdrop in the capital itself. The prosperous city of Yamaguchi, with its impressive temples and shrines, contrasted starkly with an increasingly dilapidated Kyoto, which had suffered exodus and ruin. The Ashikaga palace, where the shogun resided, had been rebuilt in 1477 to be burned again in 1480, and archaeological evidence reveals that its immediate vicinity came to be sparsely settled thereafter.[23] Likewise, temples in Kyoto such as Daigoji's Sanbōin or Tōji, arguably the most significant temple in Kyoto, had been destroyed, either during the Ōnin War or in its aftermath by mobs clamoring for debt relief in 1486.[24] By the late 1540s, Kyoto had become a decayed place where 'great stretches … remained abandoned'.[25] Francis Xavier, visiting early in 1551, commented on how Kyoto was 'a great part in ruins and waste'.[26]

The political landscape in Kyoto was dominated by the Miyoshi, a warrior family from northern Shikoku that had originally gained prominence in several districts in Awa province, and from there became a retainer of the Hosokawa. Miyoshi Korenaga (?–1520), who raised his family fortunes, had a reputation for being 'strong in battle', but the 'source of great evil'.[27] His great-grandson Nagayoshi (1522–64), proved a worthy heir to Korenaga. In 1548, he had attacked his overlord Hosokawa Harumoto (1514–63) and subsequently forced the shogun Ashikaga Yoshiharu (1511–50) to abandon Kyoto that year.[28] Many courtiers, including the regent Konoe Taneie (1502–66) and Koga Harumichi (1519–75) fled with Ashikaga Yoshiharu to Sakamoto, in Ōmi province to the east of Kyoto.[29]

Nagayoshi's relationship with the court can only be described as antagonistic. He seized imperial lands and constricted the flow of revenue to the court, making it difficult for rites to be performed in Kyoto. Reliant on force to achieve his political objectives, he gave primacy to military expediency over other considerations and made no effort to obtain imperial sanction or support. Archaeological evidence reveals that he used an ancient tomb as a castle. These tombs had often been plundered, but their incorporation into a castle's structure appears to have been new.[30] Miyoshi Nagayoshi occupied Kyoto

[21] *Go-Nara tennō jitsuroku*, vol. 2, 686, 948.
[22] The *Nakahara Yasuo-ki*, an unpublished manuscript that survives for the years 1549 (Tenbun 18), 1550 (Tenbun 19) and early 1551 (Tenbun 20) mentions these yearly payments of 200 *kanmon*. For the later sum in 1550, see *Oyudono no ue no nikki*, vol. 5, 1550 (Tenbun 19).7.12, 140, and Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan 1467–1680*, 85.
[23] For the short-lived reconstruction of the Ashikaga palace, see Sukigara, *Chūsei Kyōto no kiseki*, 137 and *Masuda ke monjo*, vol. 3, docs 581–2 of 1477 (Bunmei 9).*urū* 1.22 and 1477 (Bunmei 9).6.13, 46–49.
[24] Tomita, *Ōnin no ran*, 3 for the relevant Tōji documents.
[25] Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto*, 64. For Berry's overview of the dilapidated nature of Kyoto, see 'Urban Geography, Urban Mayhem', 59–74.
[26] Coleridge, *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier*, vol. 2, 298.
[27] Nakarai, *Rōmōki*, Eishō 17 (1520).5.11, 123–24.
[28] For the most recent study of this important daimyo, see Imatani et al., *Miyoshi Nagayoshi*.
[29] Yugawa, 'Ashikaga Yoshiharu shōgun ki', 72. Yoshiharu died in 1550 and was succeeded by his son, Yoshiteru, who remained in rustic Sakamoto along with Taneie and Harumichi, and was killed by the Miyoshi in 1565.
[30] Endō, 'Kofun no jōkaku riyō ni kan suru ichi kōsatsu'.

on 1551.3.8,[31] and he was so reviled in some quarters that assassins struck five days later, stabbing him twice at a banquet, but he escaped with minor injuries.[32] The tumultuous political environment in the capital led Emperor Go-Nara to seek security in the form of Yoshitaka, who was drawn still closer to the court.

In 1551.3.27 the emperor appointed Ōuchi Yoshitaka as protector of Yamashiro by granting him the title of the Acting Governor of the province.[33] This appointment appears in the *Ōmagaki* (大間書), official records of promotions that were written on discarded calendars for the emperor's personal use.[34] Yoshitaka's appointment has largely gone unnoticed because *Ōmagaki* are little studied, as few survive, and when this source was published in the *Zoku gunsho ruijū*, Yoshitaka's name was miscopied as Yoshizumi.[35]

Yoshitaka's appointment in absentia as the Acting Governor of Yamashiro meant that the court relied on him as its protector. Historical precedent existed for comparable positions, since Yoshitaka's father Yoshioki had governed Kyoto and Yamashiro with Hosokawa Takakuni (1484–1531) from 1508 until 1518. Symbolizing this cooperation, Yoshioki had the rank of Left City Commissioner (*sakyō daibu* 左京大夫) and Takakuni had that of Right City Commissioner (*ukyō daibu* 右京大夫). These city commissioners were nominally in charge of population registration, security, tax collection and legal appeals in the capital, and this title remained a symbol of governing authority in Kyoto.[36] The office of Acting Governor of Yamashiro exceeded these two commissioner positions, for Yamashiro was the home province where Kyoto was located.[37]

For someone as illustrious as Yoshitaka to assume the office of Acting Governor of Yamashiro might seem anomalous, as the post of Governor of Yamashiro commonly constituted a sinecure, and not a remarkable or meaningful one at that. Nevertheless, the appointment as Acting Governor of Yamashiro meant that the administrative function of the office was paramount, rather than its prestige.[38] Go-Nara effectively appointed Yoshitaka as the key official charged with protecting and administering Kyoto. This appointment provided the catalyst for Yoshitaka's most ambitious move, the attempt to transfer the emperor from Kyoto to Yamaguchi.

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[31] *Tokitsugu kyōki*, vol. 3, 1551 (Tenbun 20).3.8, 135.

[32] Nagae, *Miyoshi Nagayoshi*, 116–20. See also *Tokitsugu kyōki*, vol. 3, 1551 (Tenbun 20).3.14-16, 137–38, and *Genjo daisōjōki ge*, 1551 (Tenbun 20).3.14, 54.

[33] His title was that of Acting Governor of Yamashiro (*Yamashiro gon no kami* 山城権守). See *Ōmagaki*, 720.

[34] This source dates from 1551, but *Ōmagaki* survive for a few other years as well.

[35] That this appointment was for Yoshitaka can easily be verified, for the document refers to his surname, Tatara, rank (second) and office of the *dazai daini*, or governor of Kyushu. When deciphering calligraphy, the name Yoshizumi (義澄) can easily be mistaken for Yoshitaka (義隆), but Yoshizumi, an Ashikaga shogun, died in 1508, and had only attained the third court rank.

[36] See Tyler, *Tale of Genji* and the Historiographical Institution online glossary of Japanese historical terms. This title had been the prerogative of the Ōuchi since the mid-decades of the fifteenth century, and its occupant concurrently served as the head (*tōnin*) of the board of administrators of the Ashikaga bakufu (*samurai dokoro*). See Imatani, *Sengoku daimyō to tennō*, 91.

[37] Conversation Noda Taizō, 12 July 2012.

[38] Yoshitaka likewise may have requested the title of Acting Governor of Yamashiro in deference to his father Yoshioki, who received the title of Governor of Yamashiro when he occupied the capital from 1508 until 1518.

Reconstructing Ōuchi Yoshitaka's Attempt to Move the Emperor to Yamaguchi

Despite his influence, Yoshitaka could not bring stability to Central Japan. The capital remained unstable as Miyoshi and Hosokawa soldiers fought there during the seventh month of 1551.[39] Because of this, Yoshitaka, in his role of Acting Governor of Yamashiro, and by extension protector of the court, decided to ensure the safety of the emperor and palace officials by embarking on an attempt to move the emperor to Yamaguchi.

The evidence for this move lies first in three distinct chronicles that each recount circumstances of Yoshitaka's gambit. The one written within living memory of the events of 1551 is known as the *Chūgoku chiranki*, and was written some time after 1568, the last year mentioned in the work.[40] Focusing on the politics of western Japan, the anonymous author explained that in 1551:

> Kyoto was disordered. Saying that the emperor was ill at ease, the Ōuchi lord planned to build a palace in … Yamaguchi and have the son of heaven move there. Accordingly Nijō [Tadafusa], Denpōrin Sanjō [Kin'yori], the Jimyōin *chūnagon* [Motonori], and the courtiers traveled to Yamaguchi. (*sono koro Kyōto midari nite tei'i mo odayakanarazu tote Bōshū no Yamaguchi ni dairi o kenritsu shi tenshi mo kono kata e utsushimatsuru beki [no] yoshi Ōuchi dono kekkō arikereba Nijō dono Denpōrin Sanjō dono Jimyōin chūnagon dono sono hoka no kugeshū mina Yamaguchi e gekō ari*. 其頃京都亂ニテ帝位モヲダヤカナラズトテ防州ノ山口ニ内裏ヲ建立シ天子モ此方へ移奉ルベキ由大内殿ケッコウアリケレバ二條殿、伝法輪三條殿、持明院中納言殿、其外ノ公家衆皆山口へ下向アリ).[41]

The second chronicle, the *Ashikaga kiseiki*, was written shortly after the dissolution of the Ashikaga shogunate, most likely some time between the 1570s and 1590s. It states that in 1551:

> Kyoto was in great turmoil, so the courtiers came to depend on Ōuchi Yoshitaka and traveled to Suō. The Ōuchi had long prepared to have the emperor travel to this place [of Yamaguchi], and thus this disaster arose (*sono koro Kyōto no dairan [ga] yue [ni] kugeshū mo mina Ōuchi ontanomi ari Suō e ongekō arishikaba kinri sama mo gyōkō o kono tokoro e nashitatematsuraru beki [no] yoshi Ōuchi tanen shitake arishi ni kayō no wazawai okori* 其比京都ノ大亂故公家衆モ皆大内御頼ミアリ周防エ御下向アリシカハ禁裏様モ行幸ヲ此處エ成奉ラルヘキ由大内多年支度アリシニカヤウノ災起リ). The former regent Nijō Tadafusa, Jimyōin Motonori and Denpōrin [Sanjō] Kin'yori perished here … along with [Nijō] Yoshitoyo and Fujiwara [Minase] Chikayo. [42]

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[39]Awa kyōdokai, *Eikanshi danki nenroku*, a reliable chronicle pertaining to the Izumi branch family of the Hosokawa, mentions a battle between the Hosokawa and Miyoshi on 75.

[40]Koten isan no kai, *Sengoku gunji jiten*, 347–48. This may have been compiled early in the Edo period – dating these texts is difficult.

[41]*Chūgoku chiranki*, 436. See also Yonehara, *Chūgoku shiryōshū*, 25–26.

[42]*Ashikaga kiseiki*, 207–8. This account also recounts the Miyoshi assassination and the fact that the Ōtomo aided Sue Harukata in his rebellion, both of which can otherwise be verified.

This record supports the *Chūgoku chiranki* account and suggests that Yoshitaka had long planned for Go-Nara to come to Yamaguchi.[43]

The third account, *Muromachi dono nikki*, was written by Naramura Naganori some time between 1597 and 1602 for Maeda Gen'i (1539–1602), a monk from Owari who advised Oda Nobunaga's son Nobutada, and then became a Kyoto administrator for Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Although scholar Ise Sadatake (1717–84) described this record as reliable (*jikki* 実記), it was in fact characterized by exaggerated descriptions of Yamaguchi.[44] This is clear in its account of events of 1551. The *Muromachi dono nikki* states that Yoshitaka 'tried to move the capital to this place [of Yamaguchi]' (*tōsho ni miyako o utsuran tote* 当所に都をうつらんとて) but then claims that he laid down roads in Yamaguchi in a grid pattern, which did not occur.[45] Although we can discount some of its more exaggerated statements, the text is nonetheless important in that it provides further confirmation of the planned move.

Taken together, these accounts suggest that Yoshitaka's attempt to move the emperor, and establish Yamaguchi as the site of the imperial palace, was widely known and these texts are varied enough that they do not appear to have been simply copied from one source. Other more vague accounts allude to Yamaguchi's importance. The *Tatara metsubō shidai*, written in 1615, recounts how 'a number of nobles, including members of the monastic nobility … and even the imperial guards, traveled to Yamaguchi' and notes that 'their presence made Yamaguchi resemble Kyoto' (*Kyōto kuge onmonzeki, kaku aru shū*[46] *hokumen no katawara made mo Yamaguchi e ongekō arite izure no gi [mo]Kyōto no yō ni nasare mōshite sōrō* 京都公家御門跡、覚ある衆、北面の傍までも山口へ御下向有て、いつれの儀「も」京都の様に成申て候), but the statement is ambiguous as to whether Yamaguchi can be conceived as a capital in its own right.[47] A final chronicle, *Yoshitaka-ki*, otherwise known as the *Tatara jōsuiki*, vividly describes courtiers traveling to Yamaguchi and provides evidence that even imperial guards (*hokumen* 北面) sojourned there as well.[48]

Most of the courtiers mentioned in the *Chūgoku chiranki*, the *Ashikaga kiseiki*, the *Muromachi dono nikki*, and the *Yoshitaka-ki* can be documented as traveling to Yamaguchi in the 1540s. Nijō Tadafusa, a retired Regent, had been in Yamaguchi since 1547. The ritual specialists Sanjō Kin'yori and Jimyōin Motonori traveled to Yamaguchi on 1549.11.10, and Tadafusa's son Yoshitoyo (1536–1551) came to Yamaguchi on 1550.7.21.[49] The prominent courtiers who congregated in Yamaguchi were specialists in or integrally involved with the *sechie*, the most important rite of the year.[50] Sanjō Kin'yori, a retired Grand Minister, was knowledgeable about rites of state,

[43]See the analysis of the *Ashikaga kiseiki*, in *Kokushi daijiten*, vol. 1, 160.
[44]Naramura, *Muromachi dono nikki*, 31 for Yoshitaka's attempt to move the emperor, and 304, 307 for analysis of the text and recognition that 'not all of the account is truthful'. For more on Maeda Gen'i, see Matsunaga, *Taionki*, 109.
[45]Naramura, *Muromachi dono nikki*, 31.
[46]The text has been revised, with the character for 'group' (*shū* 衆) replacing that of 'persons' (*hito* 人).
[47]*Tatara metsubō shidai*, in *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 1: 743–48, 743–44 . For the attribution, and a survey of references to Yamaguchi as 'The Western Capital' in the Tokugawa, Meiji and more recent eras, see Maki, 'Yamaguchi wa "Nishi no Miyako" to yobarata ka', 51.
[48]*Tatara jōsuiki*, in *Yamaguchi shishi shiryōhen Ōuchi bunka*: 98–115, 101. This account is highly reliable, as many of its assertions can be independently verified.
[49]Tomita, 'Sengokuki no kugeshū', 257 for Nijō Tadafusa and Yoshitoyo, 259–60 for Kin'yori and 278–79 for Motonori. Another noble, Minase Chikayo, of the third rank (*hisangi*) can also be documented as being in Yamaguchi. See Tomita, 288 and *Kugyō bunin*, vol. 3, 429.
[50]For insight into the intricacies of the court, and the *sechie* rites, I am indebted to Yoshikawa Shinji.

and his residence had also served as the palace.[51] He had good connections to prominent warriors, as one of his daughters was the primary wife of the famous Eastern daimyo Takeda Shingen. Kin'yori wrote a treatise on *sechie* rites in 1537, which, along with a few scattered diary pages, represents one of his few surviving works.[52] In this record, Kin'yori revealed that he worked with Jimyōin Motonori, a counselor (*chūnagon*) who wrote drafts of documents and participated in New Year's ceremonies in 1535 and 1539.[53]

If these chronicles provide evidence of the planned move, further confirmation is also available in a striking rupture in the sources. The year 1551 proves to be one of the least knowable years regarding the politics of Kyoto.[54] The almost complete absence of chronicles and documents dating from the last nine months of 1551 suggests an unusual and traumatic disruption of the administrative and ritual functions of the court. There are often gaps in court sources, but it is very rare for nearly all records from all strata to be missing. This lacuna stems from the fact that most of the individuals involved in this endeavor, and their documents, were engulfed in the violence triggered by Yoshitaka's attempt to move the emperor. In this way, an unprecedented gap in surviving sources points to a cataclysmic rending of the intellectual and social fabric of the court.

Chronicles composed by high-ranking courtiers, be they Fujiwara regents or members of the second (*seika* 清華) tier of the nobility, such as members of the Saionji or Koga families, constitute the most useful political sources for reconstructing contemporary political or ritual affairs. And yet no journals or chronicles survive from members of these higher ranks from 1551. This may seem unremarkable, but their forebears had been able to preserve their records during the decade-long Ōnin War and the ensuing decades of turmoil.

A notable lacuna also exists among the mid-level administrative nobility, often identified as either *meike* (名家) or *urinke* (羽林家) families. The *meike* included the Hino and Kajūji families. In the sixteenth century, the Kajūji were most involved with court administration, but tellingly no documents from 1551 remain in their archives although a few prayers do survive from 1552–53.[55] Another important *urinke* family, the Yamashina, remained in the environs of Kyoto. Yamashina Tokitsugu's diary (*Tokitsugu kyōki*) constitutes the best source for this age, for Tokitsugu (1507–79) was integrally involved with palace finances, since he raised funds for enthronement ceremonies and procured clothes for emperors. Once again, his diary does not survive after the fourth month of 1551, a week after Ōuchi Yoshitaka's appointment as the protector of Yamashiro, although it resumes in 1552.[56]

[51]Mizuno, *Muromachi jidai kōbu kankei no kenkyū*, 211.
[52]This unpublished manuscript, which remains in the Imperial Household collection, explains how this rite was performed in the mid-sixteenth century. See Tajima, *Kinri kuge bunko kenkyū* vol. 4, 343, for reference to Sanjō Kin'yori's *Ganjitsu sechie ki* of 1537.
[53]See the *Kosechiryo gyoki*, manuscript copy Kujō family archives, currently located in the Imperial Household Agency (Kunaichō). See also Tajima, *Kinri kuge bunko kenkyū*, vol. 2, 337 (58).
[54]Some laconic temple chronicles supplement *Oyudono no ue no nikki*, a record written by ladies of the palace, but otherwise no surviving sources cover the year in its entirety.
[55]*Tsunemoto gyoki*, box 553, *Chokuzai anmon*, no. 11 for these 1552–53 prayers for peace in the realm (*kokka anzen*). Viewed at Kyoto University on 12 March 2012.
[56]*Tokitsugu kyōki*, one of the greatest sources in reconstructing this age, ends on 1551 (Tenbun 20).4.3 and the rest of this year is missing. See vol. 3, 143. For a good study of sixteenth-century court finances, see Sugawara, *Chūsei kuge no keizai to bunka*, particularly 'Kuge no kagyō to tennō ke', 258–302.

It is also telling that astronomical knowledge, in the form of almanacs (*guchū reki* 具注暦), and the *shichiyō reki* (七曜暦), the most sophisticated calendar, was lost.[57] The last surviving *guchū reki* dates from 1551.[58] During New Year *sechie* rites, members of the Ministry of Divination (*onmyō no tsukasa* 陰陽寮), attached to the *nakatsukasashō* (中務省) bureau, promulgated the new *shichiyō reki* for the year.[59] The knowledge required for the *shichiyō reki* proved so specialized that it could not be easily replicated. The calendar was integrally linked to the court's most core functions.[60] These specialists were in Yamaguchi because Yoshitaka intended to revitalize the *sechie*, and they died there, along with their expertise, in 1551.[61] In this way and in addition to the widespread loss of court records, important knowledge concerning the creation of calendars was extinguished as well.

Further evidence of the attempted move can be found in a range of other sources. It is clear for example that a number of key actors in the performance of court rites congregated in Yamaguchi in 1551. Tōgi Kaneyasu, a musician specializing in court music (*gagaku* 雅楽) perished at Taineiji, and his grave is located near that of Yoshitaka and the other nobles.[62] The Suinō (出納) were important administrators and financial specialists but, because of their status, could not have an audience in the palace. Unlike their social superiors, who could mount the steps of the palace, they became known as *jige* (地下), which constituted a shorthand for those 'below', or 'on the ground'. Their presence was essential for rituals to be financed and performed, since the Suinō managed daily palace affairs. It is telling, therefore, that Suinō Hiroaki can be verified as traveling to Yamaguchi.[63] This suggests that an attempt to move the palace to Yamaguchi was afoot. Nevertheless, little else is knowable because Hiroaki perished in 1551 and his documents were lost.[64]

Little-studied documents pertaining to officials of the sixth-rank or below are also enlightening because these local officers (*jige*) were responsible for maintaining the palace and ensuring that it functioned as a residential and ritual site. An appeal written

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[57] *Guchū reki* were calendars that provided basic astronomical (and astrological) data for every day of the year, with space provided for notations. These calendars served as framework for most courtier diaries.

[58] Kimura, 'Chūsei no tennō no reki', 166, 176–79. Kimura argues that the *shichiyō reki* may have lapsed in Kyōto around 1527, but suggests that this knowledge may have remained with the main line of the Kamo, who went extinct with the deaths of Kamo Aritane (d. 1551) and his aged father Aritomi (d. 1565).

[59] '*Shichiyō reki*', digital *Daijisen*, searched 12 January 2013.

[60] Thus, a narrative of how the tenth-century figure Taira no Masakado (?–940) attempted to usurp the throne expressly states that this individual appointed no 'doctor of the calendar' because none could be found in the east. *Shōmonki*, 114. For an English translation, see Rabinovitch, *Shōmonki: The Story of Masakado's Rebellion*, 121. Masakado's failure to appoint such a specialist remained well known, and appears in the version of the *Tale of the Heike* which was formalized in the fourteenth century. Tyler, *The Tale of the Heike*, 477. As Tyler notes, 'The correct establishment of the calendar was a government function so vital that even Masakado did not seek to usurp it.'

[61] These calendars were reinstated in 1685. *Kokushi daijiten*, 'Shichiyō reki'.

[62] Viewed at Taineiji, 15 June 2015. Of Kaneyasu nothing else is known, but the Tōgi were a noted family of court musicians.

[63] *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 1, 1550 (Tenbun 19).1.25, 455 for *Tokitsugu kyōki* references to Suinō Hiroaki going to Yamaguchi. See also 456.

[64] Although some Suinō documents survive from the earlier Daiei era (1521–28), a gap exists through 1557, when the Suinō can again be documented as being involved with the funeral ceremonies of Go-Nara, and the enthronement ceremonies of Emperor Ōgimachi (1517–93, r. 1557–86). See Nakamura, 'Suinō Hirata ke to sono kiroku'. The oldest surviving Suinō account from 1557 (Kōji 3) appears in 'Suinō Nakahara Shikisadaki'.

after the death of Kushida Munetsugu (?–1551) provides compelling evidence of a planned imperial move. Munetsugu, a local official (*jin kanjin* 陣官人), was responsible for constructing a small building, the *jin no za* (陣座), that was used in the New Year *sechie* rites. In addition to these duties, those appointed to Munetsugu's position made headgear and lit *hibachi* braziers for the throne, and thus constituted unlikely candidates for extensive travel away from the palace.[65] Nijō Tadafusa, a retired Regent (*taikō* 太閤), summoned Munetsugu to Yamaguchi because he required his knowledge of how to build the *jin no za* structure for the *sechie*.[66] The Kushida documents claim that Munetsugu traveled to Yamaguchi because Ōuchi Yoshitaka desired to revitalize the *sechie*, which necessitated the presence of Emperor Go-Nara in Yamaguchi at the dawn of the New Year in 1552.

Taken together, these sources suggest that in light of the instability in the home provinces, Ōuchi Yoshitaka attempted to bring the emperor to Yamaguchi with the goal of having the New Year rites performed there. The plans alluded to in the chronicles were acted upon, and by the end of the eighth month of 1551, save for the emperor and palace ladies, nearly all the necessary officials were in Yamaguchi preparing for the *sechie*.[67] Unfortunately for Yoshitaka, however, his ambitious scheme triggered a violent backlash that resulted in his death and the ultimate collapse of the Ōuchi organization.

The Backlash: The Mōri and Ōtomo Plot

While Yoshitaka was engrossed with these preparations to move the emperor to Yamaguchi, three deputies in the Ōuchi organization, who bridled at the arrogance of these 'worthless' courtiers, rose against Yoshitaka, and launched a coup. [68] Yoshitaka fled with his son, and a band of loyal followers. Nijō Tadafusa offered to negotiate Yoshitaka's forced retirement, but instead he was cut down. Yoshitaka was forced to commit suicide and the other nobles were hunted down and killed, or committed suicide themselves. The Sue could not countenance their survival because they represented a potent political threat that had to be exterminated. In the ensuing orgy of violence, Yamaguchi was gutted, its treasures plundered, and even the cranes in Yoshitaka's gardens were butchered.[69] Much was lost in the carnage, including the Ōuchi archives, countless artifacts, and a vast repository of court knowledge.

[65]This is explained in Sanjōnishi, *Sanetaka kōki*, vol. 4.1, 1506 (Eishō 3).5.17, 133. For the function of keeping *hibachi* lit, see *Jige monjo*, doc. 110, 1558 (Eiroku 1).3.4 Hōseiji Chika-o sanmonjō, 154-56.

[66]Tadafusa wanted to consult with Kushida Munetsugu regarding *jin [no za]* affairs (*jingi*) and headgear. Munetsugu's heirs correctly characterized his travel, and subsequent demise, as constituting service (*chūsetsu*) that required compensation, but this was disputed by nameless others who argued that Munetsugu's travel merely constituted a 'private affair'. See *Jige monjo*, doc. 106, 11.4 Hōseiji Chika-o shojō, doc. 107, 11.20 Tojima Shigesada shotojō, doc. 108, 1558 (Kōji 4).2 Hōseiji Chika-o nimonto, and doc. 109, 1558 (Kōji 4).2.27 Tojima Shigesada nitojō, 146–53. Kushida Munetsugu's actions were later recognized by the Kajūji as constituting official court business. See *Jige monjo* doc. 110, 1558 (Eiroku 1).3.4 Hōseiji Chika-o sanmonjō, 154–56.

[67]Not all with close ties to Yoshitaka were present, however, as Hirohashi Kanehide can be documented as departing from Yamaguchi to Sakai, and Aki in 1550. See *Tokitsugu kyōki*, 1550 (Tenbun 19).6.17 and 9.11.

[68]*Ihon Yoshitaka-ki*, manuscript copy.

[69]Ibid.

Before the coup, Yoshitaka was well aware of Sue Harukata's discontent and cursed him during the eleventh month of 1550.[70] Yoshitaka relied on Mōri Motonari, an allied warrior who had fought heroically against the Amako in the 1540s, for support 'in case trouble should arise'.[71] Yoshitaka signed numerous oaths with Motonari for over a decade before these events, revealing the significance of the Mōri chieftain in the Ōuchi organization.[72] In the first month of 1551, Ōuchi Yoshitaka secretly dispatched a document to Motonari, alluding to the fact that he was expecting trouble 'within the family' and asking that Motonari appear without delay in case of turmoil.[73] Yoshitaka was aware that his plan to move the capital was not popular with most of his followers, but he felt that he had enough support to quell any dissent.

That most of the Ōuchi would side with the Sue and overthrow Yoshitaka suggests that the coup was as much over policy – probably concerning the expenses that these rituals entailed, and the privileges accorded to the nobility – than personality. Sue Harukata appears to have had reformist leanings, and to have wished to facilitate trade, since shortly after he destroyed Yoshitaka, he issued several regulations to Itsukushima shrine prohibiting tolls (*dabetsuryō* 駄別料), or the levying of protection fees (*keigo mai* 警固米) on merchant ships (*kaisen* 廻船).[74] Yoshitaka miscalculated the depth of dissatisfaction within his organization and mistakenly decided to trust Mōri Motonari, who decided to side with Sue Harukata. Late in the eighth month of 1551, just days before his rebellion, Sue Harukata wrote a letter to Motonari, explaining that he and two important deputies, Sugi Shigenori and Naitō Okimori, had agreed to depose Yoshitaka in favor of Yoshitaka's infant son.[75] In fact, Harukata lied to Motonari, for he had gained the support of the Ōtomo during the previous year of 1550 by agreeing to install Ōtomo Haruhide (?–1557), the son of Ōtomo Sōrin

[70]For crucial documentary reference to prayers for Yoshitaka's long life, and for Sue Harukata's 'evil heart' to be quelled (*onshin kifuku*) see the *Yamaguchi kenshi tsūshihen furoku* CD-ROM, doc. 387, 1550 (Tenbun 19).11 Aizen myō-ō hō senza kigan kotogaki, 207. Chronicles suggest that these maledictions began much later, during the eighth month of 1551. See *Yoshitaka-ki*, 184. The *Rokuji no hō* maledictions themselves were, according to a variant of the *Yoshitaka-ki*, the reason that Sue Harukata rebelled. See *Yamaguchi shishi shiryōhen Ōuchi bunka*, 104.

[71]*Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 3, Yamaguchi kenritsu Yamaguchi hakubutsukan monjo no. 1, 5.17 Ōuchi Yoshitaka shojō, 892. This document dates from 1549. According to Yonehara, *Ōuchi Yoshitaka*, 230–31, Yoshitaka tried to strengthen his relationship with Motonari, even arranging a match between one of Motonari's sons and one of his adopted daughters.

[72]For an earlier oath, see *Mōri ke monjo*, vol. 1, doc. 213, 1539 (Tenbun 8).9.13 Ōuchi Yoshitaka seijō an, 184 and for Motonari's reply, see doc. 214, 9.28 Mōri Motonari ukebumi an, 184–85.

[73]*Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 4, 1.27 Ōuchi Yoshitaka shojō (*kirigami*), 681. For analysis, see Yonehara, *Ōuchi Yoshitaka*, 235 and Fukao, *Ōuchi Yoshitaka*, 166. This remarkable document found its way into the hands of the Shōren'in *monzeki*, and is now found in the Nagahama Castle Historical Museum (Nagahama Jō Rekishi Hakubutsukan).

[74]*Hiroshima kenshi kodai chūsei shiryō hen*, vol. 3, Daiganji monjo, doc. 65, 1552 (Tenbun 21).2.28 Sue Harukata Itsukushima sadamegaki utsushi, 1221–22 for reference to levies on cargo ships, and doc. 67, 4.20 Sue Harukata shojō an (*kirigami*), 1223 for a prohibition of tolls.

[75]*Kikkawa ke monjo*, vol. 1, doc. 609, 8.24 Sue Takafusa shojō, 543–44. The editors of *Dai Nihon shiryō*, and Kishida (below) assume that this undated document dates from 1550, but 1551 is more likely. See *Hiroshima kenshi kodai chūsei shiryōhen* vol. 5, 51 for the latter designation of these records as a [1551 (Tenbun 20)].8.24 Sue Takafusa shojō (*kirigami*). For analysis of this episode, and evidence that the Mōri and Ōtomo actively intervened to destroy the Ōuchi, including a [1551 (Tenbun 20)].9.19 Ōtomo record praising Mōri Motonari's role in Yoshitaka's overthrow, see Kishida, 'Sue Takafusa no heikyo to Mōri Motonari'.

(1530–87) and nephew of Yoshitaka, as their lord.[76] Shortly after writing this missive, Harukata launched his rebellion, which unfolded according to his plan. After forcing Yoshitaka to commit suicide, however, the Sue and Naitō rebels executed Yoshitaka's son, who had been taken prisoner. Thereupon Ōtomo Haruhide became the final Ōuchi lord, and changed his name to Ōuchi Yoshinaga.

Although not privy to plans to kill Yoshitaka's son, Motonari's active involvement in the coup can be gathered from a [1551].9.19 document from Ōtomo Sōrin, who praised Motonari for his help in overthrowing Yoshitaka.[77] Sugi Shigenori and Mōri Motonari rebelled against Yoshitaka's policies, but they opposed the murder of Yoshitaka and his son. Sue Harukata later had Sugi Shigenori killed. Mōri Motonari, however, bided his time and three years later turned on the plotters, defeating Sue Harukata and ensuring his demise in 1555, and that of Yoshinaga, the last Ōuchi lord, in 1557.[78] Thereupon the Mōri gained tenuous control over most Ōuchi territory in western Honshu.

The Ōtomo prospered mightily after the Ōuchi collapse, for they took over the Ōuchi domains in Kyushu. Ōtomo Sōrin's city of Funai replaced Yamaguchi as a center of trade in western Japan. After his son Yoshinaga's death in 1557, Sōrin preferred a weakened Yamaguchi under Mōri control, because that vacuum allowed for trade to be concentrated at Funai, which flourished in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Indeed, Ōtomo Sōrin favored the Mōri over an Ōtomo relative named Ōuchi Teruhiro (?–1569), who tried to reestablish Ōuchi rule in 1569.[79] Sōrin wrote to the Jesuits and explained that Ōuchi resurgence would lead to Yamaguchi again becoming the center of trade, which he deplored.[80]

Kyoto Connections to the Coup

At least one Kyoto noble, Kujō Tanemichi (1507–94), appears to have been involved in this plot as well. A record in the Ōtomo archives states that the plotters against Yoshitaka 'received permission from Kyoto' (*Kyōto ni jōi o ukete*).[81] As the evidence found in the *Ōmagaki* reveals that Emperor Go-Nara favored Yoshitaka as a protector, the 'permission' refers to a courtier who was distant from Go-Nara's trusted officials in Kyoto, but who at the same time possessed strong ties to Ōuchi Yoshitaka's rivals. As no evidence exists of involvement by Ashikaga Yoshiteru or his allies such as Konoe Taneie in Sakamoto, this person was mostly likely the retired Regent Kujō Tanemichi. Tanemichi fled Kyoto in 1534, and wandered through various regions,

[76]A Sagara Taketō letter, in the Mōri house records, reveals this alliance between Sue Harukata and Naitō Okimori. See *Mōri ke monjo*, vol. 4, doc. 1556, 1551 (Tenbun 20).1.5 Sagara Taketō mōshijō utsushi, 458-65 which suggests that the Sugi Shigenori initially warned Yoshitaka of this rebellion. For other documents suggesting an alliance between Harukata and Okimori, see *Hagi han batsu etsu roku*, vol. 3, doc. 62, [1550 (Tenbun 19)].9.19 Naitō Okimori kishōmon and [1550 (Tenbun 19)].9.14 Sue Harukata shojō, 160–61.

[77]Kishida Hiroshi introduced this document, including a photograph of it, in 'Sue Takafusa no heikyo to Mōri Motonari', 1–2.

[78]For Sue Harukata documents from 1554 (Tenbun 23) castigating the Mōri and Kobayakawa for their treachery see *Hagi han batsu etsu roku*, vol. 4, Kuba shōemon monjo, doc. 26, 5.19 Sue Harukata shojō, 111. Ōuchi Yoshinaga's father was Ōtomo Sōrin.

[79]Teruhiro was defeated by the Mōri in 1569, and much of Yamaguchi was laid waste at this time.

[80]Kishida, *Mōri Motonari to chiiki shakai*, 33 for analysis of a 1567 (Eiroku 10).9.15 Ōtomo Sōrin letter written to the Jesuits.

[81]See *Zōho teisei hennen Ōtomo shiryō* vol. 19, 112.

and visited the Itsukushima shrine in Aki.[82] Babe Takahiro has shown that Tanemichi established a close relationship with the Miyoshi in the twelfth month of 1548. Tanemichi can also be documented as visiting Harima as well as Izumo, where the Amako, archrivals of Ōuchi Yoshitaka, lived.[83] He did not return to Kyoto until 1552.4.5, but when he did, he dramatically improved his position, and was reinstated as regent after 20 years. *Kugyō bunin* described his reinstatement as 'most remarkable'.[84]

Matsunaga Teitoku, a confidant of Kujō Tanemichi, recounted how Tanemichi reminisced that poverty and turmoil in Kyoto during the Tenbun era (1532–55) had made it difficult to remain there. He also wrote how Tanemichi had traveled to Sakai, a Miyoshi stronghold, and Kyushu in the west, which suggests that he served as the conduit for Miyoshi and Ōtomo communication.[85] According to Teitoku, Tanemichi also emphasized the sanctity of Kyoto and explained how the identity of his house, the Kujō, was linked to a place in Kyoto. This constitutes an oblique critique of the attempted move of 1551.[86]

Tanemichi appears to have opposed the transfer of the emperor from the capital of nearly 750 years. He found a willing ally in Miyoshi Nagayoshi, who only tenuously controlled central Japan, and would have been directly threatened by the emperor's move, since it would have undermined his authority and opened him to a potential Ōuchi attack. Miyoshi Nagayoshi dedicated a linked-verse sequence (*renga* 連歌) to the Taga shrine in Yamaguchi three weeks after Yoshitaka's death. In one of his poems, he referred to the remains of the fallen autumn leaves (*aki no ha no chiru ato shinobu shigure kana* 秋の葉のちる跡しのぶ時雨かな), while in the other, he wrote about longing for the capital – presumably Kyoto – left behind (*ideshi miyako zo itodo koishiki* いでし都ぞいとど恋しき).[87]

The timing of Nagayoshi's dedication of a memorial linked-verse sequence for Yoshitaka reveals that he knew about Yoshitaka's death before others at the court. Ladies of the palace mentioned the arrival of sumo wrestlers on 1551.9.14, two weeks after Yoshitaka's demise, but remained unaware of his passing.[88] Yoshida Kanemigi, a shrine specialist who lived in Yamaguchi for several years in the 1540s and revitalized shrine rites in western Japan, did not learn of Yoshitaka's death until 1551.9.21, some three weeks after the coup, but by this time Nagayoshi had completed his linked verse.[89] Thus, Nagayoshi was aware of Yoshitaka's demise far sooner than other members of the Kyoto court, suggesting involvement in the affair. Nevertheless, beyond these poems, and the alacrity with which Nagayoshi wrote them, no further evidence of his involvement in the coup remains.

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[82]'Fusa-aki oboegaki', *Yamaguchi shishi shiryōhen Ōuchi bunka*, 229 describes Tanemichi's earlier visit to Itsukushima shrine.
[83]Babe, 'Nobunaga jōraku zen'ya no kinai jōsei', 19–24. For Tanemichi visiting the Amako and Harima, see ibid., 25. See also Inoue, 'Kujō Tanemichi no shōgai', 492–93 for Tanemichi in Harima and Sakai.
[84]Iwamoto, 'Kujō Tanemichi no shuppon to Ashikaga shōgun', 29–30. See also Mizuno, 'Ashikaga Yoshiharu-Yoshiaki ki ni okeru Sekkankei Honganji to shōgun daimyō', 7. For his return to Kyoto after 20 years, see *Tokitsugu kyōki*, vol. 3, 1552 (Tenbun 21).4.5, 175. Babe, 'Nobunaga jōraku zen'ya no kinai jōsei', 17, 19 explains Tanemichi's ties with the Miyoshi.
[85]Matsunaga, *Taionki*, 36. At this time, Tanemichi discusses meeting his Miyoshi son-in-law.
[86]Ibid., 39. He includes a quote from the *Jinnō shōtoki* in this passage.
[87]*Bōchō fūdō chūshin an* 13, *Yamaguchi saiban* 2, 105 for the poems of 1551 (Tenbun 20).9.22.
[88]*Oyudono no ue no nikki*, vol. 5, 1551 (Tenbun 20).9.14, 172–73.
[89]Okada, *Kirishitan bateren*, 160 for a transcription of Kanemigi's diary concerning Yoshitaka. The location of Kanemigi's 1551 diary is currently unknown.

Aftermath and Cover-up: Erasing the Memories of 1551

Few who participated in the coup long survived the events of 1551. All of the Ōuchi plotters who rose against Yoshitaka died within a half-dozen years of 1551: Sugi Shigenori was killed in 1551, Naitō Okimori perished in 1554, and Sue Harukata died after suffering a crushing defeat at Itsukushima in 1555 by Mōri Motonari. Emperor Go-Nara remained in Kyoto, but he descended into abject poverty, as Ōuchi financial support ceased. One remarkable document, of contested veracity, suggests that he demanded that Mōri Motonari kill Sue Harukata and Naitō Okimori's son Takayo in the first month of 1554 because they had killed their lord Yoshitaka.[90] His continued sympathies with Yoshitaka are evident in other surviving documents. One, from 1557.7.13, shortly before his death, requests that Ryūfukuji be rebuilt in accordance with the wishes of the late Yoshitaka (Yoshitaka kō).[91]

Although he survived the turmoil of 1551, Miyoshi Nagayoshi never consolidated control over the area of central Japan before his death in 1564. Tellingly, he did not provide funds for the funeral of Go-Nara, who remained unburied for over 70 days in 1557.[92] Nagayoshi's heirs resorted to increasingly desperate measures to maintain their authority, murdering the shogun Ashikaga Yoshiteru in 1565 and burning Tōdaiji in 1566. The Miyoshi were supplanted when Oda Nobunaga entered the capital in 1568. Nobunaga proved equally willing to rely on untrammeled military force and constituted a worthy heir to the Miyoshi, although he too would be assassinated in the end.

Ōtomo Sōrin lived long enough to see his city of Funai prosper due largely to links with Portuguese traders and was appointed as the heir to the Ōuchi holdings in Kyushu.[93] Sōrin's wealth and power proved fleeting, however, as Shimizu Yoshihiro smashed his forces at Mimigawa in 1578. In 1586, this same Yoshihiro reduced Sōrin's city of Funai to cinders. Ōtomo Sōrin died the following year.[94]

Mōri Motonari and his heirs consolidated their control over western Honshu, and Yamaguchi itself. Motonari had the funds to pay for enthronement rites in 1558, after a delay of a year, but could not afford to do so as lavishly as the Ōuchi, and such rites were only desultorily performed.[95] The Mōri quelled an Ōuchi rebellion in 1569, which further decimated Yamaguchi, but were never able to control Kyushu or effectively

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[90] *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 3, Jōeiji monjo doc. 80, 1554 (Tenbun 23).1.13. Go-Nara tennō utsushi, 360. The veracity of this document has generated considerable debate. See Misaka, *Mōri Motonari*, 184–93. The first signs of the Mōri rebellion became manifest in the third month of 1554, although they did not openly turn against the Sue until the fifth month of that year. For the Hiraga apprehending a Sue messenger and dispatching him to the Mōri, see *Hiraga ke monjo*, doc. 86, 3.6 Mōri Motonari onajiku Takamoto renshojō (*kirigami*), 560–61. For evidence of Motonari's open rebellion in the fifth month, see *Yamanouchi Sudō ke monjo*, doc. 217, 5.28 Ōuchi Yoshinaga shojō, 179.

[91] *Yamaguchi kenshi shiryōhen chūsei* 2, Ryūfukuji monjo doc. 1, 1557 (Kōji 3).7.13 Go-Nara tennō rinji, 927. Go-Nara died on 1557.9.5

[92] *Kugyō bunin*, vol. 3, 440 for his death on 1557 (Kōji 3).9.5 and *Oyudono no ue no nikki*, vol. 5, 1557 (Kōji 3).11.22, 364 for his burial. See Imatani, *Sengoku jidai no kizoku: Tokitsugu kyōki ga egaku Kyōto*, 242, and Watanabe, *Sengoku no binbō tennō*, 237.

[93] See *Ōita ken shiryō*, vol. 26, 358 for a 1559 (Eiroku 2).11.9 document appointing Sōrin as the heir to the Ōuchi domains and 358–59 for the 1559 (Eiroku 2).6.26 appointment as the *shugo* of Chikuzen. Sōrin was also appointed as *shugo* of Buzen, Chikago and Hizen. Toyama, *Ōtomo Sōrin*, 44.

[94] For the best survey of the archaeological artifacts recounting the period of Funai's prosperity, see Tamanaga and Sakamoto, *Ōtomo Sōrin no sengoku toshi: Funai*.

[95] *Tsunemoto gyoki*, box 553, *Chokuzai anmon*, no 16, 1558 (Eiroku 1).8.15 *Onsokui fu an* (御即位付案). This document reveals that Mōri Motonari belatedly bankrolled the celebratory enthronement (*sokui*) ceremonies of Emperor Ōgimachi. Viewed at Kyoto University on 12 March 2012.

engage in trade with the continent, although a few artifacts of their attempt survive, such as a 1584 'tally flag' that was shared between Ming and Mōri merchants.[96]

While the Ōtomo admitted their role in the coup, the Mōri, who governed Yamaguchi after the Ōuchi downfall, had an active interest in covering up what had happened in 1551. Motonari and his heirs portrayed the Mōri as remaining loyal to Ōuchi Yoshitaka and, unsurprisingly, obscured traces of their rebellion.[97] Chronicles written during the latter half of the sixteenth century by people in the Mōri domains fail to mention Motonari's duplicity, or Yoshitaka's attempt to bring the emperor to Yamaguchi.[98] Mōri Terumoto (1553–1625) commissioned Takahashi Kotonobu, the head of Taga shrine in Yamaguchi, to write the *Ōuchi sama o-ie konponki*. This account, completed in 1615, says nothing about Yoshitaka's attempt to have *sechie* rites performed in Yamaguchi, which would have entailed making this city the sole capital of Japan.[99] Ōuchi Yoshitaka's poignant 1551 appeal to Motonari also no longer appears in the Mōri house records. Instead, this original document ended up in the possession of a Shōren'in monk, most likely because they entrusted it to him when commissioning prayers for the pacification of Yoshitaka's spirit.

The Mōri tried to maintain an image of upholders of Ōuchi rule, but at the same time, they sold or transferred several important structures from Yamaguchi to Hiroshima, or northern Kyushu, so as to erase the wealth and power evident there. They continued praying at Manganji in Hōfu throughout the Tokugawa period, fearful of vengeful spirits.[100] Motonari's role in the turmoil of 1551 did not sit well with him and his descendants.

Ultimately, as the centuries passed, histories were selectively edited so as to obscure even further what had happened in 1551. The most direct evidence of obfuscation of these events appears in the writings of Narushima Chikuzan (1803–54), a Confucian scholar who was employed by the Tokugawa bakufu and compiled the *Latter Mirror* [*Nochi kagami*], a chronicle of the Ashikaga regime.[101] Narushima relied on both the *Ashikaga kiseiki* and the *Chūgoku chiranki* to reconstruct the events of 1551. Although he recounted the coup against Yoshitaka in 1551, he nevertheless omitted references from both of these sources regarding Yoshitaka's attempt to move the emperor to Yamaguchi.[102]

The Continuing Importance of Court Rites

This article has attempted to explain why the Ōuchi fell and fell so quickly. It has suggested that the answer lies in Ōuchi Yoshitaka's ambitious attempt to move the emperor from Kyoto to Yamaguchi. Yoshitaka adopted a breathtakingly bold plan to

[96]See the 1584 *Nichimin bōeki senki* (日明貿易船旗), from the Takasu house collection, located in the Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives.
[97]*Hagi han batsu etsu roku*, vol 4. 'Bōchō jisha shōmon', for the Daineiji yuisho, 7, which describes how he conquered the rebel Sue Harukata, and avenged Yoshitaka. See also 'Zoku Ōnin kōki', maki 6, 108–9.
[98]The 1580 'Fusa-aki oboegaki', or reminiscences by the head of Itsukushima shrine, has been characterized as being reliable and ignores the attempt to move the emperor, but it was written when the Mōri were overlords of Aki and Itsukushima. For the reliability of this source, see *Dazaifu shishi chūsei shiryōhen*, 834.
[99]*Yamaguchi shishi shiryōhen Ōuchi bunka*, 'Shiryō kaidai', 2.
[100]Hōfu is located on the coast of the Inland Sea, slightly over ten miles to the southeast of Yamaguchi.
[101]This work was compiled between the years 1837 and 1853.
[102]See *Nochi kagami*, vol. 4, 640–42.

buttress the court by moving it to Yamaguchi, and making his home city the political, economic and cultural center of Japan. This upset many of his retainers, who would have to pay for such a prohibitively expensive endeavor. While Yoshitaka was engrossed in these preparations, most of his organization rose against him. Only such a widespread rebellion from within was sufficient to destroy the powerful Ōuchi and to ruin their city of Yamaguchi.

At the same time, the events of 1551 have implications for how we understand Japan's Warring States period (*sengoku jidai*) more broadly. Most narratives of this period are predicated on the notion that the political institutions of the center collapsed. The few studies that do exist regarding the center in this time emphasize the political marginalization of the court before 1568, when Oda Nobunaga (1534–82) entered Kyoto.[103] But this tends to ignore the continued ritual and political functions of the state. Contrary to commonly accepted narratives, court rituals remained an important part of politics and continued to be performed during the waning days of the Ōnin War (1467–77) and through to 1551. These rites have been overlooked, however, because most scholars have assumed that they were not politically significant, and could only occur in Kyoto, which had been gutted in the conflagrations of Ōnin. In fact, both of these assumptions are flawed. Rites remained significant and they could and were performed in other centers, most notably Yamaguchi, where expansive rites to uphold peace and prosperity in the realm were performed from 1476 until 1551.

The continuing importance of court rites is further confirmed by the events of 1551. That Yoshitaka intended to move the emperor provides proof of their continued relevance, as does the fierce resistance that his attempt engendered. The slaughter of the courtiers in 1551 has merited little attention in works devoted to the Ōuchi, or studies of the court, while the attempt to move Go-Nara has been all but unknown until now.[104] Their massacre suggests that the very existence of courtiers in a position of command proved threatening enough that all had to be killed along with Yoshitaka and his son. These men were not just the unlucky bystanders in a coup; rather, they attracted such unfavorable attention because of their importance as arbiters of politics. Courtiers were not mere dilettantes. Instead they were specialists of ritual affairs, whose active participation was perceived as a prerequisite for governance. The collapse of the Yamaguchi polity, the concurrent destruction of court knowledge and loss of so many courtiers contributed to the later notion that the court was supine, its rituals abandoned, its courtiers powerless, and the emperor irrelevant throughout an era of unbridled warfare. In fact, the court's influence remained significant for far longer than has been generally assumed. The continued role of the center calls into question the 'Warring States' label which fails to account for the persistence importance of political institutions.

The year 1551 represents a crucial turning point in Japanese history. Yoshitaka's attempt to move Go-Nara stands at the endpoint of a millennium in which the court functioned as the dominant mode of political authority in Japan. It also marks the

[103]According to Butler, it was not until Nobunaga entered the capital that, once again, 'Japan's imperial court occupied a central place in the country'; Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan*, 296. While admitting that the 'court remained active', he argues that 'it was moving in no clear direction' and 'pursuing a path that promised little hope of great change'. See ibid., 100.

[104]To date only Shimomura Isao has argued that the courtiers moved to Yamaguchi because of some political objective. See his 'Yoshitaka no ryōgoku keiei' 80–81, 103–4 and *Yamaguchi kenshi tsūshihen chūsei*, 547. Butler ably recounts Yoshitaka's role in funding court ceremonies, but does not mention the presence of so many courtiers in Yamaguchi; Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan*, 84–85, 129.

emergence of a new model that emphasized military might over political legitimacy. Over the course of the early sixteenth century, warriors such as the Miyoshi and the Sue increasingly rejected the ritual order in favor of a territorial lordship expressly based on command authority as a reflection of military might. Given these priorities, they felt little need to divert resources to fund state or local ceremonies. Instead, all available resources were committed to the costly endeavor of arming troops, constructing castles, and fighting battles. For all his emphasis on military affairs, Sue Harukata proved to be surprisingly inept in battle and was defeated and killed at Itsukushima. He effectively swept away the Ōuchi order, but could not maintain his authority, or for that matter, survive the very violence that he had unleashed. Indeed, none of this new generation of warriors who were characterized by their exclusive focus on military affairs proved to be particularly successful in establishing enduring structures; the country would endure a punctuated period of violence before an order was once again restored. Although much was lost when Yoshitaka fell, and much more was forgotten, Yoshitaka's pattern of rule, with its reliance on the court, and rites, provided a template for the later reconstitution of political authority in Japan.

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