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Kenshunmon'in—Taira Shigeko—: Sociopolitical Structures of the *Insei*  
and Women's Agency in Twelfth Century Japan

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in East Asian Studies

by

Yumi Kodama

2022

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Kenshunmon'in—Taira Shigeko—: Sociopolitical Structures of the *Insei* and  
Women's Agency in Twelfth Century Japan

by

Yumi Kodama

Master of Arts in East Asian Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Richard Richard Von Glahn, Chair

The objective of this paper is to illustrate elite women's political contributions and agency through a case study of Taira Shigeko/Kenshunmon'in. She was the “primary” wife of monarch Go-shirakawa, the mother of monarch Takakura, and a sister-in-law of Taira Kiyomori. Since the Heike regime brought “warriors” to the center of the court for the first time, its military aspect has been emphasized. By examining the sociopolitical structures of the *insei* period, however, it is apparent that violence alone would have never been enough to both establish and maintain the regime: both civil authority and military power were required. Through a biography of Shigeko, I explore how elite women in this period wielded power through civil authority and

conclude that Shigeko was the co-founder of the regime that became a bridge to Japan's first shogunate. Moreover, by positioning the Heike regime as the Go-shirakawa-Heike medieval *ie*, I demonstrate the shift of women's expected role from that of "mother" to "wife." As co-manager of the *ie*, medieval women held authority, and with their initiatives and agency, they could also wield tremendous power in the *ie*.

The thesis of Yumi Kodama is approved.

William M. Bodiford

Michael Emmerich

Richard Richard Von Glahn, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mentor in academia and beyond, Joan Piggott. She inspired me to launch this project, guided me, and—most importantly—always cheered me up with her warm smile. Here, I would like to express my gratitude and regard for her.

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In addition to them, I would like to thank Professor Joan Piggott. Even though she was ultimately unable to be on my committee, she always supported me in innumerable ways. She introduced an interdisciplinary approach, invited me to conferences and workshops, and, most importantly, led me on the path to Ph.D. Through her, I met Professor Sasaki Ken'ichi at the Meiji-USC exchange program and Professor Onoe Yōichi at the Kambun Workshop at USC in 2019. The former introduced me to an archeological approach and the latter helped me to improve my *kambun* skill. Moreover, Professor Piggott introduced me to her students, whom I consider my cohort and great friends at this point: Lina Nie, Joomi Lee, Katherine Lam, Elinor Lindeman, and Emily Warren. The intellectual discussions I had with them were very inspiring and undoubtedly helped me to write this thesis.

Last but not least, I would like to show my gratitude to my parents Hitomi Kodama and Mitsuru Kodama, my partner Scotty Gough, and my new friend and cohort at U Penn, Jay Zhang. Jay kindly agreed to proofread my paper and gave me helpful comments, even though he was given less than a week to do so. Scotty constantly proofread my work, helped any technical problems, and patiently put up with my late nights and early mornings. Without his help, I would

not have been able to finish this project, and without my parents' support, I would not have been able to pursue this path in academia.

## NOTES ON TRANSLATION

All translations are my own except where otherwise noted.

### **NAME:**

All Japanese names are written with the family name preceding the given name. Their names in the footnotes follow this custom as well. Moreover, I consistently refer to a person with his/her given name. Premodern persons, especially the elite, were generally referred to only by nicknames given after his/her then court position, rank, residing location or that of his/her leading family member. Thus, their nickname could change following a change of residence, a promotion, or a demotion. In order to avoid confusion, I consistently refer to a person with one name unless his/her new nickname encompassed subtle but critical nuances.

*Tennō* (Heavenly Sovereigns) are the exceptions to the above rules. First, they do not have surnames, and second, their given names were conferred upon ascending the throne. Thus, to avoid unnecessary complication, I refer to heavenly sovereigns by their monarch names even before succession and after their abdication.

Example: Taira (surname) Shigeko (given name)/  
Kogō (her nickname as a lady-in-waiting)/  
Higashi no onkata (her another nickname as the lady of the east)/  
*nyōgo* (her court title/calling name as a wife of a monarch)/  
*kōtaigō* (her court title/calling name as the mother of the heavenly sovereign)/  
Kenshunmon'in (her official court name by her title)  
Go-shirakawa (his name as the heavenly sovereign)/ Masahito (his actual name)

### **DATE:**

Regarding dates, a lunar calendar was used in premodern Japan. Therefore, I have left the days, months, and years as they appear in the primary sources. However, I have converted the

years to their equivalents in the Gregorian calendar and have appended them in parenthesis.

Within footnotes, however, I put dates in the Gregorian calendar style.

Example: The fifth day of the eighth month in the third year of Jishō (1179).

Footnote: the entry of Jishō 3 (1179), 8/5.

### **Terminology:**

For certain premodern Japanese terms, I have attempted to (perhaps arbitrarily) choose translations which convey most accurately the concepts in question while minimizing anachronisms and potential misunderstandings. I have also included a romanization of the original term beside each translated phrase; their original *kanji* rendering can be found in Appendix B. Moreover, Appendix A is a kanji list for proper noun.

With regard to heavenly sovereigns, the ruler of the Japanese archipelago (regardless of whether their position was purely a symbolic one), I avoid using the term “emperor” for mainly two reasons: 1) to distance the impression from the Japanese imperialism of the twentieth century, and 2) to emphasize the limited power they held. They resembled premodern European monarchs more than emperors. Thus, I use the direct translations of “heavenly sovereign”—or simply, “monarch”—as English translations for *tennō*. After abdicating, *tennō* were often called *in*, which I translate as “retired sovereign.” During the period examined in this work, no female monarchs existed, so the term “retired sovereign” always refers to a male. The female equivalent title of *in* was *nyo* (female) *in*, which I chose to translate as “premier retired royal lady.”

## INTRODUCTION

In Japan, it is commonly said that “Japanese views regarding gender are far behind those in the West.” Behind this statement is a lingering notion of “Asia is behind, and the West is ahead; thus, we have to catch up,” popularized during the Meiji period (1867-1912). Still, in the twenty first century, the populace simply assumes that Japanese women have always been in a dismal situation, used by men as political pawns, and that the liberation of Japanese women began only with the massive Westernization of the late nineteenth century. My goal is to argue against this mistaken assumption.

In academia, on the other hand, building on the works of the trailblazers of Japanese women’s history during the prewar era, it is often believed that the role of Japanese women in society diminished over time: in ancient times, Japan was a bilateral—both matrilineage and patrilineage equally mattered—society, with both men and women serving as societal leaders. This situation would continue even after state formation began in earnest around the sixth and seventh centuries. During the Heian period (794-1185?), in aristocratic society, women started to lose their public roles while they maintained their high status in the court; with the rise of warriors, however, women’s status dissipated while their roles similarly diminished, and these women became political pawns of men; thus, the medieval period, which is generally symbolized by warriors, was a “Dark Age” for women. This view seems somewhat archaic, but many scholars, especially those whose specialties lie outside of women’s history, still believe this. Moreover, due to this tendency, scholars have leaned toward demonstrating the high status of women during a particular time period, while assuming that women’s high status had inevitably declined over time. My ultimate goal is to study the status of elite women through each period of

Japanese history to capture a whole picture of how their roles, both expected and substantial, in society have changed over time.

This paper serves as the commencement of this grandiose project. The objective of this paper is to illustrate elite women's political contributions and agency during the twelfth century (often considered the beginning of the Japanese medieval period) by focusing on the life of Taira Shigeo/Kenshunmon'in (1142-1176): the "primary" wife of Go-shirakawa (1127-1192, r. 1155-1158) and a younger half-sister of Taira Tokiko (1126-1185) who was the primary wife of Taira Kiyomori (1118-1181). In doing so, I position the Heike regime as the Go-shirakawa-Heike medieval royal *ie* (Japanese medieval familial system). To launch this regime, Shigeo's agency, capability, and political power, which were based mainly on the authority of her position in the court, were as necessary as Kiyomori's political power, which relied mostly on his military power. Somehow, only male actors Kiyomori and Go-shirakawa have been given credit for the establishment of the Heike regime; I argue that Shigeo and Kiyomori were the co-founders of the Heike regime, regime which would become a bridge to Japan's first shogunate.

Social dynamics were drastically changing during the twelfth century. Economically, a new landholding system (*shōensei*), featuring a multi-layered vertical division of land rights (*shiki*), was being established, and the use of Chinese coins (*sōsen*) was rapidly spreading. Socially, the medieval *ie* was developing, and *mappō* thought—declining of Buddhist norms—was spreading throughout society. Violence became a legitimized political tool; as a result, society became unstable and bloodshed broke out the streets of the capital. This situation unquestionably offered warriors leverage. Religiously, even monks from powerful religious institutions began relying on violence to advance their goals, and new Buddhist schools of thought spread among commoners. Politically, decentralization accelerated. Factionalism



intensified within the most powerful institutions, dubbed by some historians as “the gates of power (*kenmon*).” Through clientage relations with these institutions, traditionally non-elite groups, such as lower-ranking aristocrats and warriors, rose to elite status. Eventually, at the end of the twelfth century, another center of power was created by warriors in the east, and the so-called dual polity of court and shogunate began.<sup>1</sup> In this, one of the most chaotic periods in Japanese history, the Heike regime was established and met its demise. The Heike regime was a bridge between classical and medieval Japan, and I will show that it would have never existed without the active contributions of its female members, especially those of Taira Shigeeko, who will be the focus of this study.<sup>2</sup>

### **Japanese Medieval—*Chūsei***

Here, I would like to define the term “medieval” in the Japanese context, which many scholars have conceived as analogous to the Western medieval epoch. First of all, I recognize the “Western” concept periodization as a useful tool. Secondly, I recognize the benefits of shifting periodizations based on a scholar’s focus. For the purpose of this paper, I position the *insei* period—the period in which the court was led by a retired sovereign—as a transitional period

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<sup>1</sup> In western Japan, the court, the aristocratic government, continued, whereas, in eastern Japan, the shogunate, the warrior’s government also existed simultaneously. This system is often called “the dual polity” by scholars.

<sup>2</sup> There has been a long debate over the position of the Heike regime as the last polity in the classical period or as the first in the medieval period. The former was based on the fact that the regime succeeded the court organization of the previous courts—the court led by the regent or viceroy and the court led by a retired sovereign—. The latter was mainly based on the fact that the Heike played a role as a state army, and their political power stemmed largely from their military power; they controlled the court as warriors rather than aristocrats. See details in Takahashi Masaaki, *Heike to Rokuhara bakufu* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku syuppankai, 2013) and Tanaka Fumihide, *Heishi Seiken no Kenkyū* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shigaku sōsho, 1994). The regime was established and maintained certainly by preserving the traditional court organization in most part, but at the same time, they dominated the court due to their military power; without the regime, the Kamakura shogunate would have never existed. Thus, I consider it as the bridge.

from classical to medieval. As we will see later, when exactly this period commenced is almost impossible to grasp, but it would be safe to say that it began in the late eleventh century.

Now, what defines the Japanese medieval period, whose transition started in the late eleventh century? While warriors and the new medieval landholding system have been the eminent distinguishing feature for the Japanese “medieval” period, the prominent historian Ishii Susumu (1931-2001) once defined it in the following terms: 1) decentralization, 2) the rise of warriors, 3) dissemination of the feudal master-servant relationship, 4) the establishment of the medieval land system (including the multilayered rights to land), and 5) the religious era centered on Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> I would also add 6) the development of the medieval *ie*, following what Ishii said: the Japanese medieval period was the age of the *ie*.<sup>4</sup>

Needless to say, changes did not happen overnight. The influential historian Ishimoda Shō (1912-1986) asserted that Japan’s classical period (*kodai*) lasted until the ninth century, while the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries reflected the ongoing transition from classical to medieval.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the Heian period itself is often divided into three sub-periods: early, middle (the ninth to eleventh century, called the *sekkan*—the regent (*sesshō*) and viceroy (*kanpaku*)—period), and late (the late eleventh to twelfth century, called the *insei* period). In summary, Shigeo lived towards the end of a long and critical transition in Japanese history.

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<sup>3</sup> Sakurai Eiji, “Chūsei eno shōtai,” in *Iwanami koza nihon rekishi 6: Chūsei 1*, ed. Ōtsu Tōru, et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Kuriyama Keiko, *Chūsei Oke no Seritsu to Insei* (Toyko: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2012), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ishii Susumu, “Japan’s Medieval World,” in *Capital and Countryside in Japan, 300-1180: Japanese Historians Interpreted in English*, ed. Joan R. Piggott (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asian Program 2006).

## Organization

Chapter 1 builds the foundation for my case study of Shigeo in the subsequent chapter by contemplating the following questions: what was the sociopolitical structures of the *insei*? Ultimately, what elements enabled the *insei* women to become prominent political figures? First, I explore the social thoughts during the *insei* period: heavy reliance on written documents, great emphasis on precedent, the interdependence of royal norms and Buddhist norms (*Ōbō buppō sōi*), and the belief in the declining of Buddhist law (*mappō*).<sup>6</sup> Then, I examine the sociopolitical structures of the *insei* by starting with the previous court organization, the court led by a regent/viceroy. By doing so, I argue against the traditional view of a retired sovereign as the despot under the court led by a retired sovereign: the most fundamental characteristic of the *insei* was incredible power diffusion and factionalism, which stemmed partially from the *insei*'s inclusiveness of both the older court structure and newer developing court principles. But this inclusiveness was also one of the elements that enabled women to become influential political figures. Furthermore, these newer court principles induced personal clientage between the gates of power and traditionally non-elite groups, such as lower-ranking aristocrats and warriors, opening a new avenue for both men and women of lower status. The differentiation of authority and power widened, and power diffusion and factionalism were escalated.

Additionally, the new emerging medieval *ie* also provided a retired sovereign and his “primary” wife with a justification for becoming involving in state affairs in their capacity as the head and co-manager of the royal *ie* respectively. Therefore, I conclude Chapter 1 by examining the medieval *ie* and position the Heike regime as the Go-shirakawa-Heike medieval royal *ie*.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ōbō buppō* are often translated as royal law and Buddhist law, but “norm” is more accurate since these “*hō*” have no relationship to penal codes or administrative codes.

Accelerated factionalism and power diffusion induced violent situations, which provided warriors with more leverage. Thus, while Kiyomori contributed to the military power of the Heike, Shigeiko was the one who established the regime's court civil authority. Together, they acted as co-founders of the Heike.

Chapter 2 commences the case study of Shigeiko. This biography should bolster the understanding of the sociopolitical system discussed in Chapter 1, and we will see how some elements continued to develop throughout the twelfth century. Within the span of her short life, Shigeiko demonstrated how capable she was as a politician. She was quick-witted and able to read subtle changes in a room. She could also settle, with finesse, complicated political disputes and serve as a skillful arbitrator between aristocratic court society and the Taira warriors. As we see in Chapter 1, the sociopolitical structures of the *insei* indeed provided her with a certain degree of authority and power, but it was her agency and skills—as well as her beauty—that enabled her to establish the Heike regime. Without her, the Heike regime could have never existed. My reading here is that Shigeiko was the one who injected the power of the warriors into the court and opened a path for the later shogunate.

Through her biography, I demonstrate that while the then-existing complicated sociopolitical customs of the twelfth century indeed enabled the women to become influential and powerful political figures, it was the women's individual characteristics, such as their intelligence, determination, and most importantly, agency, that enabled them to utilize their influence and power for the sake of their natal families. These women were not simply political pawns. They contributed to their families not simply through arranged marriages with powerful men or the delivery of children; rather, their agency, talent, and skills, as well as their social

statuses, enabled them to raise their natal family's status and ultimately determine the fate of their families: women were actors on this political stage.

To be sure, Shigeo is not representative of all elite women in the twelfth century. Nonetheless, by examining the sociopolitical structures of the time and following the life of a woman who married a monarch, cooperated with Taira warriors through her sister, and successfully climbed the social ladder, I hope this study will be able to shed light on the society that allowed a noble woman to be a powerful political figure and illuminate the agency, capability, and resilience of noblewomen during the *insei* period—women that would enable monumental historical achievements.

## **Historiography**

Due to the immeasurable significance of the Heike regime in Japanese history, impressive numbers of studies in Japanese and several in English have examined the life of the head of the Heike, Taira Kiyomori, and his temporary ally, monarch Go-shirakawa; nonetheless, there are almost no historical studies of the life of the female members of the Heike.

While literary and religious scholars have paid certain attention to some women from the Heike, due to their relationship to *The Tale of the Heike*, Nagai Michiko (1925-) was one of the first individuals to spotlight and study Heike women with a historical approach during the 1960s

and 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Nagai was not a professional scholar, though she married one.<sup>8</sup> She started her career as a magazine editor, and she later began writing historical fiction based on her scrutiny of primary sources.<sup>9</sup> Even though Nagai's official title is a "historical novel writer," her approach is scholastic. She bases her fiction on familiarity with historical sources. This is probably why, when the field of women's history in Japan was pushed forward during the 1980s, most scholars read Nagai's works. Another reason was that these scholars did not have a choice; historical scholarly works on female figures were scarce. For instance, in *Heike monogatari no Joseitachi*, published first in 1972, Nagai examines twelve female members of the Heike with brief biographies that she patches together based on primary sources.<sup>10</sup> For most of these women, this

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<sup>7</sup> Since Shigeo's lady-in-waiting left a "diary," literary studies of the diary have been done in both languages. For instance, in English, there is a doctoral dissertation by Carolyn Miyuki Wheeler, "Fleeting is Life: Kengozen and her Early Kamakura Court Diary, *Tamakiharu*," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2008), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304694635/4C039C33027F486DPQ/1?accountid=14512>. Moreover, some literary scholars focus on the roles of Tokiko and her daughter Taira Noriko (1155-1213) in *The Tale of the Heike*, such as Suzuki Keiko, "'Heike monogatari' to 'ie' no arikata: Kenreimon'in to Niidono o megutte," *Bungaku* 3, no. 4 (July/August 2002). Regarding Noriko, religious scholar Lori Meeks wrote a magnificent chapter: Lori Meeks, "Survival and Salvation in the Heike monogatari: Reassessing the Legacy of Kenreimon'in" in *Lovable Losers: the Heike in Action and Memory*, ed. Mikael S. Adolphson and Anne Commons (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015). This is the only English work about Noriko with a religio-historical approach. Similarly, a religious scholar, Abe Ryūichi, produced a unique article, which takes religious and literary approaches but examines Tokiko and Shigeo's agency for the first time in English. See details in Abe Ryūichi, "Women and the Heike Nōkyō: The Dragon Princess, the Jewel and the Buddha," *Impression, The Journal of the Japanese Art Society of America*, no. 40 (2019).

<sup>8</sup> Her husband is historian Kuroita Nobuo, whom the present work also cites.

<sup>9</sup> Several *Taiga* dramas, the historical drama that spans one year in broadcasting by the educational station NHK in Japan, were created by following her works. For instance, "Kusa Moeru," broadcasted in 1979, followed Nagai's work *Yamagiri: Mōri Motonari no tsuma*, and "Mōri motonari," broadcasted in 1997, followed her works *Hōjō Masako*, *Enkan*, *Tsuwamononofu*, *Sagami no mononofutachi*, and *Emaki*.

<sup>10</sup> Nagai Michiko, *Heike monogatari no Joseitachi* (Tokyo: Shintōsha, 1972). She included *The Tale of the Heike* in her primary sources, thus, there is certainly literary elements in some of these biographies, but Nagai is also aware of the discrepancy between the character in the tale and the historical figure. She sometimes compares the roles a woman played according to a courtier's diary and the same woman's roles that a literary work depicts.

work was their only biography until the scholastically founded—but general audience focused—book *Heike monogatari no jidai o ikita joseittachi*, edited by Fukutō Sanae in 2013.<sup>11</sup>

It is intriguing that Takamure Itsue (1894-1964), who is often considered the founder of women's history in Japan, was also not a professional scholar. She was a poet and teacher and became a journalist; eventually, she devoted herself to women's history. While her revolutionary works are known almost only to scholars of women's history and have been criticized for some flaws, Takamure's contribution is exceptional. Her theories have been influential for over half a century, and subsequent scholars of women's history have proposed their revisions of Takamure's theories by adapting, refining, and challenging them. The fact that these two trailblazers, both female, were not professional academics might be an indication of the androcentric academia from an earlier time.

The late Tsunoda Bun'ei (1913-2008) was possibly the only professional scholar who paid attention to female figures in history during the 1960s and 1970s, and he left behind valuable biographies of these women. His contribution to women's history is tremendous. For instance, he paid close attention to the rear palace (*kōkyū*) and female court officials. He scrutinized official court documents, picked out names of female officials (*nyokan*), royal wives (*kōhi*), royal princesses who were appointed to serve the deities of Kamo or Ise shrine as a deputy of the heavenly sovereign (*saiō*), and premier retired royal ladies (*nyoin*), and created a table of successive generations that contains all of these posts.<sup>12</sup> He wrote an entire book dedicated to the biography of an important premier retired royal lady from the twelfth century, as

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<sup>11</sup> Fukutō Sanae et al., *Heike monogatari no jidai wo ikita joseittachi*, ed. Fukutō Sanae (Saitama: Shōkeisha, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Tsunoda Bun'ei, *Nihon no Kōkyū* (Tokyo: Gakutōsha, 1973).

well as two volumes that focused on the Heike after its defeat at Dannoura.<sup>13</sup> In the latter work, he remarkably points out that the Heike survived after the fall of the regime through its female line; as a matter of fact, Kiyomori's blood was passed down to the current heavenly sovereign through females, unlike the “winner,” Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199), who is usually credited for the defeat of the Heike. Furthermore, Tsunoda's forty-page chapter, published in 1993, dedicated to Shigeko, was her only biography until Fukutō's work.<sup>14</sup> Tsunoda's work is still the only biography of Shigeko that includes full references to the primary sources he scrutinized. Even today, his intensive studies of female historical figures remain valuable resources for contemporary scholars.

Unfortunately, only a few scholars have followed these great works. There are few historical studies of Shigeko in Japanese, and no historical biography of Shigeko, let alone the rest of the Heike women exists in English. Historian Sachiko Kawai focuses on premier retired royal ladies, although Kawai's lens is more on court women, not Heike women, and places more emphasis on the economic aspects of their influence.<sup>15</sup> In conclusion, there is a very limited number of historical studies on the women of the Heike in both languages, and there are no studies in English that concern Taira Shigeko, the co-founder of the Heike regime.

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<sup>13</sup> Tsunoda Bun'ei, *Shōtei Hishō: Taikenmon'in Tamako no shōgai*, Asahi sensho 281 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun shuppan, 1985). Tsunoda Bun'ei, *Heike Goshō: Rakujitsugo no Heike* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1981).

<sup>14</sup> Saeki Tomohiro, “Kenshunmon'in Taira Shigeko: Go-shirakawa no chōki,” in Fukutō Sanae et al., *Heike monogatari no jidai wo ikita joseitachi*.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, see details in the following: Sachiko Kawai, “The Lady of the Eighth Ward: Political, Economic, and Military Power of *Nyoin* during the Twelfth Century, Japan” (master's thesis, University of Southern California, 2007); Sachiko Kawai, “Power of the Purse: Estates and the Religio-political Influence of Japanese Royal Women—1100-1300” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2015); Sachiko Kawai, *Uncertain Powers: Sen'yōmon-in and Landownership by Royal Women in Early Medieval Japan* (Massachusetts, Harvard University Asia Center, 2021).



## Sources

The present work focuses on the political contribution and agency of elite women, but because politics, especially during the premodern era, was deeply intertwined with economic, social, cultural, and religious issues, this work inevitably takes an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, I also employ various types of sources for my examination of the life of Shigeo. The main sources are naturally aristocrats' journals: the *Hyōhanki* written by Taira Nobunori (1112-1187); the *Gyokuyō* written by the regent Fujiwara Kanezane (1149-1207); the *Gyokuzui* written by the regent Fujiwara Michiie (1193-1252); the *Sankaiki* written by the minister Fujiwara/Nakayama Tadachika (1132-1195); the *Kikki*, written by Fujiwara/Yoshida Tsunefusa (1143-1200); and the *Hyakurenshō*, compiled in the late thirteenth century. I also utilize the *Tamakiharu* written by a lady-in-waiting of Kenshunmon'in, as well as the *Gukanshō*, the first systematized Japanese history, written by Jien (1155-1225), a high-ranking monk and younger brother of Kanezane, around 1220. I also employ prefecture histories such as *Hiroshima kenshi*, official documents, a written prayer offered to shrines (*ganmon*), and the *Ryōjinhishō*, a folk song collection compiled by monarch Go-shirakawa. Examining these sources provides us with insight into the historical lives of women, including the highly political life of Shigeo. I sometimes rely on *The Tale of the Heike* in order to accurately adjust for the values of the time but certainly avoid using it as the sole reference for any of our actors' responses to sociopolitical situations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *The Tale of the Heike* has various versions. In this work, *The Tale of the Heike* refers to the *Kakuichi* version written down by a blind monk Akashi Kakuichi (1300?-1371) during the middle of the fourteenth century, unless otherwise noted.

## Warriors

Lastly, I would like to refine the definition of warriors in writing about the Heike. The word “warrior (*samurai*)” derives from the verb “serving (*saburau*),” reflecting the low status of warriors in the traditional Japanese hierarchy. However, in actuality, some warrior families were descendants of the royal clan. The Kanmu Heishi and Seiwa Genji were typical examples: the former were the descendants of monarch Kanmu (737-806, r. 781-806), and the latter, of monarch Seiwa (850-881, r. 858-876). They branched into many lines over generations: some lines became lower aristocrats, such as Shigeeko’s “Heishi line, originating from Prince Takamune (Takamuneō *ryū* Heishi).” Others became warriors, such as Kiyomori’s “Ise Heishi line, ascended from Prince Takamochi (Takamochiō *ryū* Ise Heishi).” What is significant here is that a few Heishi lines who became warriors in the provinces managed to become so-called “military nobles (*gunji kizoku*),” who were both warriors and aristocrats. They held a lower court rank—sixth or below, or at highest fifth—but the root of their power was not in the capital, but rather in their province. Among these “elite” warrior lines, only a few warrior lines advanced to the point where they could establish a base in the capital.

Kiyomori’s line, often called “the Heike,” was one of them. This line even managed to merge into the royal line, becoming a new “gate of power.” This line, a collateral of the Ise Heishi line, ascended from Prince Takamochi; because they were based in Rokuhara, this line was also called the Rokuhara line. The Rokuhara line began with Kiyomori’s grandfather, Taira Masamori (?-1121?), who built a clientship with the then retired sovereign in the capital by making the best use of his resources. As a result, he managed to attain a court rank of Junior Fourth Rank Lower Grade, and his son—that is, Kiyomori’s father—made it to the Senior Fourth Rank Upper Grade. Finally, Kiyomori himself was appointed Grand Minister (*daijō daijin*) and

became the maternal grandfather of the heavenly sovereign. For the purpose of this paper, I define the Heike as a political group created by the families who supported the Rokuhara line, whereas “Heishi” refers to all Taira lines. Furthermore, I consider the establishment of the Heike regime to begin with the succession of monarch Takakura (1167-1181, r. 1168-1180), and I consider its demise to be the death of monarch Antoku (1179-1185, r. 1180-1185).<sup>17</sup> With that, let us turn to the time in which Shigeiko lived: the *insei* period.

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<sup>17</sup> Some scholars consider the coup d’etat of the third year of Jishō as the commencement of this regime. For instance, Tanaka suggests that the coup d’etat was a shift for the Heike from the warrior’s gate of power to the gate of power that seized the state affairs. See details in Tanaka, *Heishi Seiken no Kenkyū*, 234.

## Chapter 1: The *Insei*—the Court Led by a Retired Sovereign—Period

This chapter provides a background for the subsequent case study of Taira Shigeiko. Specifically, I examine the characteristics of the period between the late eleventh and the late twelfth century: now called the *insei*—i.e., the court led by a retired sovereign—period. What was the political significance of the *insei*, what were its peculiarities, and how did it impact elite women? In other words, what elements of the *insei* enabled women, through their political influence, to achieve their goals?

This period has often been characterized through a shift toward a patrilineal society, compared to the rather matriarchal elite society of the early and middle Heian period. As we will see below, under the court led by a regent or viceroy (*sekkan seiji*) during the early and middle Heian period, a daughter of a Fujiwara family who was recognized as the mother of the heavenly sovereign (*bogō*) was the key: only through her authority and power could her male family members wield power.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, under the court led by a retired sovereign, a retired sovereign wielded his power as the father of the heavenly sovereign. For a long time, scholars have assumed that during the *insei* period, the power of a retired sovereign as patriarch was almost absolute. Thus, focused on their despotism, scholars have also assumed that Fujiwara women and regents lost their power.

I argue, however, that the most fundamental characteristic of the *insei* was extreme factionalism and power diffusion, caused by maintaining a delicate balance between seemingly

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<sup>1</sup> From here, for the sake of brevity, *sekkan seiji* will be translated as “the court led by a regent” as the position of the regent and viceroy changed depending on the age of a heavenly sovereign, and *sekkan* as a regent and viceroy. Similarly, *Sekkanke* will be translated as “the Fujiwara family of the regent” up to a certain point and Fujiwara Regent’s Family for later. I will explain the shift later.

contradictory factors: the emphasis on both written documents (civil authority) and violence (military authority); co-existence of the older court organization—the regent-led court—and the newly developing court organization, in which the court came to be led by a retired sovereign. As a result, the gap between authority and power—the actual ability to carry out one’s own will regardless of direct authority—widened.<sup>2</sup> Authority largely stemmed from the older court organization, and power mainly came from the newer court organization. Consequently, power was further scattered, and the splintering of factions accelerated.

The leading figures under the court led by a retired sovereign were gates of power (*kenmon*)—retired sovereigns, mothers of the heavenly sovereigns, premier retired royal ladies, adult heavenly sovereigns, Fujiwara Regent’s Family—and those who built personal clientage with these influential figures. The authority was shared among gates of power, and the power was shared by all: power was incredibly scattered. Most importantly for the purpose of this work, this means that the Fujiwara daughters who had been essential to the political maneuvering of their families, and who thus held tremendous power in the court during the early and middle Heian period, still held power during the *insei* period. Their power was based mainly on their eminent authority. Meanwhile, a new type of woman who built a personal clientage with gates of power also arose and started to wield power. Furthermore, the Fujiwara daughters’ continued hold on strong power also meant that, in most cases, Fujiwara regents did not lose as much power as had been assumed. Thus, contrary to the assumed retired sovereign’s despotism, power was dispersed and shared.

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<sup>2</sup> Sachiko Kawai, *Power of the Purse*, 5.

Since both authority and power were shared by the gates of power under the court led by a retired sovereign, building a personal clientage with gates of power was necessary for those who were from humble origins (namely lower-ranking aristocratic and warrior families) to climb up the social ladder. The status of each family was still somewhat fluid, so lower-birth individuals who improved their own status would also improve the status of their family by proxy. This gave both men and women of humble origins, such as the Taira and Minamoto warrior families, the chance to advance in the court and naturally contributed to further factional splintering and scattering of power.

While the importance of personal clientage with gates of power came to define the balance of power, the medieval *ie*—the family system—was developing during this time. This development of the medieval *ie* provided a retired sovereign, who had limited legitimacy as a ruler of the state, with authority to exercise power as the head of the royal *ie*, which included the legitimate ruler: the heavenly sovereign. Meanwhile, the emphasis on the mother of the heavenly sovereign's significance shifted from her status as the mother of the reigning monarch to that of the “primary” wife of the retired sovereign and the co-manager of their medieval *ie*. Coupled with its complicated characteristics, the new developing *ie* accelerated the issues of power diffusion and factionalism. The splintering of factions between and within gates of power, even within the same family line, induced battles such as the Hōgen Turbulence (1156) and the Heiji Turbulence (1159), which provided warriors—often of lower birth—with leverage to potentially raise their station.

All of these factors were intricately intertwined with one another, contributing to the political power and family status of the Heike—and more importantly, to the political influence of Heike

women. In order to examine this complicated period, I will begin with the social aspects of the time: that is, the custom of heavily relying on written documents, the traditional custom of putting great value on precedent, the common idea of the interdependence of royal norms and Buddhist norms (*ōbō buppō sōi*), and the widely-held belief that Buddhist norms were in decline (*mappō*).

Next, I will explore the socio-political dimensions of the *insei*. What exactly was it? How did it develop, and how did it work? In order to tackle these questions, it is necessary to start with the previous court organization, the court led by a regent, and the roles of key players: heavenly sovereigns, his parents, and the Fujiwara family of the regent. Then, I will examine the court led by a retired sovereign. By these examinations, I will show the development and complexity of the *insei* period, and we will see how the elements that burgeoned under the court led by a regent during the early and middle Heian period were integrated into the *insei*. These elements greatly contributed to the *insei* women's political influence. These examinations also demonstrate some critical issues, such as the legitimacy of the ruler of the state and the distinction between authority and power.

Lastly, I will explore the development of the medieval familial system, *ie*, which accelerated power diffusion further and escalated violence by means of battles or protests, which also contributed to the growing power of the warrior class. Then, I examine and categorize a retired sovereign's wives under the court led by a retired sovereign. There was a new type of woman who was often considered the "primary" wife of the retired sovereign, who were the co-managers of the royal *ie*. With this framework, I will position the Heike regime as the Go-

shirakawa-Heike medieval royal *ie*; thus, Shigeko was the co-manager of the *ie*: the Heike regime.

These analyses should provide us with the foundation for understanding the *insei* period. To comprehend an individual's actions, it is essential to understand the historical and societal contexts of the period in which s/he lived. An appreciation of the volatile, chaotic political situations of the *insei* period and how these complicated situations came to be should help us grasp a more complete, nuanced picture of the life of Taira Shigeko.

## **1. Social Climate**

### **1-1. Heavy Reliance on Written Documents**

Written documents have been valued in Japanese society since the classical period. The central court and provincial administrative headquarters issued orders through written documents. In the court, there was a specific branch that was tasked with writing these documents. A court matter was generally handled via the following procedure: an active senior noble would be appointed to be in charge of a certain matter or event (becoming a *jōkei*), after which he would receive an order from the heavenly sovereign through a secretary (*kurōdo*), often in the form of a written document. Then, the senior noble would supervise a controller (*ben*) to write the order into an official document.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in order to appeal to the court and claim one's property holdings, one would need a written document; thus, when one donated their property, they would also append a written document to the donation.

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<sup>3</sup> These were basic procedures during the classical period and had not changed much during the *insei* period. See details in Hayakawa Shōhachi, *Nihon kodai kanryōsei no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoen, 1986).



The high value of written documents did not change even during the *insei* period, when violence became a legitimate tool by which one could seize power. For instance, according to Eastern warrior Chiba Tsunetane (1118-1201)'s written appeal submitted in 1146, the Sōma Mikuriya landed estate was first donated by his father to Ise shrine with a written document in 1130. In 1136, however, his father was taken into custody and released only after being forced to write and sign another document. Similarly, in 1143, a Minamoto warrior forced him to write yet another document under duress.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that violence was prevalent, but at the same time, it also should be emphasized that violence alone was not enough to seize a property; the violent party needed a written document to formally claim ownership of the property, while the victim could similarly use a written document to appeal to the court. A royal order of 1174 states that they should follow “the logic of written documents (*bunsho no ri*).”<sup>5</sup> As historian Gomi suggests, we could consider that violence made “the state governed by warriors,” while the logic of written documents developed the new medieval landholding system.<sup>6</sup> They were both equally important elements in the construction and recognition of power.

## 1-2. Great Emphasis on Precedent

Japanese society also highly valued precedent, and this social climate encouraged aristocrats to leave diaries for posterity. Ritual was one of the biggest concerns of the court; in fact,

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<sup>4</sup> Gomi Fumihiko, *Inseiki shakai no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1984), 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Tōnan'in monjo*, doc. 4-4.

<sup>6</sup> Gomi Fumihiko, *Inseiki shakai no Kenkyū*, 4.

ceremony was a central part of the political affairs of the Heian period.<sup>7</sup> The importance of rituals lay in maintaining procedures and celebrations by following proper protocols. Given the importance of ritual, it was only natural that at least two-thirds of the work of the central administration during the middle Heian period was concerned with the conduct of ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> Aristocrats were desperate not to humiliate themselves by “making mistakes” in ritual procedures. One who was familiar with protocol was valued in aristocratic society, and one who was unfamiliar with such things was ridiculed; the latter might even have been labeled as “incompetent.” Fujiwara Sanesuke (957-1046), for instance, repeatedly writes in his diary *Shōyūki* that Fujiwara Akimitsu (944-1021) was a “fool” and constantly ridiculed by the aristocrats due to his propensity for making errors in ritual proceedings.<sup>9</sup>

Finding a precedent was almost necessary in order for an aristocrat, even a member of the royal family, to persuade other aristocrats to realize his political aims. When the retired sovereign Shirakawa (1053-1129, r 1072-1086), who is often considered as the founder of the *insei*, wanted to raise his favorite daughter to the title of “quasi-mother (*junbo*)” of her younger brother, Shirakawa had to pull up a “precedent” from more than a century prior in order to carry out his wish.<sup>10</sup> It was a far-fetched analogy, yet he persevered in his insistence; this incident

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<sup>7</sup> Hashimoto Yoshihiko, *Heiankizoku* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1986), 61-62.

<sup>8</sup> Francine Heraill, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Heian Japan: 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries*, trans. Wendy Cobcroft (San Bernardino: Clear space Publishing, 2013), 33.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, “...左相国、始自五品至丞相、万人嘲弄已無休憩...” the entry of Kannin 1 (1017)/1/18. Fujiwara Sanesuke, *Shōyūki* 2, ed. Sasagawa Tanerō, Shiryō tsūran (Tokyo: Nihon shiseki hozonkai, 1915), 142-143; “...今日作法前後倒錯、聊記其方筆毫、可知只見略記、卿相出壁後嘲咲...” The entry of Chōwa 5 (1016), 1/25. Fujiwara Sanesuke, *Shōyūki* 2, 57.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding *Junbo*, see details in Kuriyama Keiko, “Junbo rikkōsei ni miru chūsei zenki no ōke” in *Chūsei Oke no Seritsu to Insei*, 75-112; Yamada Sakiko, “Tennō junbo naishinnō ni kansuru ichikōsatsu” in *Chūsei zenki josei ingū no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 2010), 83-110.

contributed to his reputation as “arbitrary”.<sup>11</sup> In aristocrats’ diaries, we frequently encounter phrases such as “there is no precedent of...” and “there was a precedent of X [so X course of action makes sense].”<sup>12</sup> Aristocrats, even the retired sovereign—the de facto ruler of the state—had to find precedents to persuade others of the legitimacy of their claims; if they failed to show a reasonable and analogous precedent, they would be barred from carrying out their wishes. If they did so regardless, they could be branded as “arbitrary.” In a way, precedents could be considered to be the equivalent of law in present-day society.

This social climate engendered the “Families with Diaries (*nikki no ie*),” one of which was Shigeo’s natal family. Families with Diaries specialized in 1) keeping and passing down diaries from generation to generation, 2) searching for precedents in diaries for certain cases and reporting to the court, 3) recording daily events for the Fujiwara family of the regent, and 4) sometimes even writing the Fujiwara family of the regent’s diary on their behalf.<sup>13</sup> The families were recognized as on par with the Families with Music and Families with Martial Arts.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Banse Akemi, “Chūsei zenki: tennōke no hikari to kage” in *Rekishi no Nakano kōjotachi*, ed. Fukutō Sanae (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2002), 129.

<sup>12</sup> “先例無” or “先例有因.”

<sup>13</sup> Takahashi Hideki, *Chūsei no ie to sei*, nihon libureto 20 (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansya, 2004), 40.

<sup>14</sup> This “specialization of a family (*kagyō*)” is highly associated with the developing medieval *ie*. I will explain this in the medieval *ie* section in the present chapter.

### 1-3. Interdependence of Royal Norms and Buddhist Norms (*Ōbō Buppō Sōi*) and the Declining of Buddhist Norms (*Mappō*)

In a society that placed such a great emphasis on the importance of precedent and tradition, it is beyond our imagination how hard any change would have impacted the people living during this transitional time. The collapse of society would not be an exaggeration. The belief in the “declining of Buddhist norms” provided people with a relatively reasonable explanation for the chaotic world they were living in.

By the *insei* period, the doctrine of *ōbō buppō sōi*—the interdependence of royal norms and Buddhist norms—penetrated deeply into society. This doctrine represents the idea that the state and Buddhism were dependent on each other as the wings of a bird or two wheels of a cart.<sup>15</sup> This means that if powerful religious institutions were damaged or became unstable, it would result in the decline of the court itself and vice versa.<sup>16</sup> In this milieu, the *gōsō*, a violent protest that featured monks and shrine personnel demonstrating in the capital with divine symbols, such as portable shrines, had a huge impact. They would come to an influential person’s residence—or even the royal palace—and threaten to leave the portable shrine behind, claiming that it would cause the fall of Buddhist norms. The tacit understanding here was that royal norms would follow Buddhist norms, and consequently the fall of one would lead to the fall of the other. We will see in Chapter 2 the apprehensive attitudes of aristocrats toward the participants of violent protests by the Enryaku monks.

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<sup>15</sup> Mikael S. Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 15.

<sup>16</sup> This idea provided the ideological foundation for the participation of Buddhist institutions in government. See in detail in Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*.

Meanwhile, the concept of “the declining of Buddhist norms” had a tremendous impact on late Heian thought. Popular thought in 1052 expressed that Japan had entered a final catastrophic stage in which people ceased to follow Buddhist norms. Chaos had replaced order in society, and life became submerged in darkness and suffering.<sup>17</sup> Chaotic, violent situations such as the Hōgen and Heiji Turbulences, and monastic protests in particular, came at the end of a long transition from classical to medieval in the twelfth century, and was received fatalistically due mainly to this belief in the declining of Buddhist norms. Numerous entries in courtier diaries, for instance, show that violent protests by monks were frequently interpreted as a sign of this spiritual decline.<sup>18</sup> In *Gukanshō*, it is clear that Jien links warriors having risen to the center of power in the state with the fall of Buddhist norms.<sup>19</sup>

In a way, it is possible to argue that during the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, thanks to this belief in the declining of Buddhist norms, it was easier for some to succeed in executing their political machinations even without precedent—and possibly by force, despite the resulting stain on their reputation: in the end, people would accept the consequences as the fate of this period. It was this school of thought that allowed for a number of unprecedented things to be accepted, such as the violence that accompanied the establishment and maintenance of the Heike regime.

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<sup>17</sup> H. Paul Varley, “Cultural Life in Medieval Japan,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan: vol. 3 Medieval Japan*, ed. Kozo Yamamura, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 447.

<sup>18</sup> Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*, 273, 280.

<sup>19</sup> “マコトニハ、末代悪世、武士ガ世ニナリハテ、末法ニモイリニタレバ...” Jien, *Gukanshō* volume 7, in Japanese Historical Text Initiative, ed. University of California at Berkeley, 340, Paragraph 4. <https://jhti.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/jhti/print.cgi>

## 2. The *Insei*

The *insei* literally means the court (*sei*) “governed” by a retired sovereign (*in*), and its leading characters were gates of power and those who built personal clientage with them. The concept of the “gates of power (*kenmon*)” was introduced during the 1960s by Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993). According to his theory, the highest authority in the state was shared by a number of elite groups known as “gates of power,” and these elites were the leaders of three power blocks: the court nobles (*kōke* or *kuge*), the warrior aristocracy (*buke*), and the religious institutions (*jisha*) such as temples and shrines.<sup>20</sup> For instance, Go-shirakawa, a retired sovereign, was the head of a gate of power. The Fujiwara Regent’s Family was another gate of power, belonging to the category of court nobles; Taira Kiyomori was of the warrior aristocracy; and the Enryaku Temple at Mt. Hiei—which as we will see in the next chapter, caused an undue amount of trouble for Go-shirakawa—was of the religious institutions.

According to Kuroda, the gates of power all shared five characteristics that defined their elite status. First, they had their own “private” headquarters, which handled administrative and economic matters within the gate of power.<sup>21</sup> Second, these headquarters issued edicts to convey orders from the head of the group, controlling matters pertaining to land and internal disputes. Third, each gate of power had a number of retainers or followers who were loyal only to its leader. Fourth, the head of each gate of power had complete judicial rights, namely, rights to

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<sup>20</sup> Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> The concept of “private” in premodern Japan is extremely complicated. I only mean “private” here in that some headquarters, especially that of the warrior aristocracy and the religious institutions, were not integrated into the court organization.

self-rule, over their own family or lineage. Lastly, each gate of power also had incontestable control and jurisdiction over its assets, which included a large number of landed estates.<sup>22</sup>

The gates of power ruled the realm together by sharing responsibilities of government and supporting each other's privileges and status. The court nobles mainly held the administrative and ceremonial responsibilities of the state. The warrior aristocracy was largely responsible for keeping the peace and the military protection of the state. The religious institutions supplied the state and its members with spiritual protection. They were mutually dependent on each other to maintain their status and wealth: one gate of power was never powerful enough to rule without the support of other gates of power. In a way, the gates of power system was at the core of the *insei*.

The gates of power maintained a balance of power while surrounded by a state in constant volatility. This led to a delicate power balance within a gate of power as well as between them. Thus, contrary to the traditional view of the *insei* as a retired sovereign's despotism, power was significantly distributed and shared. While the high value on personal clientage with a gate of power contributed to the rise of warriors to the center of the court, causing more power diffusion, the new development of the medieval *ie*—the family system— accelerated further factional splintering, which also provided warriors with leverage to rise in the court. This development of the medieval *ie* also provided retired sovereigns with justification for involvement in the court

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<sup>22</sup> Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*, 13. Landed estates provided the gates of power with their base of power; therefore, the medieval landholding system, which contained a multi-layered vertical division of rights (*shiki*), was an integral part of the gates of power system since the gates of power constituted the political elite of a socio-economic system based on the *shiki* and the landed estates. Regarding the gates of power in English, see details in the introduction in Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*. In Japanese, Kuroda Toshio, *Kenmon Taisei Ron*, vol. 1, Kuroda Toshio Chosakushū (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1994). Regarding the medieval landholding system, see details in the Introduction in Sachiko Kawai, *Uncertain Powers: Sen'yōmon-in and Landownership by Royal Women in Early Medieval Japan* (Massachusetts: the Harvard University Asia Center, 2021).

affairs as the father of the reigning monarch and induced a shift in the emphasis on the significance of the mother of the heavenly sovereign from her status as the mother of the heavenly sovereign rather to that of the “primary” wife of the retired sovereign.

All of these factors were intertwined with one another and constituted the society of the *insei* period. It was inevitable that political situations during this time were generally volatile. These factors, however, also contributed to the political power of elite women. Let us begin by examining the previous court organization, the court led by a regent, whose main features persisted in the *insei* period.

## **2-1. The Court Led by a Regent (*sekkan seiji*)**

Before the late eleventh century, and especially during the tenth and early eleventh centuries, the court was led by a regent or viceroy. The beginning of this court system is generally attributed to Fujiwara Yoshifusa (804-872) and Fujiwara Mototsune (836-891), with the power of the Fujiwara family of the regent reaching its zenith under Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1027)’s leading of the court. When monarch Seiwa ascended the throne at the age of nine in 858, his maternal grandfather Grand Minister Fujiwara Yoshifusa became the regent.<sup>23</sup> With the nine year-old on the throne, this was a necessity, but this was also the first case of a subject—a non-royal member—assuming the role of “regent.”<sup>24</sup> When Yoshifusa’s adopted son, Fujiwara

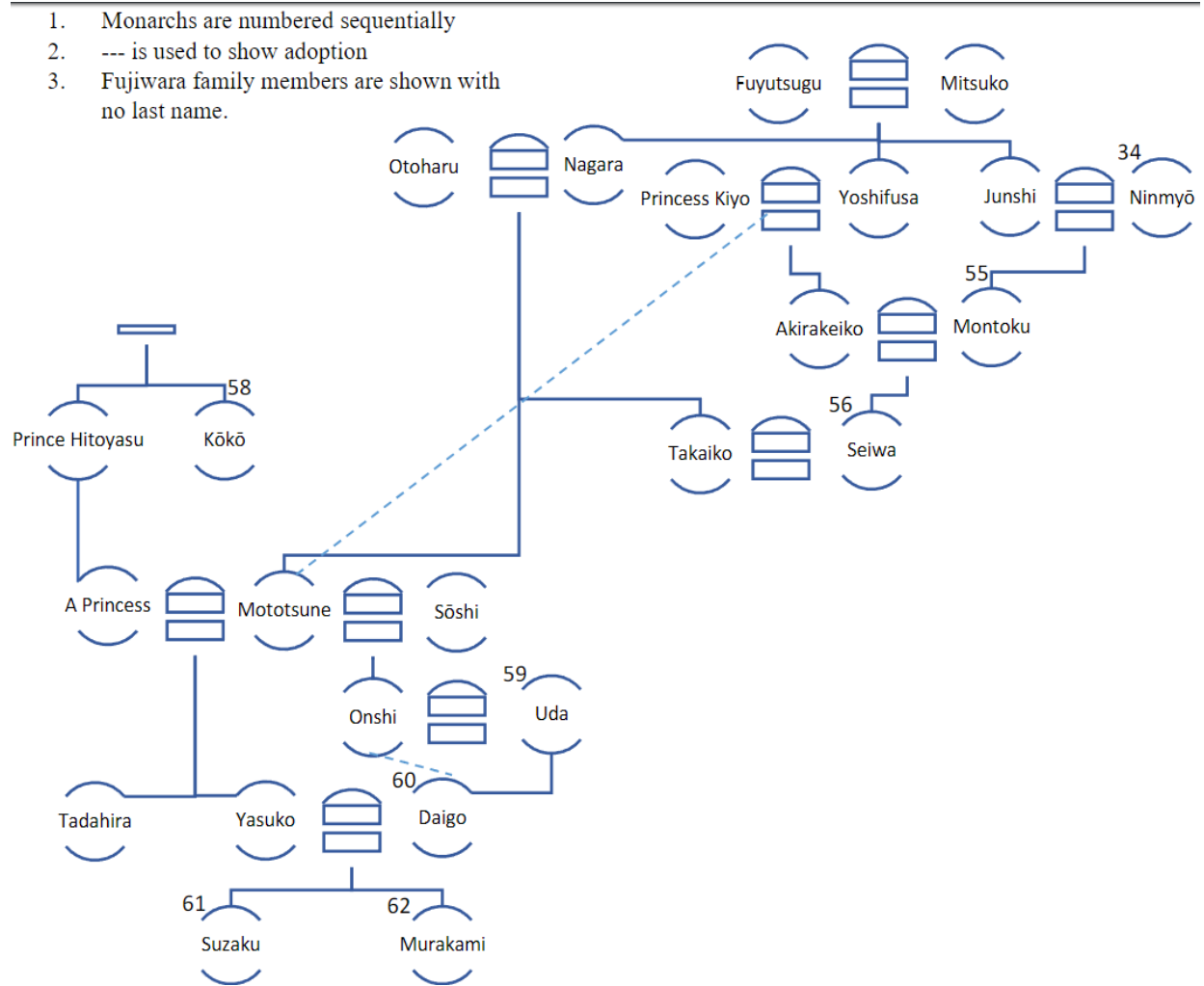
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<sup>23</sup> Even though the title “regent 摂政” did not appear in the records, his role was that of the regent.

<sup>24</sup> *Ōtenmon no hen* (866) further emphasized the necessity that the young heavenly sovereign relied on his adult relatives. See in detail in Higuchi Kentarō, *Sekkanke no Chūsei: Fujiwara Michinaga kara Toyotomi Hideyoshi made* (Toyko: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2021), 27.



Mototsune played a significant role in the succession of monarch Kōkō (830-887, r 884-887), this fifty-four-year old sovereign allowed Mototsune to assume the role of “viceroy”; Kōkō needed an experienced politician to support his reign and also needed to express his gratitude to Mototsune who had worked for his succession.<sup>25</sup> Under the court led by a son of Mototsune, Fujiwara Tadahira (880-949), the court led by a regent was established.<sup>26</sup>



### Genealogy I: 9th century monarchs and the Fujiwara family of the regent

<sup>25</sup> Higuchi, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Yoshikawa Shinji, however, suggests that Tadahira simply emulated what Mototsune established; Mototsune was the one who established the court organization led by a regent. See details in Yoshikawa Shinji, “Sekkan seiji no Tensei” in *Ritsuryōkanryōsei no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Hanawa shobō, 1998).

The prominent historian of the Heian aristocrats, Hashimoto Yoshihiko (1924-2015), identifies three key aspects in the establishment of the regent-led court under Tadahira: 1) the clear distinction and definitions of the role of the regent and the viceroy: the role of the regent was to act on behalf of the reigning juvenile sovereign until the sovereign became an adult, and that of the viceroy was to assist the mature but inexperienced sovereign;<sup>27</sup> 2) the protocols for rituals and practices (*kojitsu*) that the late Heian aristocrats mostly relied on as precedents; and 3) the coalition structure of aristocrats.<sup>28</sup> The regent-led court was a court organization in which the regent/viceroy powerfully “led”—but did not control—the ruling administration, which consisted of a heavenly sovereign, his mother/*bogō*, his father/retired sovereign, the regent, princes, princesses, the Minamoto who were once royals, and other Fujiwaras. These members of the ruling administration formed a political circle, the “*miuchi* (quasi-familial)” circle, being interdependent on one another and governing the state.<sup>29</sup>

The concept of “quasi-family” was critical in order to exercise influence in the court at that time, and women were vital for political success under this concept. First and foremost, the condition for becoming the regent/viceroy was to be either maternal grandfather or maternal uncle of the reigning heavenly sovereign. Furthermore, one’s quasi-familial identity did not

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<sup>27</sup> In many cases, the person who had been the regent became the viceroy when the sovereign became an adult. Higuchi Kentarō argues that the regent was the other self of the mother of a heavenly sovereign who would conduct the direct daily “service (*ushiromi*)” for the reigning monarch and reflecting her opinions in politics officially whereas the viceroy executed the retired monarch’s guardianship as father for the reigning monarch. See details in Higuchi, 29-32.

<sup>28</sup> Hashimoto, *Heiankizoku*, 61-65.

<sup>29</sup> This quasi-family (*miuchi*) concept was first proposed by Kuroita Nobuo in *Sekkan jidaishi ronshū*. It was published in 1969 when mainstream scholars considered the regent-led court (*sekkan seiji*) as the court governed by a regent in which regents held absolute power and controlled the court. See details in Kuroita Nobuo, *Sekkan jidaishi ronshū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1969).

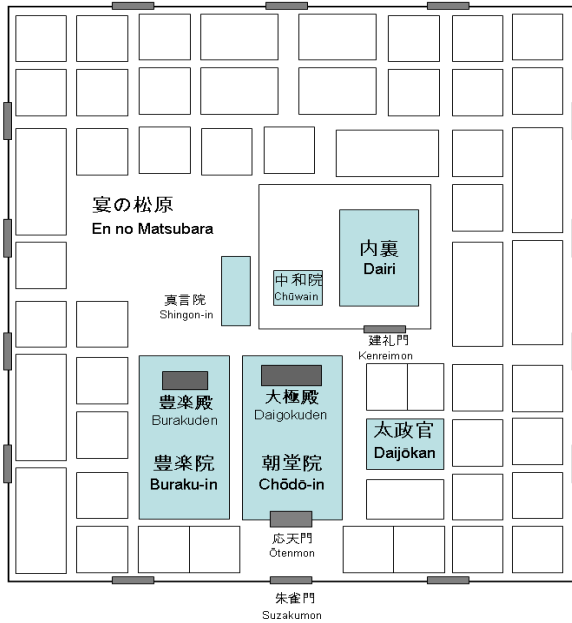
result from blood ties alone. Historian Kuramoto Kazuhiro suggests that when a regent/viceroy had a close tie with the reigning monarch both by blood and by marriage, he could form the most potent quasi-familial circle, and one of the measures of this quasi-familial identity was whether the mother of the reigning monarch was alive.<sup>30</sup>

Recently, historian Shōji Ayako added one more condition to define this quasi-family in her work *Heianjidai no Kisaki to Ōken*: whether the mother cohabited with the monarch when he was young.<sup>31</sup> Shōji demonstrates the strong political influence of the mother of the heavenly sovereign and how much and how exactly they contributed to the establishment of the regent-led court by exploring resident patterns in the royal palace; she argues that the cohabitation of the mother of the heavenly sovereign and the heavenly sovereign was the key to the origins of power of the mother, and that due to her power, regents could extend their influence at the court. This emphasis on the cohabitation of the mother of the heavenly sovereign and the heavenly sovereign reflected the strong bond between mothers and children—not between husbands and wives—in traditionally fluid Japanese families. During the *insei* period, the emphasis shifted more to the bond between husband and wife; consequently, the mother of the heavenly sovereign's cohabitation with her husband, not with her son, would be more emphasized, as we will see in the medieval *ie* section later.

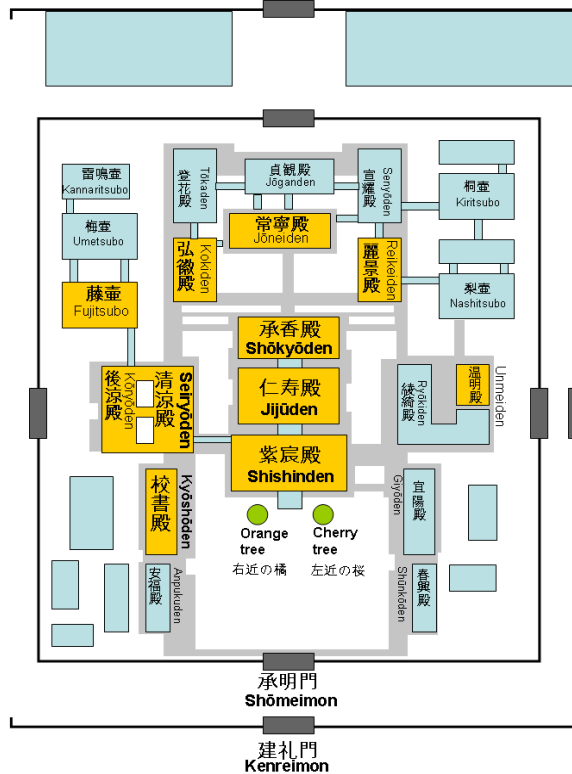
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<sup>30</sup> Kuramoto Kazuhiro, “Sekkanke no seikenkōzō: Tennō to sekkan tonon miuchi ishiki wo chūshin to shite” in *Sekkan seiji to ōchō kizoku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> This work is essential to understand the roles of the middle Heian noblewomen, especially that of the mother of the heavenly sovereign, and extraordinary by its special focus on cohabitation. See details in Shōji Ayako, *Heian jidai no kisaki to Ōken* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2018), 28.



Map 2: Greater Royal Palace



Map 1: Royal Palace

According to Shōji, after the mother of the reigning monarch displaced queen consort, who had been a co-ruler of the state before the ninth century, the power of the mother of the reigning monarch increased tremendously. The first turning point came when the child monarch Seiwa ascended the throne.

Yoshifusa’s daughter Fujiwara Akirakeiko (829-900) eventually started to live with Seiwa in order to act as a guardian, first in the greater royal palace (*daidairi*) and later, in the royal palace (*dairi*), closer to the throne. (Map 1 and 2). Akirakeiko’s cohabitation with Seiwa in the royal palace broke a tacit agreement that a retired monarch and his wives were not allowed to enter, let alone live in, the royal palace.<sup>32</sup> Akirakeiko’s expected role in the royal palace was not only to be the tie between the reigning monarch and her natal family, thus forming a solid “quasi-familial” circle, but also

<sup>32</sup> Akirakeiko and Seiwa started to live in the crown prince’s palace in the greater royal palace, and in 865 Seiwa moved to the royal palace. Akirakeiko also moved to the royal palace one year later.

to perform the direct daily “service” (*ushiromi*) for the child monarch.<sup>33</sup>

The *ushiromi* can also be read as *kōken*, which even nowadays refers to general ideological backing or support; however, the *ushiromi* conducted by the mother of the heavenly sovereign under the court led by a regent meant more than that. By examining its usages in *The Tale of the Genji*, Yoshikawa Shinji defines the *ushiromi* conducted by the mother of the heavenly sovereign as a kind of daily service which extended into political decision-making. Naturally, due to the characteristics of this arrangement, the mother’s cohabitation with the heavenly sovereign was an essential condition.<sup>34</sup> He also suggests that under the regent-led court, the direct daily service was conducted by the mother or the delegated wives who cohabited with him in the royal palace, and to a certain degree, by regents who were in the quasi-familial circle and who were based in the royal palace.<sup>35</sup> Largely because Akirakeiko controlled the rear palace in the royal palace, Yoshifusa was able not only to become the first subject-regent but also to possess his personal “waiting room” (*jikiro*) at Akirakeiko’s office in the greater royal palace; this enabled Yoshifusa to assist Akirakeiko’s direct daily service for monarch Seiwa. Yoshifusa’s grandson Tadahira eventually possessed his personal space inside the royal palace and started carrying out administrative duties there thanks to the strong backing of his sister, Fujiwara Yasuko (885-954), the mother of the then-reigning monarch in the royal palace. As entering, let alone living in, the

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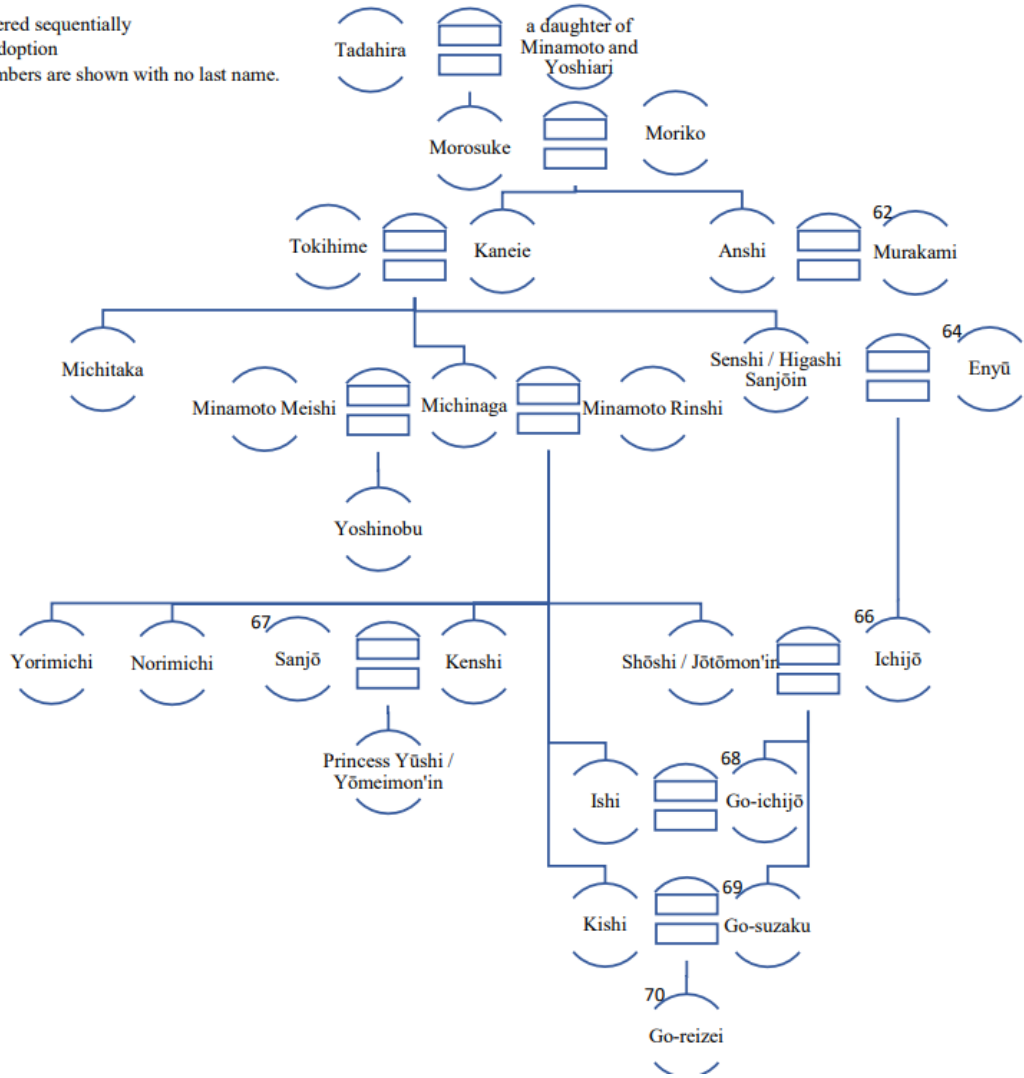
<sup>33</sup> The use of the word "service" is the most apt translation. Nonetheless, it implies lower to higher status that is not present in the original Japanese.

<sup>34</sup> Yoshikawa, *Ritsuryō kanryō sei no Kenkyū*, 409.

<sup>35</sup> Shōji Ayako, “Sekkankei no Kōbo: Minamoto Rinshi o chūshin ni,” in *Heianchō no josei to seijibunka: Kyūtei, Seikatsu, Jenda-*, ed. Fukutō Sanae (Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 2017), 88.

royal palace was highly exclusive—even a retired sovereign was not allowed to enter the royal palace—this was a very significant privilege.

1. Monarchs are numbered sequentially
2. --- is used to show adoption
3. Fujiwara family members are shown with no last name.



### Genealogy II: 10<sup>th</sup> century monarchs and the Fujiwara family of the regent

Tadahira’s grandson, Fujiwara Kaneie (929-99), officially established the status of the regent and viceroy on a different level from all other posts under the *ritsuryō* system (the penal and administrative codes imported from China in the eighth century), separating it from that of the Grand Minister. The status of the Grand Minister correspondingly declined and became mostly

honorary.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, from Kaneie's time, the post of the head of the Fujiwara (*tōshi no chōja*) was integrated with that of the regent.<sup>37</sup> The mother of the heavenly sovereign who backed Kaneie was Fujiwara Senshi (962-1002), for whom the title of the “premier retired royal lady”—*nyoin*—was created. This office continued until the end of the Edo period (1600-1867). I will explore the premier retired royal ladies in detail in Chapter 2.

Kaneie's son Michinaga's firm grip on monarchs Ichijo and Sanjo's succession and reproduction led to the commencement of the court led by a retired sovereign. Starting under the regency of his older brother Fujiwara Michitaka (953-995), Michinaga managed to maintain a stronger and eventually absolute control of the rear palace through Fujiwara Shōshi (988-1074), his daughter and the mother of two heavenly sovereigns. The number of wives of a heavenly sovereign continued to decrease; only Michinaga's daughters—namely, Shōshi's sisters—were able to live in the royal palace, and other women often could not even visit the royal palace even if they managed to become wives.<sup>38</sup> Goichijō (1008-1036, r 1016-1036), for instance, had only one wife throughout his entire life: Fujiwara Ishi (1000-1036), Shōshi's younger sister. Shōshi became the second premier retired royal lady in 1026.

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<sup>36</sup> Hashimoto, *Heian kizoku*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Before Kaneie, only the maternal grandfather and uncles of the heavenly sovereign were called *gaiseki*, who were qualified to hold the regent post, and whoever held the highest rank among the Fujiwara assumed the role of the Head of the Fujiwara. Hashimoto, *Heian kizoku*, 65-70.

<sup>38</sup> Fukutō demonstrates the tactics of Shōshi and her sisters for making only Michinaga's line special: Shōshi repeatedly “requested” (from such an influential figure, no one could refuse) high blood women who were not from Michinaga's direct line to serve as a lady-in-waiting. For instance, they employed daughters from the previous viceroy and even princesses, who could have been a wife of the heavenly sovereign, as their ladies-in-waiting. See details in Fukutō Sanae, *Fujiwara Shōshi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2019), 236-239.

Especially after the death of her husband monarch Ichijō (980-1011, r 986-1011), Shōshi was practically the head of the royal family; most importantly for the purpose of this work, retired sovereigns during the *insei* period cited her as precedent when they handled court affairs. As the widowed mother of the heavenly sovereign, she was in charge of royal property, supported the members of the royal family while performing direct daily service, and controlled the rear palace, which included the decisions on the wives of the heavenly sovereign. The court aristocracy acknowledged that Shōshi was constantly involved in court affairs, and important court affairs, including personnel of the court officials, needed Shōshi's approval.<sup>39</sup> Her relative power in court was most likely why she was often referred to as a precedent. Her funeral rituals were appropriated by male retired sovereigns during the *insei* period as an example that had shifted misfortune to fortune, and when Shirakawa previewed official documents regarding court affairs, he often referred to her. When deciding who should be the Grand Minister, Shirakawa also made a final decision by referring to her precedent.<sup>40</sup> Fukutō positions Shōshi as the pioneer of and a bridge to the *insei*; undoubtedly, the well-known Michinaga's prosperity heavily relied on Shōshi.<sup>41</sup>

Having fewer wives, however, usually meant having fewer children, so it was highly possible that a heavenly sovereign failed to bear a successor. Eventually, there were no sons born to monarchs and Michinaga's daughters. This situation weakened the power of the Fujiwara family of the regent, especially its grip on the rear palace. As a result, the Fujiwara family of the regent

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<sup>39</sup> Fukutō Sanae, *Fujiwara Shōshi*, 96, 112-113, 151-152, 215, 233-236 etc.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-232.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



was less involved in the royal succession, and a new tendency emerged: the number of a monarch's "consorts," as opposed to his official wives, drastically increased, and the son of an "unofficial" wife would become the next monarch. As we will see in chapter 2, Shigeo was a typical example of these "unofficial" wives.

In sum, the regent-led court was governed by a coalition of aristocrats under the powerful leadership of the regent. Consequently, the power and authority of queen consorts and retired sovereigns became relatively limited. The key to this coalition was the identity of the quasi-family—*miuchi*—and in order to create a strong quasi-familial circle, women were essential: the mother of the heavenly sovereign started to cohabit with her son and controlled the rear palace by conducting direct daily service, extending her influence into political decision-making and actions. Thanks to her, the regent managed to have his own space inside the royal palace and started managing court affairs there. This also meant that a heavenly sovereign usually grew up surrounded by his maternal kin, and most importantly, only the father or brothers of a woman who became the mother of the heavenly sovereign were able to become the regent and claim the status of "the regent's family."<sup>42</sup>

The authority of both the mother of the heavenly sovereign and the regent was generated from that of the heavenly sovereign. The only post that held legitimacy was that of the heavenly sovereign, and only his maternal kin—mother, grandfather, and uncles—could share his authority. As seen above, this did not mean that a heavenly sovereign could do whatever he wanted; he could not even choose his own wife. The heavenly sovereign held legitimate

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<sup>42</sup> With the burgeoning of family specialization due partially to the developing medieval *ie*, though, this custom changed. The regency also became a specialization of the family, so the regent did not have to be the father or brothers of the mother of the heavenly sovereign. I will explore this shift in the medieval *ie* section in this chapter.

authority, but he did not necessarily have power, which was shared by the members of the quasi-familial circle. In other words, in the court led by the regent, the regent held power through the maternal link with the heavenly sovereign but did not have authority by himself; the heavenly sovereign held absolute legitimacy and authority but often did not have power: they were interdependent on each other. Officially, the sole ruler of the state was the heavenly sovereign; the mother of the heavenly sovereign supported the heavenly sovereign by performing direct daily service, the regent acted on behalf of a child heavenly sovereign, and the viceroy “assisted” the heavenly sovereign.

In this court organization, the position of a retired sovereign was somewhat peculiar since he was once the heavenly sovereign. Indeed, a retired sovereign, as well as a queen consort, had held authority and considerable power under the heavenly-sovereign-centered-court, which preceded the regent-led court. The heavenly sovereign, his queen consort, and the retired sovereign shared authority and power as members of the royal family. After two sovereigns’ efforts to emulate the Sino-patriarchal system and after the Kusuko Incident (810), the power of queen consort and retired sovereign became limited.<sup>43</sup> The power of the retired sovereign shifted to the regent, and the power of the queen consort shifted to the mother of the heavenly sovereign.<sup>44</sup> In other words, by Michinaga’s time, both retired sovereigns and queen consorts,

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<sup>43</sup> The two sovereigns were Kanmu and his son Saga (786-842, r. 809-823). The Kusuko Incident was an armed conflict between the reigning monarch Saga and his older brother and the retired monarch Heizei (774-824, r. 806-809). Fujiwara Kusuko (??-810) was the highest female official in Heizei’s court, and this incident was once called the Kusuko incident since it was said that she and her brother were the ringleaders. However, recently, some historians call it the “Heizei Retired Sovereign’s Incident” suggesting that the ringleader was, at least partially, Heizei himself.

<sup>44</sup> Higuchi, 29-32. Higuchi argues that, following Fukutō Sanae, even though the mother of the heavenly sovereign’s influence was considerable in the palace, she still did not own the official political channel in the system so that the regent represented her opinions as proxy; thus, regents were the mothers of the heavenly sovereigns’ other self. Moreover, he suggests that a viceroy was a proxy for a retired sovereign. Since a retired sovereign was no longer

who had once held strong power and authority, did not have much power unless they were in the quasi-familial circle. Nonetheless, retired sovereigns kept their authority to some degree due to their past status as a heavenly sovereign who held absolute legitimacy and authority. This limited authority of retired sovereigns contributed to their reliance on the concept of the medieval *ie*, which we will see later in this chapter.

These elements under the regent-led court persisted tenaciously during the *insei* period; some became less functional but never disappeared. The *insei*, the court led by a retired sovereign during the end of the transitional time from classical to medieval, was constituted of elements from the previous regent-led court and new developments. In order to wield power, one needed both elements. For instance, Kiyomori, the most powerful warrior of his time, utilized traditional means—assisting a heavenly sovereign and becoming a maternal uncle and eventually maternal grandfather of a heavenly sovereign—as well as new ones, such as forming personal clientage with heavenly sovereigns, retired sovereigns, and premier retired royal ladies in order to advance in the court. Let us now turn to the *insei*, the court led by a retired sovereign.

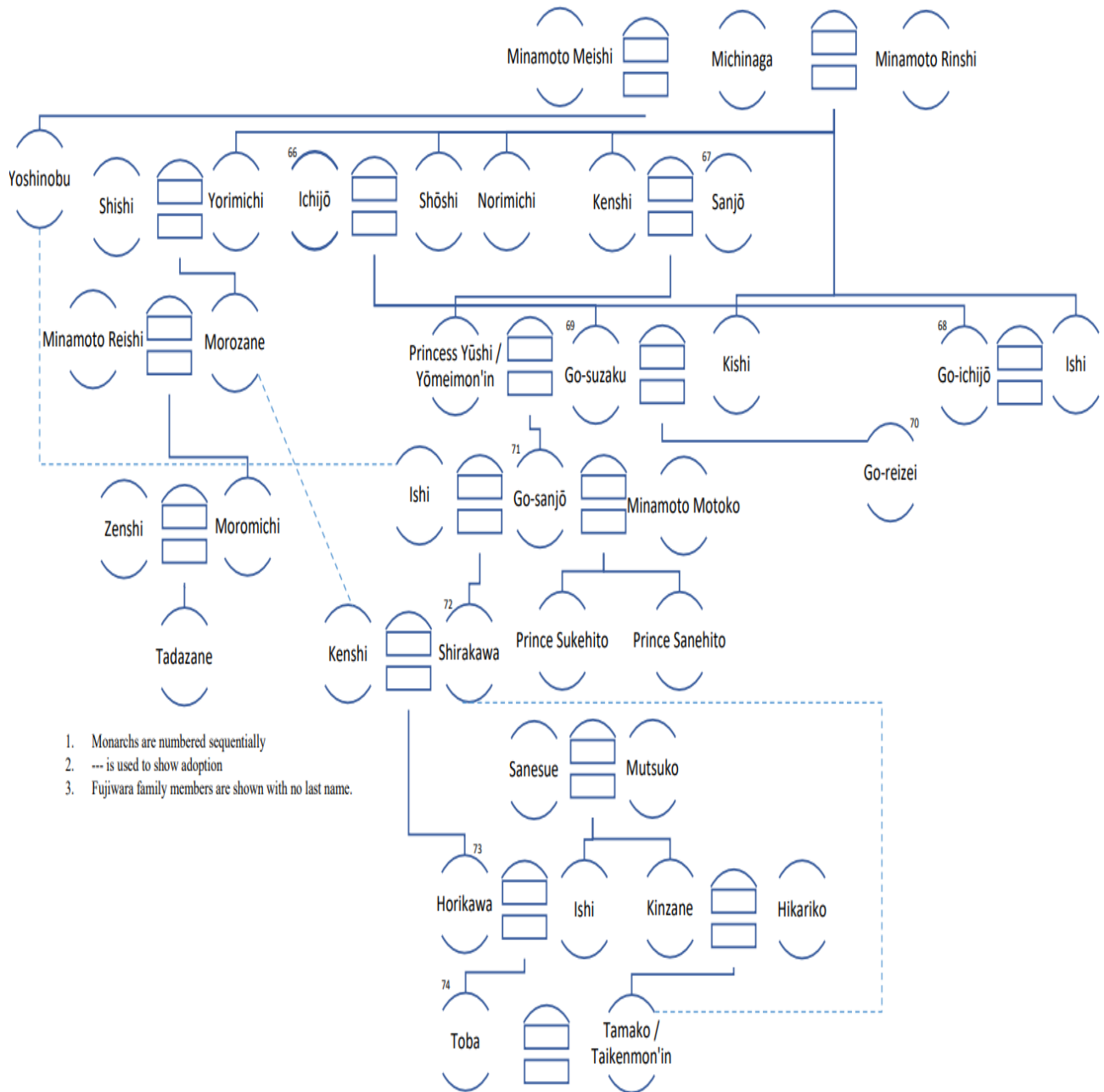
## **2-2. The Peculiarity of the *Insei*, the Court Led by a Retired Sovereign**

Scholars have not reached a consensus on when the *insei* began. The *insei* was not a court organization that a particular individual initiated with a clear plan; instead, the socio-political situation induced particular individuals to lead the court in a certain way, which was retroactively called *insei*. The two monarchs Gosanjō (1034-1073, r. 1068-1072) and his son

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allowed to enter the royal palace, he was not able to perform direct daily service for the heavenly sovereign, in many cases, his son. On the other hand, viceroys could, with the help of his daughter or sister, the mother of his majesty.

Shirakawa, who are generally considered the inaugurators of the *insei*, most likely did not plan to begin the *insei*. They abdicated when they were young in favor of their sons because they wanted to secure their own lines as the royal line.



**Genealogy III: 11th century monarchs and the Fujiwara family of the regent**

As mentioned above, Michinaga's firm grip on the rear palace culminated in the decline of his family's power. After the monarch Goreizei (1025-1068, r. 1045-1068), there were no more princes from Michinaga's mainline.<sup>45</sup> In 1068, Gosanjō ascended the throne as a heavenly sovereign who, for the first time in 170 years, had neither a maternal grandfather nor a maternal uncle from Michinaga's main line. On Michinaga's side, Michinaga's sons, Shōshi's brothers, were unable to become the maternal grandfather or maternal uncle of Gosanjō.<sup>46</sup>

With Gosanjō's succession, while Michinaga's family's influence on heavenly sovereigns weakened, Michinaga's children still held significant influence in the court. Gosanjō's son Shirakawa—who had a close relationship with Michinaga's son Fujiawara Yoshinobu (995-1065) who was not from the Fujiwara's mainline—had already been chosen as the crown prince in 1069, but Gosanjō seemed to want to choose Prince Sanehito (1071-1085) born of Minamoto Motoko (1047-1134).<sup>47</sup> Therefore, he abdicated and appointed Prince Sanehito as the crown prince as soon as Shirakawa took the throne; this action prevented Shirakawa from choosing his heir and also deprived Shirakawa's sons of the possibility of ascending the throne. Moreover, the crown prince had a younger brother, Prince Sukehito (1073-1119), and Gosanjō wanted Prince Sukehito to be the subsequent crown prince. Gosanjō's wish also induced Shirakawa's early

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<sup>45</sup> Michinaga had two sons from Minamoto Rinshi (964-1053), Shōshi's mother, and one son from Minamoto Meishi (975?-1049), another wife. Both of their fathers experienced Minister of the Left (*sadaijin*), so they both were very high nobles. But Meishi's father had fallen from power in the Anna Incident (*anna no hen*) in 969 and had passed away by the time Michinaga married Meishi, whereas Rinshi's father was the then active Minister of the Left when Michinaga married Rinshi. Thus, Rinshi and her children were considered the mainline of Michinaga.

<sup>46</sup> Gosanjō's mother was Michinaga's granddaughter and was under the guardianship of the Fujiwara family of the regent; Gosanjō was not "no one" for the Fujiwara family of the regent, so they should have had some influence in Gosanjō's court. However, in the court led by a regent, if one failed to be specifically the maternal-grandfather or uncle of his majesty, he could not wield political power let alone be the regent.

<sup>47</sup> Mikawa kei, *Insei: Mouhitotsu no tennōsei*, zōhoban (Tokyo: Chūōkōron shinsha, 2006), 34-36.

abdication in order to secure Shirakawa's direct line as the royal line by having Shirakawa's sons take the throne.

After Gosanjō passed away in 1073, the generation of Michinaga's children who held significant influence in the court died one after another: Michinaga's oldest daughter and the second premier retired royal lady Shōshi and Yorimichi (992-1074), Michinaga's oldest son, in 1074, and their younger brother Norimichi (996-1075) in 1075. A generational change occurred. In 1076, the court was led by the twenty-three-year-old heavenly sovereign Shirakawa and his viceroy Morozane (1042-1101) who was Yorimichi's son and whose adopted daughter Fujiwara Kenshi (1057-1084) was Shirakawa's wife. This fact made the viceroy Morozane the adoptive maternal grandfather of monarch Horikawa, thus, it could be seen as a revival of the regent-led court. Indeed, Shirakawa cooperated with Morozane, especially in the early years of his reign. This is partially because Shirakawa simply followed the customs under the existing regent-led court and also partially because he needed as much support as possible in order to appoint his son from his beloved wife Kenshi as the crown prince, opposing Gosanjō's will. Notably, the would-be mother of the heavenly sovereign Kenshi was viceroy Morozane's adopted daughter and functioned as the keystone between the royal family and her natal family as the middle Heian mothers of the heavenly sovereigns had been. However, Kenshi died in 1084. Shirakawa famously clung tearfully to her dead body and did not leave; this action violated a taboo for a heavenly sovereign, who must be "pure."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Banse, "Chūsei zenki: tennōke no hikari to kage," 128.

At this time, death was the worst pollution, and his majesty and the royal palace needed to remain purified, distanced from pollution. If an aristocrat saw a dead body on the way to work at the royal palace, he had to turn back and stay home for a few days until the pollution was "purified." Thus, usually the heavenly sovereign could not even visit, let alone touch, the bodies of the dead, even if they were related to the deceased. When a queen consort

Fortunately for Shirakawa, however, Prince Sanehito, who had been appointed by Gosanjō, died in 1085. Finally, in 1086, he managed to appoint his son Horikawa (1079-1107, r. 1087-1107), son of the deceased Kenshi, as the crown prince, before immediately abdicating and allowing Horikawa to take the throne, guaranteeing Shirakawa's success in securing his own royal line. It is noteworthy that at this point, even after his abdication, the court was still governed very similarly to the regent-led court, by the coalition of a heavenly sovereign, his maternal grandfather and uncles, and the State Council.

Consecutive misfortunes turned the tide. First, Horikawa's maternal uncle Moromichi (1062-1099) and then-vice-roy passed away in 1099. Then, in 1101, the monarch's maternal grandfather Morozane died. The two were the heads of the Fujiwara families, and the heir Tadazane (1078-1162) was only twenty-two years old and inexperienced. The mother of Horikawa was long dead. In other words, Horikawa, the reigning monarch at the age of twenty-two, lost all reliable maternal kin, the only ones he could usually rely on for strong political back up, except for Tadazane who was almost the same age. The only person who had the authority to assist Horikawa was his father, retired monarch Shirakawa, now forty-eight years old. Indeed, after 1101, Horikawa visited Shirakawa's residence far more frequently.<sup>49</sup> Shirakawa's influence in the court gradually became profound; one aspect was his control of the rear palace, which directly related to the monarchs' familial issues, including royal succession.

In 1099, Fujiwara Ishi (1076-1103), who was not from the Michinaga-Yorimichi line, married Horikawa. Her father had already died, so Shirakawa managed the marriage. She gave

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became deadly ill, she had to leave the royal palace and go back to her natal family's house. But Shirakawa did not allow Kenshi to leave.

<sup>49</sup> Higuchi, *Sekkanke no Chūsei*, 69.

birth to a prince for Horikawa but died during the delivery. Shirakawa took care of the prince at his residence.<sup>50</sup> Needless to say, the prince took the throne and became heavenly sovereign Toba (1103-1156, r. 1107-1123). Moreover, in 1117, Fujiwara Tamako (later premier retired royal lady: *Taikenmon'in*, 1101-1145) married Toba as Shirakawa's adopted daughter. Not only did Shirakawa manage the marriage, but he also became the maternal grandfather of the reigning monarch. This marriage provided Shirakawa with much authority and power, which stemmed from his status as the maternal grandfather of the reigning monarch in addition to the fact that he was also the paternal grandfather who raised the reigning monarch. Shirakawa gained a firm grip on the rear palace with Tamako's aid and exerted a strong influence in the court.<sup>51</sup> It is critical to point out here that managing the reigning monarch's familial matters and being the maternal grandfather of the monarch was exactly how the regents wielded power under the previous court organization.

It is noteworthy that despite Shirakawa's increasing influence in the court, in general, the affairs of the state were still managed by the aristocratic coalition: the heavenly sovereign, the regent, and the State Council. Similar to what had been practiced previously, only important matters were presented to the reigning monarch, and he consulted with the retired sovereign or the regent, depending on the case and situation; if the reigning monarch was a child, the retired sovereign, who was in most cases his father, would generally act on behalf of the heavenly

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, Tamako and Shirakawa were so close that there was a rumor going around that the first son between Tamako and supposedly Toba was actually Shirakawa's son. Many historians propose that it was a mere rumor, but Tsunoda suggests that it was most likely true. Tsunoda demonstrates how often Tamako went "back" to Shirakawa's residence even after her marriage—for instance, as soon as a series of the rituals for the marriage had been done, she immediately left the royal palace and went back to Shirakawa's residence—, calculates Tamako's menstrual periods through her deliveries, and concludes that she conceived during her staying with Shirakawa. See details in Tsunoda, *Taikenmon'in Tamako no shōgai*.



sovereign, and the regent supported the monarchs. Despite his influence, Shirakawa's official title was "retired sovereign," and as mentioned, the power of the retired sovereign was officially limited after the ninth century. Nevertheless, Shirakawa still exercised power, in many cases, through unofficial channels.

For instance, one of the most important means for exercising power was to seize appointments of court offices. Shirakawa started to make memoranda, called *ninjin origami*, reflecting his "opinions" about the appointment of the court officials. These memoranda, which were entirely unofficial, would be sent to the regent to preview and then forwarded to the palace.<sup>52</sup> The final appointment was announced under the name of the reigning monarch. It is not hard to imagine that, especially in the case of a child monarch, the actual appointment simply followed Shirakawa's "opinions" written on the unofficial memorandum.

The more Shirakawa's influence increased its presence in the court, including controlling the conferment of court rank and appointment to an office, the more people and funds gathered around him. Shirakawa started to create personal patron-client relations with such people; these "clients," generally from humble origins, were called "the retired sovereign's personal retainers" (*in no kinshin*). Since this patronship was unofficial and personal, the definition was somewhat ambiguous, but as *Gukanshō* suggests, it was genderless. In the case of males, in order to become a retired sovereign's personal retainer, a man often donated to, became a sexual partner of, or

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<sup>52</sup> This *ninjin origami* became a common method for retired sovereigns to intervene with personnel under retired sovereign Toba's court. See details in Mikawa, *Insei*, 47. Also, this *ninjin origami*, the unofficial memorandum, became important and almost officially acknowledged by the court society during the medieval times. See details in Yoshikawa, *Ritsuryōkanryōsei no Kenkyū*, 394-396.

became a husband or became a child of a nursing mother (*uba*) for the retired sovereign.<sup>53</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, Kiyomori's grandfather Masamori managed to become Shirakawa's personal retainer by donating property to the temple that dedicated prayers to Shirakawa's deceased favorite daughter. Fujiwara Nobuyori (1133-1160) and Fujiwara Narichika (1138-1177), who were the leading figures in the Heiji Turbulence, became Go-shirakawa's "favorites" by being his sexual partners.<sup>54</sup> Fujiwara Akisue (1055-1123), one of Shirakawa's main personal retainers, made it to the Senior Third Rank for the first time in two hundred years in his line; his unexpected promotions were possible due to the fact that he was a son of Shirakawa's nursing mother, Fujiwara Chikako (1021-1093). She was a leading personal retainer of Shirakawa, received the Junior Second Rank, and wielded influence in the court.<sup>55</sup>

Nursing mothers were wholly in charge of child-rearing; thus, the bond between the baby and his nursing mother was naturally intimate; in the case of royal children, this intimacy meant a strong patron-client connection, exemplified by Chikako.<sup>56</sup> If a nursing mother's charge took the

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<sup>53</sup> Originally, *uba/menoto* referred to the women who breast-fed a high-born baby. However, by the *insei* period, nursing mothers came to be in charge of the whole of child-rearing. Many high-born babies had a "breast-feeding woman (*ochi no hito*)" along with a nursing mother, and in the case of a royal baby, he/she usually had around four nursing mothers. Regarding nursing mothers, I will explain in the next paragraph.

<sup>54</sup> Gomi, *Inseikishakai no kenkyū*, 419; Fukutō, *Heikemonogatari no jidai o ikita josei tachi*, 241; *Gukanshō*, vol. 5. Regarding homosexual relationships among the elite during the *insei* time, see details in Gomi Fumihiko, "Inseiki seijishi danshō" in *Inseikishakai no kenkyū*, 416-441; Itō Rumi, "Otoko no nettowa-ku" in *Heikemonogatari no jidai o ikita josei tachi*, 236-243.

<sup>55</sup> Tsunoda Bun'ei, "Go-shirakawa in no kinshin," in *Go-shirakaawain: dōranki no tennō*, ed. Kodaigaku kyōkai (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1993), 24; Tabata Yasuko, *Uba no Chikara*, rekishi bunka raiburari- 195 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2005), 12-14. Also, incidentally, Chikako's husband reached only the Senior Fourth Rank Lower Grade.

<sup>56</sup> In *The Tale of the Heike*, a combination of a nursing mother and her charge often appeared, and it is evident nursing mothers were expected to be extremely loyal to her charge. In one instance, Kiyomori's grandson was killed, and his nursing mother and lady-in-waiting committed suicide to follow him. The comment goes, "that the nursing mother deciding to commit suicide was very reasonable and inevitable; but it was uncommon and profound that even a lady-in-waiting committed suicide for him."

throne and retired, she was considered “a personal retainer of the retired sovereign” and possibly received a high court rank, separate from her husband’s. As a matter of fact, her husband benefited from her. For example, Fujiwara Shinzei (1106-1160), who was from humble origins, led the court after the Hōgen Turbulence thanks to his connection with Go-shirakawa through his wife, Fujiwara Asako (??-1166), the leading nursing mother of Go-shirakawa. She received the Junior Second Rank, while Shinzei only reached the Senior Fifth Rank Lower Grade. Nursing mothers could provide her family members with an opportunity to advance at the court through her intimate connection with her charge; by doing so, she could also raise her family status.

Nursing mothers were technically ladies-in-waiting but the highest in the hierarchy; thus, they were often responsible for more politically important roles. The chief duties of ladies-in-waiting were to support her master/mistress with daily matters, including delivering messages to her master/mistress and managing property.<sup>57</sup> Since the royal members were too exalted to be seen, let alone directly spoken to, they rarely made an appearance before their subjects. Therefore, when a noble wanted to report to or ask something from a royal member, he often had to ask a lady-in-waiting to relay the message, with more politically important messages usually going through the hands of nursing mothers. These messages sometimes encompassed state secrets; consequently, the ladies-in-waiting, especially those whose master/mistress was close to the throne, could gain political leverage. We will see in Chapter 2 how significant of a role Shigeiko’s nursing mother played in Takakura’s court. Furthermore, as Lori Meeks demonstrates in her chapter “Envisioning Nuns: Views from the Court,” many ladies-in-waiting, especially

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<sup>57</sup> Physical labor of the household, such as cleaning, washing, and cooking were not their duties. They were also usually aristocratic women. In the case of the ladies-in-waiting for the reigning monarch, some could hold court positions, and some were assigned to supervise the Mirror, one of the three sacred regalia of the royal family (*sanshu no jingi*). Their roles were highly political.

those of a premier retired royal lady, were regularly involved in property management for their mistress. Some were bequeathed a portion of the property they had managed, and passed them down matrilineally.<sup>58</sup> Gomi Fumihiko further speculates that these ladies-in-waiting established their own familial “line,” which was also passed down matrilineally.<sup>59</sup>

While nursing mothers were also in charge of the sexual education of their charges, they usually did not become a sexual partner, but a lady-in-waiting could be.<sup>60</sup> Takashina Eishi/Tango no tsubone (1151? -1216) was a lady-in-waiting for Go-shirakawa in his later life, and she became his favorite. She was considered a personal retainer of Go-shirakawa and wielded tremendous influence in the court.<sup>61</sup> To put it another way, if a lady-in-waiting’s master or mistress became influential in the court, she was able to exercise significant influence at the court which her original family status would have never been able to offer her. Furthermore, if a lady-in-waiting managed to give birth to a heavenly sovereign or a retired sovereign, and the prince took the throne, now she would not be a mere personal retainer; she would become the mother of the reigning monarch and possibly a royal member, as exemplified by our lady Shigeiko. In either case, she could “pull up” her family members and family status with her advancement.

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<sup>58</sup> Lori Meeks, “Envisioning Nuns: Views from the Court,” in *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic orders in Premodern Japan*, Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 23 (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press), 66.

<sup>59</sup> Gomi, *Inseikishakai no kenkyū*, 387.

<sup>60</sup> But an “accident” could happen. One of the nursing mothers of monarch Takakura actually gave birth to a daughter of his. Also, even though it was at a later time, one of the eighth Ashikaga shogun’s nursing mothers became his favorite and wielded strong power. But it was one of the rare cases.

<sup>61</sup> Famously, the decision of the next heavenly sovereign was altered because of her disagreement; as a result, Gotoba (1180-1239, r. 1183-1198) took the throne. Naturally, her influence in Gotoba’s court was also tremendous. See details in Nishii Yoshiko, “Wakasa no tsubone to Tango no tsubone” in *Go-shirakawa in: Dōranki no tennō*.

In sum, both men and women from the same humble family cooperated in order to strengthen their clientships with gates of power so that they could raise their family status. One of the best methods to build the clientship was to become a personal retainer of the retired sovereign. A man could become a personal retainer by donating to, becoming a sexual partner of, or becoming a husband or being a child of a nursing mother of the retired sovereign, whereas a woman did so by becoming a nursing mother or lady-in-waiting; in the female case, she could climb up even higher than a personal retainer. Personal retainers also generally formed a faction centered on his/her master/mistress, so they accelerated the factionalism at the court. Shirakawa was the first retired sovereign who surrounded himself with his entourage, constituted by personal retainers, and built patron-client relationships with them.

Despite Shirakawa's powerful influence on the court, however, as a retired sovereign, he was not allowed to enter the royal palace; Shirakawa needed the regent, who still kept its personal space inside the royal palace, to conduct direct daily service with the mother of the heavenly sovereign or, if she was dead, in her stead, and to organize annual rituals that were mainly held in the palace. For instance, in 1114, at Toba's first ceremony of a report to the throne from the State Council (*kansō*), Tadazane, the regent, first visited Shirakawa's place and received instructions on how the reigning monarch should proceed with the ceremony. Then Tadazane went to the royal palace and gave a lecture to the eleven-year-old Toba. During the ceremony, Tadazane was by Toba's side and watched the ceremony.<sup>62</sup> Shirakawa, who was not allowed to enter the royal palace, had to oversee the young, inexperienced reigning monarch indirectly through the regent Tadazane.

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<sup>62</sup> Higuchi, 75.

It is important to emphasize here that Tadazane held no significant maternal lineage to Toba. Tadazane's father, Moromichi was the maternal uncle (albeit adopted) of monarch Horikawa, Toba's father. However, Tadazane was neither maternal grandfather nor uncle of either Horikawa or Toba. Nonetheless, he was appointed to regent and, more importantly, kept his personal space in the royal palace. Indeed, with Toba's accession in 1107, Toba's biological maternal uncle Fujiwara Kinzane (1053-1107) proposed to Shirakawa that he should be the regent. This was a justifiable claim, so Shirakawa could not immediately make a decision. Nevertheless, in the end, Shirakawa appointed Tadazane, Yorimichi's direct great-grandson, as the regent for Toba.<sup>63</sup>

This appointment of Tadazane for the regent suggests a significant shift during this period. As seen, under the court led by a regent, only the father and brothers of the mother of the heavenly sovereign could be a regent and claim to be the Fujiwara family of the regent. But Tadazane was appointed to the regent neither because he was maternal grandfather nor maternal uncle of the heavenly sovereign; rather, he was appointed simply because he was from *the* direct line of Michinaga's oldest son, Fujiwara Yorimichi. Now, this Michinaga-Yorimichi line was considered the Fujiwara Regent's Family. In other words, the Fujiwara family of the regent, which had to entirely rely on their female members to establish relationships with the heavenly

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<sup>63</sup> Jien, *Gukanshō*, book 4, 202. Paragraph 3. <https://jhti.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/jhti/print.cgi>. According to Gukanshō, it was Minamoto Toshiaki (1044-1114) who controlled the situation, Shirakawa being indecisive, by rushing Shirakawa and “interpreting” what Shirakawa implied. “「無左右如元トコソハアルベケレ」トオホセラレケルヲ、タカ??トサウナク稱唯シテ、ヤガテソクタイサヤハラトナラシテタチケレバ、ソノウエヲエトモカクモヲホセラレズ。ヤガテ殿下ニマイリテ、「例ニマカセテトクヲコナハレ候ベキヨシ御氣色候」ト申テ、ヒシ++トヲコナハレニケリ。” We could recognize Jien's attempt not to put blame on Shirakawa. This implies that the notion of only the maternal grandfather and uncles holding the regency still strongly remained during this time.

sovereign by being the mother of the heavenly sovereign, now did not have to rely on them in order to secure their status and posts. In a way, the status and authority of the regent's family itself increased, but the power of the mother of the reigning monarch and the regent decreased. Instead, other gates of power, such as the retired sovereign, seized more power. This shift, from the Fujiwara family of the regent to the Fujiwara Regent's Family, was deeply associated with the development of the medieval *ie*, which now we turn to.

### 3. The Medieval *Ie* (familial system)

#### 3-1. The Development of the Medieval *Ie*

In addition to the above factors, there was one more factor that unquestionably contributed to the diffusion of power; the development of the medieval *ie*. The issues around the *ie* are extremely complicated, and scholars have argued for a long time over what the *ie* was, how it developed and when it was established, and how exactly it functioned. Due to the limited space, I do not intend to reopen the argument over the medieval *ie*; rather, I briefly overview the development of the medieval *ie*, which was closely connected to the further power diffusion during the *insei* period.

The medieval *ie* was conceived as a patriline formed by a conjugal couple, the co-managers of the *ie*, and their children.<sup>64</sup> The most prominent characteristic of the medieval *ie* was the expected succession pattern that a son who was chosen by the head as the heir succeeded

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<sup>64</sup> Takahashi Hideki, "Chūsei no Ie to Josei," in *Iwanami koza nihon rekishi 7: Chūsei 2*, ed. Ōtsu Tōru, et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2013), 235. Regarding co-managers of the medieval *ie*, see Gotō Michiko, "The Lives and the Roles of Women of Various Classes in the *Ie* of the Late Medieval Japan," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2006).

to headship of the *ie*.<sup>65</sup> Before the emergence of the medieval *ie*, there was a social unit called *uji* (clans). Under the *uji* system, marriage was an extremely fluid entity; there was, indeed, no particular word for “marriage.” Consequently, the bond between husband and wife was weak and unstable, especially compared to that between mother and children. In this milieu, the power of the mother of the heavenly sovereign was fully exercised. In terms of succession, whoever held the highest position among the members of an *uji* assumed the position of the head of the *uji*, and when the head retired or died, s/he was succeeded by whomever held the most senior position. Thus, in many cases, succession occurred within the same generation. Over time, however, *Uji* expanded too widely to be functional, and so divided into multiple branches or *ichimon*, whose succession pattern followed the same principles as the *uji*. In medieval times, *ichimon* were also sometimes called *ie*. In other words, there were two types of *ie* in the medieval period: one followed the older, traditional succession pattern, and the other followed the new, more patrilineal succession pattern.<sup>66</sup>

This newer type of *ie* induced notions of the status (*kakaku*) and the specialization (*kagyō*) of the *ie*. The status of the *ie* determined the highest post one could reach. Moreover, each family began to have its own specialization as *kagyō*, such as the Families with Diaries, Families with Music, and Fujiwara Regent’s Family. As we saw, even if a Fujiwara regent’s heir was unable to be the maternal grandfather or uncles of the reigning monarch, still, he succeeded to the post of the regent by succeeding his *ie*; his post—regent—was secured by the fact that he was the heir of the *ie*. The specialization of the Fujiwara Regent’s Family as the medieval *ie* was to be the regent

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<sup>65</sup> Takahashi Hideki, *Chūsei no ie to sei*, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Takahashi Hideki, *Chūsei no ie to sei*, 11.



and to assist the heavenly sovereign, while sometimes performing direct daily service, regardless of his biological distance from the monarch. During the twelfth century, the status of the *ie*, except for that of the Fujiwara Regent's Family, were not yet entirely fixed; there was still room for those who were from humble origins to uplift their family status.

The children who had not been chosen as the heir would create a new *ie* with their spouse by branching off. For instance, the Rokuhara line was succeeded by Kiyomori, which became Kiyomori's and Tokiko's *ie*. However, Kiyomori's half younger brother also had his own *ie*; furthermore, Kiyomori's oldest son—not from Tokiko—also established his own *ie*, which was often called the Komatsu line, and succeeded by his son. Meanwhile, Kiyomori's younger son—but oldest son from Tokiko—succeeded to the Rokuhara line. Each branch *ie*, such as the Komatsu line, had some measure of independence while cooperating for the prosperity of the primary *ie*, which directly succeeded from the previous generation, such as the Rokuhara line. Especially with the traditional succession pattern still in existence, it is not hard to imagine the delicate power balance among the *ie* of different lines, let alone the same line; this factor unquestionably accelerated power diffusion. Indeed, subtle conflicts among *ie* inside Kiyomori's *ie* are now well known.<sup>67</sup>

The royal *ie*, *ōke*, established with Shirakawa, encompassed the most subtle and delicate diffusion of power. The royal *ie* constituted of a retired sovereign, the mother of the reigning monarch/often a premier retired royal lady, their son/the heavenly sovereign, and other children; each member could be a gate of power. As mentioned, each gate of power had tremendous

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<sup>67</sup> In the end, the heads of both newly created *ie* did not follow the Heike to the last battle. Supposedly, one committed suicide since he was bothered by his love for his family and by the fact that other members of the Heike suspected his loyalty. The other one betrayed the Heike directly by returning to the capital by himself; he then went to Kamakura. Since his mother had saved Yoritomo's life, Yoritomo welcomed him.

independent power. In other words, the royal *ie* encompassed multiple politically independent individuals, including the legitimate ruler of the state, the heavenly sovereign, and meanwhile, each individual cooperated for the royal *ie*. This royal *ie* was another means for a retired sovereign, who held limited authority as a ruler of the state, to exercise his political power as its head; it also shifted the significance of the mother of the heavenly sovereign from the mother of the heavenly sovereign to the “primary” wife of the retired sovereign, the head of the royal *ie* and the co-manager of the royal *ie*. This idea of the “primary” wife, especially that of a retired sovereign, had unique meaning and significance during this time, so let us now explore categories of wives of a retired sovereign.<sup>68</sup>

### 3-2. Categories of Wives of a Retired Sovereign

The sexual partners of retired sovereigns were divided into three categories: official wives, unofficial wives, and mere sexual partners; the “primary” wife, the one who cohabited with the retired sovereign, was often chosen from among the second category.<sup>69</sup> The connection between the first category of women, the official wives, and a retired sovereign stemmed from the *ritsuryō* system under the regent-led court. They were generally daughters, sometimes adopted, from the Fujiwara Regent’s Family and had an official wedding ceremony when a retired sovereign was a heavenly sovereign or crown prince; they would generally be elevated to

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<sup>68</sup> The “primary” wife is a term of convenience invented by modern historians.

<sup>69</sup> The “mere sexual partners” include both sexes. But here, since I am talking about wives of a retired sovereign, I refer to only females.

a queen consort relatively soon after the marriage.<sup>70</sup> Continuing from Michinaga's time, many monarchs did not have multiple official wives concurrently. Instead, especially after becoming a retired sovereign, he was free to have sexual relations with most women; these women constituted the third type. They were usually temporary sexual partners; in Go-shirakawa's case, for instance, this category included female entertainers (*asobime*).<sup>71</sup> Putting the entertainers aside, it was highly likely that a heavenly sovereign, let alone a retired sovereign, historically had had mere sexual partners apart from their official wives.<sup>72</sup> Thus, these two categories were not new.

What was new in the *insei* period was the second category: unofficial wives. The borderline between them and the third category was somewhat blurry, but it seems that once the relationship became long-term, in many cases, through pregnancy, these women were considered unofficial wives. What is important here is that the "primary" wife of a retired sovereign was, in many cases, chosen from among them; she was the one, especially in the case of her being the mother of the heavenly sovereign, who constituted the conjugal couple, around which the medieval *ie* formed. Consequently, the "primary" wife could exercise great power as the wife of the head of, so the co-manager of, the royal *ie*. Since marriages between a monarch and his official wife were political alliances, they often did not get along well. In these cases, she was not considered the "primary" wife, even if she was a queen consort. Instead, the woman a retired sovereign chose to live with was considered the "primary" wife. The official wife of a retired

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<sup>70</sup> Since retired sovereigns were "retired," they could not have the official court wedding ceremonies in theory.

<sup>71</sup> *Asobime* were female entertainers who could offer sexual services along with their skilled artistic entertainment. Regarding female entertainers, see Janet R. Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles: The Sex Trade in Heian and Kamakura Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

<sup>72</sup> Banse Akemi, "Inseiki ni okeru kōkyū no henka to sono igi," *Nihonshi kenkyū*, no. 402 (1996).

sovereign, in many cases his queen consort and a daughter of the Fujiwara Regent's Family, held authority, but power mostly gravitated into the hands of the "primary" wife.

Unlike the official wives, many unofficial wives had neither the court rank nor titles, and "primary" wife was not their official court title. How did the court society distinguish the "primary" wife from other unofficial wives? Unofficial wives' "rank" was ultimately determined by the intimacy of the relationship with her "husband" retired sovereign, and the symbol of this intimacy became cohabitation. We can see this recognition through the diaries of the Fujiwara Regent's Family.

A regent, Fujiwara Michiie, made an excuse in his diary *Gyokuzui* for not having visited to pay respects to a particular premier retired royal lady on New Year's Day (*shōgatsu hairei*) by referring to the precedents of his ancestors. According to Michiie, senior nobles (*kugyō*) visited to pay respects to Bifukumon'in (1117-1160), Kenshunmon'in, Shichijōin (1157-1228), and Shūmeimon'in (1182-1264). They were all premier retired royal ladies and mothers of the heavenly sovereigns. However, the heads of the Fujiwara Regent's Family did not visit Bifukumon'in and Shichijōin since, according to Michiie, "it is said that when a premier retired royal lady did not live with a retired sovereign, there was no need to visit to pay respects to the premier retired royal lady."<sup>73</sup> Kujō Kanazane also says in *Gyokuyō* that "even though [Shichijōin was] the mother of the heavenly sovereign, regents do not have to visit to pay respects since she

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<sup>73</sup> "...是非 貴種之國母、上皇無御同宿之時、必不可參故云々..." The entry of Antei 2 (1228), 1/1. Fujiwara Michiie, *Gyokuzui*, an excerpt from Kuriyama, *Chūsei Oke no Seritsu to Insei*, 213.

did not cohabit with the retired sovereign...so I did not visit.”<sup>74</sup> These claims suggest that the woman who cohabitated with the retired sovereign was considered the “primary” wife.

In a way, we can simply consider them as a retired sovereign’s officially recognized “favorite” wife. This favoritism was entirely personal, thus unofficial. Nonetheless, due to the peculiarity of the *insei* period, this unofficial concept was somehow officially recognized. Moreover, a woman who was no one but a retired sovereign’s “favorite” could climb up the social ladder and eventually earn the official title of “wife of the monarch,” following *faits accomplis*. In other words, she could acquire power first and authority later. As we will see in the next chapter, Shigeo was a sexual partner of Go-shirakawa. She bore him a son and started to cohabit with Go-shirakawa. As soon as the son was appointed to the crown prince, she received the Junior Third Rank and soon the court title of an official wife of a monarch, *nyōgo*. When the crown prince took the throne, Shigeo was elevated to the grand queen consort (*kōtaigō*). Now, she herself was recognized as a royal member who held authority.

Lastly, let us briefly look at the court positions with “the highest official wife of a monarch (*kō*).” These are titles from the *ritsuryō* codes, and by the *insei* period, there were four positions with *kō*: junior queen consort (*chūgū*), senior queen consort (*kōgō*), grand queen consort, and senior grand queen consort (*taikōtaigō*).<sup>75</sup> A woman who received any of these titles

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<sup>74</sup> “...雖為帝母、未必可受撰錄之拜歟、況於今之女院者、非上皇之同居哉、是以不參....” The entry of Kenkyū 6 (1195), 1/1 in Fujiwara Kanezane, *Gyokuyō* 3, ed. Ichijima Kenkichi (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōsha, 1907), 894.

<sup>75</sup> The history of “the highest official wife of a monarch (*kō*)” followed a very complicated path. One of the main reasons for that was the fact that these posts came from the *ritsuryō* code. As is well known, most aspects in the *ritsuryō* code were simply on paper and did not apply in reality. During Michinaga’s time, the *chūgū* post started to be considered one of the *kō* posts; with this there were now four *kō* posts and, setting a new precedent, monarch Ichijō had two “highest official wives.” There was not necessarily a hierarchy between *chūgū* and *kōgō*, but in some cases, there was. Therefore, I translated “junior” and “senior” respectively. Moreover, *kōtaigō* was for the woman

would be recognized as a royal member, and thus possessed strong authority and held her own office. Especially during the *insei* period, a daughter of the Fujiwara Regent's Family who married a heavenly sovereign often immediately became a queen consort regardless of her husband's affection, whereas women from humble origins had to win the same or the relevant title by earning their "husband's" love.

### 3-3. The Heike Regime as the Go-shirakara-Heike Medieval Royal *ie*

The royal *ie* not only encompassed the most subtle and delicate power diffusion, but also was an extremely volatile unit; unlike any other *ie*, the royal *ie* could not be divided into branches. This means that every time a son of a retired sovereign—the head of the royal *ie*—failed to take the throne, the royal *ie* was reorganized. Shirakawa exerted himself to preserve his *ie* by abdicating in favor of his son Horikawa while preventing his younger half-brother prince Sukehito from taking the throne. With increasing violence in society, the struggles over succession intensified; royals had to rely more and more on warriors. Go-shirakawa, who temporarily succeeded to the throne, tried to preserve his *ie* by implementing more aggressive means, which resulted in heavy reliance on powerful warriors such as Kiyomori.<sup>76</sup>

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who was the mother of the heavenly sovereign and *taikōtaigō* for the grandmother in the code. However, by the *insei* period, some unmarried princesses started to receive the status of *kō*. In addition, high noble women were sometimes simply moved to the upper *kō* position so that a new woman could receive a *kō* position; their marital relations with the heavenly sovereigns did not matter in these cases. See an example in footnote 32 in chapter 2. Furthermore, there was the "equivalent to the three *kō*" rank (*jusangō*), which was a honorary rank granted to one of non-royal descent, designating that they receive treatment comparable to the women who had the *kō* posts. Both Kiyomori and Tokiko received this.

<sup>76</sup> We will see the situation in detail in the next chapter, but basically, when a troubled royal succession ensued after the death of the reigning monarch at a young age, retired monarch Toba and his wife Bifukumon'in, the mother of the deceased monarch, wanted their daughter to be the next monarch. In Japan, both male and female were qualified for the heavenly sovereign until the ninth century, so they had hope. But it had been too long since the last female

On the Heike's side, as seen in the introduction, the head, Kiyomori, reached the position of Grand Minister, and most importantly, he managed to be in the quasi-family (*miuchi*) circle even though he was from neither the royal family nor the Fujiwara Regent's Family. But his wife's sister Shigeko was the mother of the heavenly sovereign, monarch Takakura, which made him the heavenly sovereign's uncle-in-law, and later his daughter, Taira Noriko, became the mother of the subsequent heavenly sovereign, monarch Antoku, which allowed him to be the maternal grandfather of the heavenly sovereign. In other words, he was a warrior, but his family acted as if they were the Fujiwara Regent's Family; Kiyomori's *ie* now merged into the royal *ie*. The Heike regime was, in the end, the Go-shirakara-Heike medieval royal *ie*. Since the royal *ie* was such a volatile entity, cooperation between Go-shirakawa and the Heike was necessary to maintain the *ie*, and for this cooperation, the living mother of the heavenly sovereign was still key, especially because the Heike were newcomers. Unlike the Fujiwara Regent's Family, which had already established its status, the Heike had to follow the precedents that the Fujiwara Regent's Family had created, especially being a member of the quasi-familial circle through the maternal link with the reigning monarch, in order to be a part of the royal *ie*.

Moreover, the Heike could offer Go-shirakawa a great, unique asset, which was particularly emphasized during the *insei* period: military force. Japanese monarchs had never possessed a standing army. There was a conscription system levied on ordinary farmers in the classical period, but the state abandoned this inefficient system by the middle Heian period.

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monarch Kōken/Shōtoku (718-770, r1. 749-758, r2. 764-770), so they gave up on the idea. Instead, they wanted Bifukumon'in's fostering child (*yūshi*)—and Go-shirakawa's son—to take the throne, but since there was no precedent of a son taking the throne without his father having taken the throne, they decided that Go-shirakawa would take the throne first, but he would have to abdicate in favor of his son—Bifukumon'in's fostering child—quickly. With Go-shirakawa's well-known indulgence in entertainment, especially for entertainment directed at commoners, he was considered nothing more than a mere interim monarch in the court society.

Subsequently, the state relied on warriors in provinces, known as “military nobles”, to settle “savage” provincial conflicts. In the capital, “sophisticated, elegant” aristocrats expressed their extreme dislike of bloody conflicts, so that political conflicts usually involved framing a rival by spreading rumors, often claiming the rival was attempting to curse royal members. The framed person was usually exiled; as a matter of fact, capital punishment had not been conducted for centuries before the Hōgen Turbulence. With the rise of violence in society in the *insei* period, monarchs lacking military force became a fatal problem; this was probably both a cause and result of further power diffusion. Go-shirakawa, especially as a temporary monarch, needed the Heike’s military power to preserve his *ie*, and the Heike needed Go-shirakawa in order to seize authority and political power to act like the Fujiwara Regent’s Family: this interdependency allowed the Heike regime, the Go-shirakawa-Heike medieval royal *ie*, to be established.

## **Conclusion**

The main purpose of this chapter was to provide a background for the subsequent case study of Shigeko, and the main question of what elements of the *insei* enabled the women, through their political influence, to achieve, for themselves, their goals. In order to answer this question, first, I explored the social aspects—great emphasis on written documents and precedent— and common ideas of the interdependence of royal norms and Buddhist norms, as well as the declining of Buddhist norms. Second, I examined the court led by a regent and showed the significance of the mother of the heavenly sovereign; the quasi-family concept and direct daily service were such important elements under the court, and the mother of the heavenly sovereign was a key figure for both. Then, I examined the court led by a retired



sovereign and showed that the elements from the older court tenaciously survived with the new developing elements under the *insei*.

Through the examination, I argued that contrary to the traditional view of the *insei* as merely a retired sovereigns' despotism, power was extremely dispersed and shared by gates of power and those who built patron-client relationships with these gates of power. This opened a new avenue for men and women from humble origins, including warriors, and they advanced into the center of the court through clientships. The differentiation of authority and power broadened, and accelerated power diffusion contributed to further factionalism.

With the new emerging medieval *ie*, retired sovereigns, who had limited legitimacy as the ruler of the state, started to wield power as the head of the royal *ie*, rather than a retired monarch. Meanwhile, the emphasis on the significance of the mother of the heavenly sovereign from her status as the mother of the heavenly sovereign shifted to that of the “primary” wife of the retired sovereign: the co-manager of the royal *ie*. Simultaneously, the key figures under the previous court organization—the legitimate ruler of the state, the heavenly sovereign, the mother of the heavenly sovereign, and Fujiwara Regent's Family—all continued to hold power that stemmed from their authority. The escalated power diffusion and factionalism started to legitimize violent solutions and provided warriors with leverage.

As seen, however, use of violence alone did not work in Japan; they also needed civil authority. Authority came from the court, which was still the center of power. Not only were women important as co-managers of the medieval *ie*, but also, they were still key members of the court, especially for their natal families, as they had been in the regent-led court. In the next chapter, we will see how Shigeko established and maintained the Heike regime—the Go-

shirakawa-Heike medieval royal *ie*—through civil authority while Kiyomori contributed through military power.

## Chapter 2: Taira Shigeko/Kenshunmon'in

In this chapter, I examine the life of Taira Shigeko/Kenshunmon'in, who played a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining the Heike regime. For these significant achievements, her successful climbing of the social ladder was necessary. Her life was, in a way, the twelfth-century Japanese Cinderella story. She was a woman of humble origin who originally worked as a lady-in-waiting for a premier retired royal lady, who was loved by her mistress's younger brother and delivered his son. Her son took the throne, and so she became the mother of the heavenly sovereign, also receiving the title of grand queen consort. Ultimately, she received the title of premier retired royal lady and became known as Kenshunmon'in. As seen in Chapter 1, the new sociopolitical structures of the *insei* period provided women from humble origins with an opportunity to climb up the social ladder and become politically influential. However, it was Shigeko's individual characteristics, such as her quick wit and agency that enabled her to make the best use of her positions and influence. Her strong willpower, hungry spirit, intelligence, beauty, communication skills, and a proactive approach ultimately determined the fate of herself and the Heike.

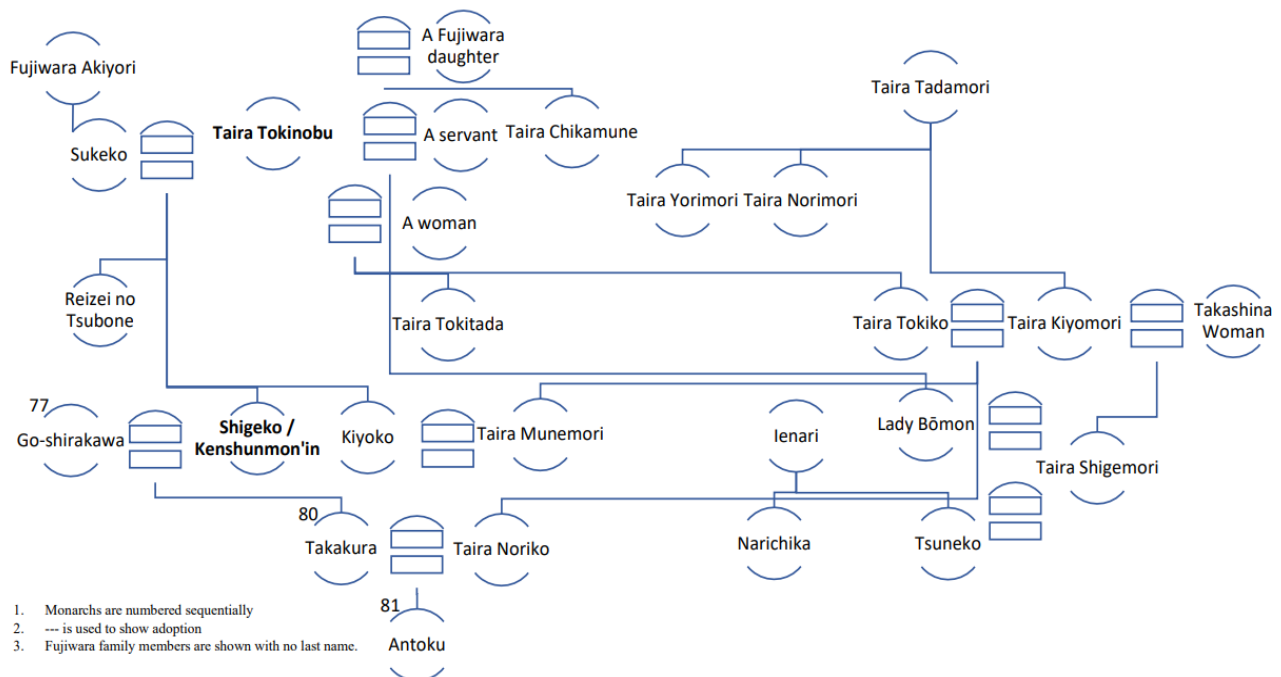
As mentioned in Chapter 1, Go-shirakawa took the throne only temporarily for his son Nijō (1143-1165, r. 1158-1165),<sup>1</sup> but once he took the throne, he wanted to create his own royal *ie*, especially after Nijō died. Given the increased violence in society and lacking an army, he had to rely heavily on warriors to secure his power due to limited legitimacy as a ruler of the state as a “retired” monarch. Shigeko, who was from an aristocratic Heishi line but whose sister had married the powerful warrior Kiyomori, won Go-shirakawa's favor; through Shigeko, Go-

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<sup>1</sup> A brief explanation for this accession is in footnote 76 in Chapter 1.

shirakawa cooperated with the Heike and secured the Go-shirakawa-Heike medieval royal *ie*. Now, the Heike, acting as the Fujiwara Regent's Family, merged into the royal *ie*, and thus, the first royal *ie* that encompassed a warrior's family was created. Naturally, under the Heike regime the members of the Heike, mostly warriors, wielded strong political influence in the court with Shigeke's support. In other words, Shigeke was the one who introduced the power of the warrior into the court.

Through her chronological biography, which is short but dense, I would like to illustrate two themes: first, her power and authority, which were mainly generated from her titles and statuses, lay in both the regent-led court organization and the newer, developing *insei* court organization; and second, how she, with her skills and agency, made the best use of her power and authority in order to establish and maintain the Heike regime where possible. I will try to follow her life chronologically, though inevitably some events will appear out of order due to the



**Genealogy IV: The Rokuhara line and Shigeke's natal family's line**

organization of the present work. In order to make the timeline of events easier to follow, I put a chronology of her life at the end of this chapter (Figure 6).

### **1. Early Years: From a Lady-in-waiting to the “Primary” Wife of Go-shirakawa**

There are almost no sources regarding Shigekeo’s early life. According to the scarce sources available, Shigekeo was born in 1142 as a daughter of Taira Tokinobu (?-1149) and his primary wife, Fujiwara Sukeko (?-?).<sup>23</sup> Both Tokinobu and Sukeko's father, Fujiwara Akiyori (1094-1148), were personal retainers of retired sovereign Toba. Tokinobu had at least three daughters from Sukeko: one was Shigekeo, another the primary wife of Kiyomori's second heir, Taira Munemori (1147-1185), and the last a lady-in-waiting for Kenshunmon'in/Shigekeo. Tokinobu also had at least three children from a servant (*hashitamono*): Tokiko, who became Kiyomori's wife, another daughter, and Taira Tokitada (1130-1189). Tokinobu had further daughters from different women; one became a wife of Kiyomori's first heir, Taira Shigemori (1138-1179). It is evident that Tokinobu's line, one of the Families with Diaries and a lower aristocratic Heishi, tried to ally with the Rokuhara line, a warrior Heishi line. The first connection with the Rokuhara line, the marriage of Kiyomori and Tokiko, happened around 1145. But Tokinobu died in 1149, so Shigekeo lost her father at the age of seven.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Primary” here means that her family’s status, including father’s rank, was no doubt the highest among his wives.

<sup>3</sup> Fujii Jōji and Yoshioka Masayuki, eds., *Go-shirakawa tennō jitsuroku* 2, vol. 44 of *Tennō kōzoku jitsuroku* (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008), 780.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed years for her early life based on Tsunoda Bunei, “Kenshunmon’in” in “Go-sirakawain o meguru hitobito” in *Go-shirakawain: Dōranki no Tennō*, 117-158.

One thing that is certain about Shigeko's childhood is that Wakasa no tsubone/Taira Masako (?-?) was one of her nursing mothers, if not the only one.<sup>5</sup> We do not know when her biological mother, Sukeko, died. However, considering the fact that Shigeko was the youngest of her children and that there is no record of Sukeko, “the biological grandmother of the heavenly sovereign,” it is most likely Sukeko died when Shigeko was little. Moreover, Sukeko's father (Shigeko's maternal grandfather) Fujiwara Akiyori died in 1148, when all of Sukeko's siblings were still young.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, unless Shigeko was adopted by someone—a hypothesis for which no evidence exists—Shigeko was not raised at her maternal kin's residence. There is a high possibility that Shigeko was raised by Wakasa at her house. This presumption is reinforced by the following statement in a prayer text (*ganmon*) composed by Wakasa, "Late Kenshunmon'in was Wakasa no tsubone's charge...even though [Kenshunmon'in was] a “nursing child” [of Wakasa], in [their] mind, it was no different from a real mother-daughter [relationship]."<sup>7</sup> Wakasa, as a nursing mother, supported her charge, Shigeko, until death separated them; Wakasa also served Shigeko's son, Takakura, even after Shigeko died. As we shall see later, Wakasa played a key role in Takakura's court. We do not know when or how, but Shigeko started to work as a lady-in-waiting for the premier retired royal lady Jōsaimon'in (1126-1189), Goshirakawa's sister. Since some ladies-in-waiting started to work right after their coming-of-age ceremony, it is possible to assume that Shigeko started to work when she was between the ages of ten to twelve, but we certainly know that she did so before 1160. As seen in Chapter 1,

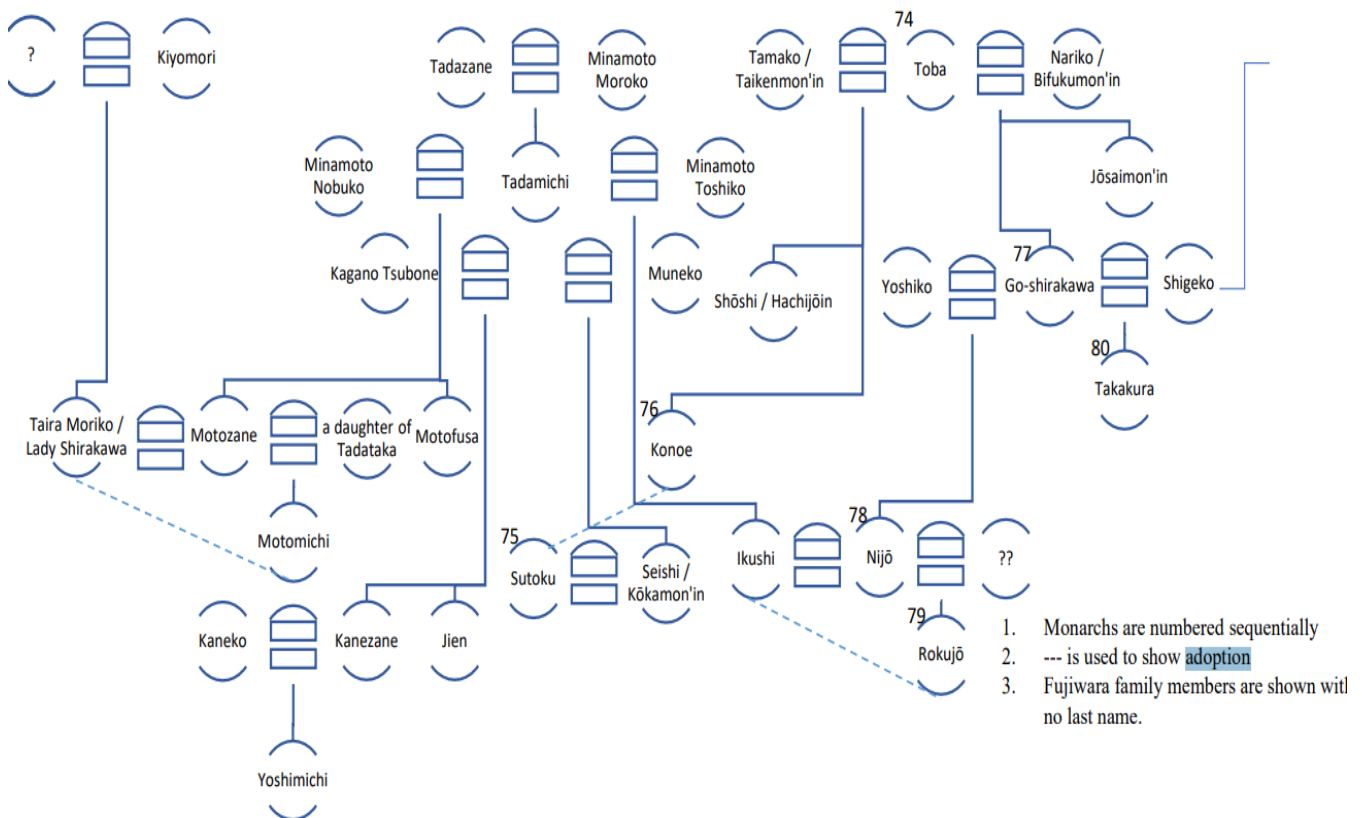
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<sup>5</sup> From here, Wakasa refers to Wakasa no tsubone.

<sup>6</sup> The oldest son of Akiyori was twenty-four years old.

<sup>7</sup> “前建春門院聖靈は女大施主の養君也...儀養君たりと雖も、志母子に異ならず...” Wakasa no tsubone sagadō kuyō hyōbyaku bun, excerpted from Simogōri Takeshi, “Densō no nyōbō: Takakura inseiki no sei to sei,” in *Kenryoku to Bunka*, Inseiki bunka ronshū 1, ed. Inseiki bunka kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2001), 134.

the roles of ladies-in-waiting were highly political, and they could be considered personal retainers of their mistress/master; thus, we can consider this the beginning of Shigeko's political life. She might have polished her political skills here, learned them from her capable nursing mother, Wakasa. Probably due to Shigeko's beauty, she became a sexual partner of Go-shirakawa and would go on to give birth to Takakura in 1161.



### Genealogy V: 12th century monarchs and the Fujiwara Regent's Family

At this point, however, the fate of the mother and baby did not look promising at all. First, the political situation in 1161 was not in favor of Go-shirakawa. When the heavenly sovereign Konoe (1139-1155, r. 1141-1155), the son of Toba and Bifukumon'in, passed away in 1155, the problem of succession caused much trouble; as a matter of fact, this problem was the

leading cause for the Hōgen Turbulence, which was the first military conflict that occurred inside the capital and led to the use of capital punishment for the first time in centuries. Since Bifukumon'in and Toba's wish that their daughter Hachijōin (1137-1211) would be the next heavenly sovereign was not realized, they wanted Nijō, a son of Go-shirakawa and a foster child of Bifukumon'in, to take the throne.<sup>8</sup> According to the *Gukanshō*, Go-shirakawa had become overly absorbed in entertainment, particularly for commoners, so "retired sovereign Toba did not think that Go-Shirakawa had enough ability to be the heavenly sovereign."<sup>9</sup> However, there was no precedent that a son would take the throne when his living father had never taken the throne; it was decided that Go-shirakawa would take the throne temporarily and abdicate soon after in favor of his son Nijō. Go-shirakawa was not recognized as worthy of being the heavenly sovereign among the members of aristocratic society; he was seen only as a temporary stand-in.

In 1156, Toba died, and the former heavenly sovereign and the brother of Go-shirakawa, Sutoku (1119-1164, r. 1123-1142), was defeated in the Hōgen turbulence. In 1158, Bifukumon'in and Go-shirakawa's nursing father, Shinzei, met and decided Go-shirakawa's abdication, after which Nijō took the throne.<sup>10</sup> Now, the court was divided between the supporters of retired sovereign Go-shirakawa and the supporters of the heavenly sovereign Nijō. Another military conflict, the Heiji Turbulence, ensued, and as a result, leading members of both

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<sup>8</sup> Noguchi Hanayo, "Taikenmon'in, Bifukumon'in, Hachijōin: nyoin zensei no jidai" in *Heikemonogatari no jidai wo ikita josei tachi*, 199.

<sup>9</sup> "...四宮ニテ後白河院、待賢門院ノ御ハラニテ、新院崇徳ニ同宿シテヲハシマシケルガ、イタクサタバシク御アソビナドアリトテ、即位ノ御器量ニハアラズトヲボシメシテ、近衛院ノアネノ八條院ヒメ宮ナルヲ女帝カ、新院一宮カ、コノ四宮ノ御子ニ條院ノヲサナクヲハシマスカロナドヤウ++ニヲボシメシテ、..." Jien, *Gukanshō*, vol. 4, page 216, paragraph 1. <https://jhti.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/jhti/kensaku.cgi>.

<sup>10</sup> Noguchi Hanayo, "Taikenmon'in, Bifukumon'in, Hachijōin: nyoin zensei no jidai," 197.



factions were killed or exiled, including Shinzei. Moreover, in 1160, Bifukumon'in, a strong backer of Nijō, passed away. Especially since Nijō was still rather young, neither faction was strong enough to take control of the court; Go-shirakawa, Nijō, and the Fujiwara Regent's Family took joint control of court matters. However, the older Nijō became, the more Nijō—someone who had shown to be a legitimate and wise ruler—overshadowed Go-shirakawa. Thus, when Shigeke delivered Takakura, the court moved toward excluding Go-shirakawa from the political center.

It is noteworthy that even though the baby was Kiyomori's nephew-in-law, at this point, Kiyomori technically belonged to the Nijō faction through his position as a nursing father of Nijō. In fact, according to the *Gukanshō*,

Kiyomori had built a palace for Nijō at Oshikōji and East Tōin, and Nijō had taken up his residence there [in 1162]. Kiyomori ordered members of his own house to construct mansions near the royal palace, where they served Nijō day and night [even though] Kiyomori secretly hoped [that Takakura would be enthroned]. Kiyomori and others were deeply concerned about having Nijō handle court affairs because retired sovereigns had customarily borne that responsibility. But Kiyomori was very cautious and managed things magnificently, giving his attention to both Nijō and Go-shirakawa.

...押小路東洞院ニ皇居ツクリテオハシマシテ、清盛ガ一家ノ者サナガラソノ邊ニトノキ所ドモツクリテ、朝夕ニ候ハセケリ。イカニモ+ 清盛モタレモ下ノ心ニハ、コノ後白河院ノ御世ニテ世ヲシロシメスコトヲバ、イカトノミオモヘリケルニ、清盛ハヨク++ツ、シミテイミジクハカラヒテ、アナタコナタシケルニコソ。<sup>11</sup>

This account suggests the limited legitimacy of the retired sovereign as a ruler of the state and illustrates Kiyomori's balanced political sense. By not severing the connection with Go-

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<sup>11</sup> Jiem, *Gukanshō*," vol. 5, page 239, paragraph 2, <https://jhti.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/jhti/print.cgi>.

shirakawa, Kiyomori did not allow himself to fully belong to the Nijō faction; even though, his fundamental allegiance was to the Nijō faction.

Moreover, Shigeo's brother Tokitada was dismissed and went into exile right after Takakura was born. Tokitada cooperated with Kiyomori's younger half-brother Taira Norimori (1128-1185) to elevate Takakura to the position of the crown prince. This plot angered Nijō, and the two were dismissed and exiled.<sup>12</sup> No extant sources show that Kiyomori tried to save the two, or that he was a part of the plot. As a result of this incident, recognition as a royal member, let alone the throne, had moved further out of reach for Takakura.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, Shigeo was most likely among the many sexual partners of Go-shirakawa. According to the Table of Royal Wives created by the historian Tsunoda Bun'ei, Go-shirakawa had seventeen "wives."<sup>14</sup> They were the only ones who somehow were recorded, mainly due to their delivering his children. For instance, a lady-in-waiting was invited to Go-shirakawa's temporary residence one night, but she was never invited again.<sup>15</sup> We know about her only because she was a famous poet and left a diary, but her name is not on the royal record. Tsunoda also wrote a section about the "wives" of Go-shirakawa in "Go-shirakawain no Kōkyū" in *Go-shirakawain: Dōranki no Tennō*, in which he demonstrates how many women Go-

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<sup>12</sup> Preceding this incident, Go-shirakawa dismissed and exiled Nijō's personal retainers since they were critical against the *insei*.

<sup>13</sup> In order to be recognized as a royal member, a baby had to receive the title of *shinnō*, the prince of the blood. Since a retired sovereign had many sexual partners and wives, there were many "princes/princesses," but only those who received the title of the prince of the blood were recognized and lived as a royal member. Whether or not a baby could get the title was highly competitive and depended on the then political situation, his/her mother's status, and how much the mother was loved by the retired sovereign.

<sup>14</sup> Rekidaikōhihō in yoroku in Tsunoda Bunei, *Nihon no kōkyū*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> A famous poet Ukyōdaibu Kojijū recollected the story. See details in Tsunoda Bun'ei, "Kenshunmon'in," 121-122.

shirakawa had sexual relations with and points out Go-shirakawa's tendency of exceeding favoritism toward women he fell in love with. This tendency eventually turned out to be a boon for Shigeko, but in 1161, Shigeko was most likely only one of many partners, considering that there are no extant primary sources mentioning her until she had Takakura.

Therefore, combining all the above situations between 1161 and 1164, —that the political situation was not in favor of Go-shirakawa, that Kiyomori stood primarily with the Nijō faction, that Shigeko's brother Tokitada had been dismissed and exiled, and that Shigeko was only one of many sexual partners of Go-shirakawa—it seemed to be that Shigeko's baby was not destined for recognition as a royal member, let alone taking the throne.

However, three consecutive deaths unexpectedly changed the fate of Go-shirakawa, and by this time, Shigeko seemed to have won Go-shirakawa's favor; both factors contributed to the unexpected political cooperation between the Heike and Go-shirakawa. First, in 1164, the most influential individual of the Fujiwara Regent's Family at the time, Tadazane, who was allied with Nijō, died. In 1165, Nijō passed away after abdicating, passing the throne to his infant son Rokujō (1164-1176, r. 1165-1168), who then became the center of the Nijō clique. Nijō's death opened an opportunity for Go-shirakawa to come back to the center of the court and exercise his power as the retired sovereign. Moreover, in 1166, the young head of the Fujiwara Regent's Family, Fujiwara Motozane (1143-1166) who was the regent of the infant heavenly sovereign and also Kiyomori's son-in-law, died. The infant heavenly sovereign had lost all of his powerful supporters. Additionally, according to the *Gyokuyō*, by this time, Shigeko had already moved to Go-shirakawa's residence, Hōjūji, living in the east wing. As seen in Chapter 1, cohabitation

with a retired sovereign symbolized a woman's position as the "primary" wife of the retired sovereign and provided the woman with power.

From here, Shigeiko rapidly climbed up the social ladder. As soon as Nijō died in 1165, Takakura received the title of the prince of the blood (*shinnō*), and in 1166, Shigeiko, who officially had neither a title nor rank, received the Junior Third Rank. In 1167, Shigeiko was elevated to a *nyōgo*; thus, she acquired authority as an official wife of a monarch. In 1168, Takakura ascended the throne, and subsequently, Shigeiko received the title of the grand queen consort; now, she herself was recognized as a royal member. In 1169, Shigeiko was elevated to the position of premier retired royal lady; now, she was officially recognized as an equal to her husband, the retired sovereign, and became *Kenshunmon'in*.

Before engaging in her political life as an official wife of a monarch, let us explore the title of premier retired royal lady. The title of the premier retired royal lady—*nyōin*—was created in 991 for Senshi, as I mentioned in the previous chapter.<sup>16</sup> Hashimoto argues that even though a royal edict asked for a new title for the grand queen consort Senshi—the most influential mother of the heavenly sovereign—following her taking tonsure (*shukke*), the true purpose of this edict was to establish a precedent for providing an influential mother of the heavenly sovereign with favorable treatment.<sup>17</sup> In the end, the solution was determined by "following the precedent of retired sovereigns"; she was "retiring" from the *kō* post and becoming the premier retired royal lady following the pattern of the heavenly sovereign's "retiring" from the throne and becoming a

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<sup>16</sup> She is in Genealogy II.

<sup>17</sup> He demonstrates that other mothers of the heavenly sovereigns who took tonsure around the same time did not resign their *kō* posts and that the court society seemed to not have any problems with it. See details in Hashimoto Yoshihiko, *Heian kizoku*, 147-149.

“retired sovereign.” As a result, premier retired royal ladies “*nyoin* (female retired sovereign)” received almost the same privileges as retired sovereigns.

Once a woman became a premier retired royal lady, she obtained administrative headquarters (*nyoin no chō*), almost identical to that of a retired sovereign (*in no chō*), received a governmental stipend from sustenance households (*fuko*), and obtained the official right to nominate candidates for annual promotions.<sup>18</sup> Just as in a retired sovereign’s case, people and wealth gathered around premier retired royal ladies. A premier retired royal lady’s administrative headquarters could provide many court posts; these posts could provide those of humble origins with opportunities to build a patron-client relationship with the premier retired royal lady. Moreover, not only did a premier retired royal lady possess the official right to nominate for promotions, but they also wielded unofficial power to influence personnel matters as the mother of the heavenly sovereign had done.

Hoping to gain benefits from these privileges, the lower aristocrats or warriors donated their lands to a premier retired royal lady; in doing so, they often became personal retainers of premier retired royal ladies as some ladies-in-waiting did. As a result, some premier retired royal ladies held enormous numbers of landed estates.<sup>19</sup> Since premier retired royal ladies’ headquarters lacked military bureaus, a premier retired royal lady often relied on warriors from her estates. As a matter of fact, both Yoritomo and Kiyomori’s fathers served premier retired

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<sup>18</sup> The only difference in administrative headquarters of premier retired royal ladies and retired sovereigns was the Warriors’ Bureau *musha-dokoro* and the Bureau of Official Bodyguards *Mizuishin-dokoro*. See details in Kawai Sachiko, *Power of the Purse*, 24-26.

<sup>19</sup> It is well known that Hachijōin held approximately 230 estates.

royal ladies, and they married the ladies-in-waiting of their mistresses.<sup>20</sup> As scholars have already pointed out, both Yoritomo's line and the Rokuhara line's advancement to the center of the court were deeply associated with their connections with premier retired royal ladies.<sup>21</sup> In other words, a premier retired royal lady was influential enough to provide her personal retainers with the opportunity to climb up the social ladder.

Partially because the number of premier retired royal ladies drastically increased during the *insei* period, the condition for receiving the title of premier retired royal lady became fluid; as a result, one premier retired royal lady could be more powerful than another. They all possessed authority, but their power heavily depended on their political positions; the premier retired royal lady, often a gate of power who had closer relationships with other powerful gates of power, could exercise more power.<sup>22</sup> They might have been a favorite daughter of a retired sovereign, fostered a prince who would later take the throne, or politically allied with another gate of power.

In the next section, we will see how much power and authority Shigeiko gained and how she utilized them for her own benefit. Her decisions and actions unquestionably resulted in the

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<sup>20</sup> Kiyomori's father Tadamori served Taikenmon'in and later Bifukumon'in; his son Norimori was from a lady-in-waiting for the former. Another son, Taira Yorimori (1133-1186) married a lady-in-waiting for Hachijōin, who was a daughter of Bifukumon'in. Similarly, Yoritomo's father married a sister of a lady-in-waiting for Jōsaimon'in, and his primary wife's family also served Jōsaimon'in. Yoritomo himself served Jōsaimon'in. See details in Gomi Fumihiko, *Inseikishakai no kenkyū*, 376.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, Gomi Fumihiko, *Inseiki shakai no Kenkyū*, 376; Tsunoda Bun'ei, "Minamoto Yoritomo no haha," in *Ōchō no meian* (Tokyo: Tokyodō Shuppan), 1977.

<sup>22</sup> In her chapter "Nyoin Power, Estates, and the Taira Influence: Trading Networks within and beyond the Archipelago," Kawai suggests that the supreme proprietorship of a premier retired royal lady did not always promise her economic prosperity despite her large landholdings. Further, she demonstrates through case studies of a premier retired royal lady that in order for a premier retired royal lady to wield maximum influence and power through her estate, first, she had to own estates in areas important to transportation and trade, and second, during times of crisis, she had to seek assistance from other powerful authorities rather than maintaining absolute independent control over her land. See details in Sachiko Kawai, "Nyoin Power, Estates, and the Taira Influence: Trading Networks within and beyond the Archipelago," in *Land, Power, and the Sacred: the Estate System in Medieval Japan*, ed. Janet R. Goodwin and Joan R. Piggott (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018).

close relationship between the Heike and Go-shirakawa; this relationship was the key to establish and maintaining the Heike regime.

## 2. Climbing up the Social Ladder

### 2-1. Initial Activities as the Monarch's Official Wife (*nyōgo*) (1167-1168)

It seems that as soon as Shigeiko was elevated to an official wife, her political life started. In the first month of the second year of Ninan (1167), Shigeiko received the title of an official wife of a monarch.<sup>23</sup> In the third month of that same year, she joined Go-shirakawa for the Buddhist service to recite sūtras by a thousand clerics (*sensō midokyō*) that prayed for the health of Go-shirakawa and the peace of the realm.<sup>24</sup> This ritual was held by Go-shirakawa at the Hosshō Temple, which Jien called, “the family temple of the king of the realm (*kokuō no ujidera*).”<sup>25</sup> Thus, even though it was organized unofficially, the event was deeply related to the state. Shigeiko was not yet a royal member, but she attended this event. Moreover, she traveled to Kumano with Go-shirakawa for pilgrimage in the ninth month.<sup>26</sup> The Kumano pilgrimage became popular among the royal members during the *insei* period. Shirakawa, Toba, and Go-shirakawa frequently traveled to Kumano. Go-shirakawa's mother, the premier retired royal lady Taikenmon'in, went to the Kumano pilgrimage with her husband Toba and her adopted father

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<sup>23</sup> The entry of Nin'an 2 (1167), 1/20 from Taira Nobuyori, *Hyōhanki* 3, vol. 17 of Shiryōtaisei, ed. Sasakawa Shirō (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki, 1936), 157-161.

<sup>24</sup> The entries of Nin'an 2 (1167), 3/23 from *Hyōhanki* 3, 183; Fujiwara Kanezane, *Gyokuyō* 1, ed. Imaizumi Teisuke (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōsha, 1906), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Hayami Tasuku, *Nihon bukkyōshi kodai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawakōbunkan, 1986), 246.

<sup>26</sup> On the fifteenth of the ninth month, she entered the “purifying” phase, and on the twenty-first, she left the capital with Go-shirakawa; they both came back to the capital from Kumano on the twelfth day of the tenth month. Entries on these three days—Nin'an 2 (1167), 9/15, 9/21, and 10/12—from *Gyokuyō* 1, 22-23; *Hyōhanki* 3, 261, 262, 277.

Shirakawa several times; however, at this point, Shigeko was just an official wife of a monarch, neither a royal member nor the mother of the heavenly sovereign yet.<sup>27</sup> It was unprecedented.

These actions reflected, and also probably contributed to, her presence in the court.

Moreover, she already seemed to have had a voice in the court. For example, Taira Nobuyori, Go-shirakawa's personal retainer and Shigeko's uncle, had been suspended from entering the palace of the crown prince but wanted to return to the palace. On the fifth day of the sixth month, Nobuyori officially asked Shigeko and obtained permission from her, allowing Nobuyori to enter the crown prince's palace.<sup>28</sup> Entering a palace (*shōden*) was a special privilege, as seen in Chapter 1. Shigeko was able to decide if one was allowed to have the privilege or not. This might be attributed to her status as mother of the crown prince; she had the power and authority to decide who was allowed to enter her son's palace.

Furthermore, Shigeko seems to have already been deeply involved in personnel affairs in the court, though it was mainly in the event of Go-shirakawa's absence. In the first month of the third year of Nin'an (1168), for instance, Go-shirakawa, during the Kumano pilgrimage, summoned Nobuyori and conveyed his opinions regarding adding personnel to the Annual Spring Appointment of Court Officials (*haru no jimoku*). Then, Nobuyori went to Shigeko's residence, and the final decision was made there.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, Shigeko issued an unofficial memorandum. Nobuyori brought the memorandum to the regent, who previewed it; Nobuyori then took it to the palace, and the appointments were announced in the name of monarch Rokujō,

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<sup>27</sup> Takakura has not ascended to the throne yet, even though he was appointed to crown prince.

<sup>28</sup> The entry of Nin'an 2 (1167), 6/5 from *Hyōhanki* 3, 220.

<sup>29</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 1/15 from *Hyōhanki* 3, 364-365.



who was three years old. From this entry, it is hard to know how much Shigeko could exert her will; whether she issued a memorandum that reflected Go-shirakawa's opinions or her own. Nevertheless, especially since *ninjin origami* was an unofficial document, Go-shirakawa could have made it at Kumano, given it to Nobuyori directly, and sent him to the regent, removing Shigeko's involvement entirely. But, Go-shirakawa chose to send Nobuyori to Shigeko first before the regent. Go-shirakawa's decision actually implies that her intervention was significant in personnel affairs.

Moreover, this was an annual event, and it was not that Go-shirakawa must have gone to Kumano that day.<sup>30</sup> To put it another way, he left the matter to her. Even though it was still during an annual event, Go-shirakawa was able to go to the Kumano pilgrimage as he wished, since he had a reliable wife and co-manager who could capably act on his behalf. This also suggests that Shigeko, a *nouveau riche* woman who had received the title of an official wife of a monarch, held more power than Go-shirakawa's queen consort.<sup>31</sup> The cohabitating "primary" wife of the retired sovereign could overshadow the queen consort, who was considered a royal member and who had initially been a co-ruler of the state.

The most significant role Shigeko played as an official wife of a monarch was, arguably, in relation to Rokujō's abdication and Takakura's succession. First, on the twenty-eighth day of

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<sup>30</sup> He entered the "purifying" stage for the Kumano pilgrimage on the thirteenth (1/13). *Hyōhanki* 3, 364

<sup>31</sup> At this point, Go-shirakawa's official wife Fujiwara Kinshi (1134-1209) from a senior noble had already been elevated to senior queen consort. In many cases, these high women were elevated, 1) since it was just a custom to follow, 2) so that new official wives could receive the *kō* status. As seen in Chapter 1, there were only four *kō* positions. In Kinshi's case, for instance, she married Go-shirakawa in 1155; immediately after that, she received the title for an official wife of a monarch. In 1156, she was elevated to senior queen consort as it had been planned, since Kiyomori's daughter Noriko married the monarch Takakura and received the junior queen consort position so that Kinshi needed to be pushed up.

the first month in the third year of Nin'an (1168), Shigeko seems to have sent Nobuyori to the Rokuhara residence of Kiyomori and Tokiko.<sup>32</sup> Nobuyori neither says what this was about nor whom he saw at the Rokuhara residence. Similarly, on the second day of the second month, Nobuyori first went to Shigeko's residence, then to Tokitada, Takakura, and Shigemori, before finally visiting Kiyomori. This time, he specifies seeing Kiyomori but only says that he conveyed "miscellaneous affairs" to Kiyomori. It is noteworthy that Go-shirakawa had left the capital for Kumano, and Kiyomori became ill this day.<sup>33</sup> On the sixth day, Nobuyori first went to the palace, then Shigeko's residence, Takakura's palace, and last Kiyomori's residence.<sup>34</sup> On the ninth day, Kiyomori's condition became critical. Nobuyori immediately visited the Rokuhara residence; most of Kiyomori's family was there.<sup>35</sup> On the tenth day, Nobuyori visited the Rokuhara residence, where many courtiers were gathered. At the same time, Shigeko secretly visited the Rokuhara residence with Tokitada.<sup>36</sup> On the eleventh day, Kiyomori and Tokiko took tonsure, probably because Kiyomori was on the verge of death. On the fifteenth day, Go-shirakawa came back from Kumano one day earlier than planned and secretly visited the Rokuhara residence.<sup>37</sup> On the sixteenth day, Takakura's succession issue was suddenly brought

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<sup>32</sup> “参女御殿、次詣六波羅亭、” the entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 1/28 from *Hyōhanki* 3, 371.

<sup>33</sup> “参女御殿、...謁右兵衛督[時忠]、次参春宮[高倉]、...次詣春宮大夫[重盛]亭、...次参前太相国[清盛]、執申雜事、...上皇自今日十箇日可籠御本宮云々、” the entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/2 from Taira Nobuyori, *Hyōhanki* 4, vol. 18 of *Shiryōtaisei*, ed. Sasakawa Shirō (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki, 1936), 1.  
“太相国自去二日聊不例、寸白云々、” the entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/6 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/9 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 6; *Gyokuyō* 1, 40.

<sup>36</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/10 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 6.

<sup>37</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/11 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 8; *Gyokuyō* 1, 40.

up.<sup>38</sup> Kanezane heard about it from someone on the sixteenth day and visited Takakura's palace the next day, probably to make sure of the authenticity of the news; he talked with Wakasa, who was also serving Takakura, and learned that it was indeed suddenly brought up on the sixteenth day.<sup>39</sup>

These entries show that the two figures who usually are credited for Takakura's succession were, in fact, not at the center of the situation: one was at far-off Kumano and the other was dying. First of all, it seems that Shigeo initiated the whole plan. It was not that Nobuyori was summoned by Go-shirakawa or Kiyomori for this matter first; it was Shigeo who called Nobuyori and asked him to tell "something" to either Kiyomori or her sister Tokiko, both of whom were at the Rokuhara residence. Secondly, Go-shirakawa had left the capital and was mostly gone during the groundwork for Takakura's succession; Kiyomori became critically ill, and it is hard to imagine that he could be of any help while bedridden. Thus, closely looking at the sources, it appears that it was Shigeo who initiated the concrete plan for her son's succession—probably in concert with Tokiko, not the dying Kiyomori—and that Tokitada cooperated with the plan. At this point, Shigeo was still an official wife of a monarch, but she made the best use of her position as the "primary" wife of Go-shirakawa and her connection with the most powerful warrior's family. On the day of Takakura's succession, Shigeo dedicated a congratulatory prayer (*norito*) to Itsukushima Shrine, which Kiyomori's family had been treating as the familial shrine.<sup>40</sup> She probably wanted to show gratitude for their cooperation.

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<sup>38</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/16 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 9; *Gyokuyō* 1, 40.

<sup>39</sup> "...参東宮、相合女房、談讓位事等、昨日俄出来事云々、..." The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/17 from *Gyokuyō*, 1, 40.

<sup>40</sup> Hiroshima Kenshi Hensan Shitu, ed. *Hiroshimakenshi nenpyō: kodai* (Hiroshima: Hiroshima Prefecture, 1984). [https://www.pref.hiroshima.lg.jp/soshiki\\_file/monjokan/nenpyou/nenpyou-kodai.pdf](https://www.pref.hiroshima.lg.jp/soshiki_file/monjokan/nenpyou/nenpyou-kodai.pdf).

We cannot know her real motivations for these actions. Perhaps she simply wanted her beloved son to be the Heavenly Sovereign or maybe she had the ambition of elevating herself to be recognized as the mother of the heavenly sovereign and presumably, to a position with *kō*. Or, perhaps, she was extraordinarily intelligent and ambitious enough to want to establish the royal *ie* with her natal family, an aristocratic Heishi line. Whatever her motivation was, though, her effort bore fruit. On the nineteenth day, Rokujō abdicated; on the twentieth day of the third month, Takakura ascended to the throne and the Heike regime was established, while Shigeiko was elevated to grand queen consort.<sup>41</sup> Now, Shigeiko is the mother of the heavenly sovereign and a royal member.

## **2-2. Role as the Mother of the Heavenly Sovereign (*bogō*) and Grand Queen Consort (*kōtaigō*) (1168-1169)**

As the grand queen consort, Shigeiko was involved in politics as much as before, if not more. For instance, on the first day of the seventh month in the third year of Nin'an (1168), Go-shirakawa told Nobuyori his opinions regarding when Takakura should visit to pay respects in the next month. Go-shirakawa ordered Nobuyori to discuss this with the regent. Nobuyori went to the regent and came back to report to Go-shirakawa, but he had already left. Nobuyori reported to Shigeiko instead.<sup>42</sup> On the tenth day, the senior nobles gathered and discussed the matter. They reached a final decision, which was supposed to be reported to Go-shirakawa. However, he was at Kumano, so by following the order of the senior noble who was in charge of

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<sup>41</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 2/19 and 2/29 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 27, 43-51.

<sup>42</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 7/1 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 101.

the matter, they reported to Shigeke.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, on the fourth day of the ninth month, Go-shirakawa, who had already entered the “purifying” place preparing for the Kumano pilgrimage, summoned Nobuyori and ordered an ad hoc appointment of court officials (*shōjimoku*) for the court banquet on the occasion of the first ceremonial offering of rice by the newly-enthroned monarch (*daijōe*). Nobuyori received a document and went to Shigeke’s residence with it. Shigeke issued an official royal order (*ryōji*), regarding the appointment, and Nobuyori went to the regent with the order.<sup>44</sup> This example also shows not only that Shigeke acted as a proxy for Go-shirakawa but also that she was recognized as co-manager of the royal *ie*: she was part of Go-shirakawa’s court.

By receiving reports, Shigeke was entrusted to judge various court matters. In the first month of the fourth year of Nin’an (1169), a senior noble who had been appointed to the post responsible for Ise Shrine lost a family member, forcing him to excuse himself from his post. Go-shirakawa was at Kumano, so Shigeke received the report.<sup>45</sup> We must remember that the only communication tools they had were to report in person or deliver a letter. When nobles reported court matters to Shigeke, as a proxy for the absent Go-shirakawa, they expected her first to judge whether the matter should be handled by herself or not, and before judging how urgent the matter was—that is, whether or not she should send a messenger or letter to Go-shirakawa in Kumano. Nobles could have sent a person or letter to Kumano directly, but they did not; they

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<sup>43</sup> “...次依上卿命令啓皇太后宮、上皇今熊野、仍有議、被啓皇太后宮云々、...” The entry of Nin’an 3 (1168), 7/10 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 104.

<sup>44</sup> *Ryōji* refers to a document issued for conveying orders of princes and the four positions with *kō*: the junior queen consort, the senior queen consort, the grand queen consort, the senior grand queen consort. The entry of Nin’an 3 (1168), 9/4 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 154-155.

<sup>45</sup> The noble was Minamoto Masamichi (1118-1175). The entry of Nin’an 4 (1169), 1/13 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 301.

reported to Shigeko and left the decision to her, recognizing her as co-manager of Go-shirakawa's court. In other words, Shigeko positioned herself as the official channel between the aristocrats and Go-shirakawa, and the aristocrats recognized her position.

Shigeko also made herself an unofficial channel between the aristocrats and Go-shirakawa. On the fourteenth day of the fourth month in the third year of Nin'an (1168), Nobuyori felt Go-shirakawa's displeasure with him.<sup>46</sup> He was so worried that he "unofficially" reported the matter to Shigeko. Shigeko answered that Go-shirakawa's displeasure was not too serious, and more importantly, the absence of the head secretary (*kurōdo no tō*) in the ritual would be unprecedented; thus, he should come to the palace.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, he went to the palace and fulfilled the duty but felt uncomfortable. Afterward, he confined himself to his house. Almost two months later, Nobuyori heard from Shigeko unofficially saying he should return to his duties. In the evening, a secretary also requested him to return to his duties. That night, Nobuyori first visited Shigeko, probably to show his gratitude, and then Go-shirakawa.<sup>48</sup> It is evident that Shigeko also unofficially mediated between nobles and Go-shirakawa. A mediator for a temperamental person like Go-shirakawa required subtle skills such as a quick wit, a sense of reading situations readily, and the ability to act swiftly. These skills enabled her to be a

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<sup>46</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 4/14 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 68.

<sup>47</sup> “依有恐懼、内々啓皇太后宮、勘氣不重歟、是非罪過之故也、代始禁中違例不便之由有御返事、仍愁參内、...” The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 4/15 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 68.

<sup>48</sup> “午後自皇太后宮内々有仰、日来不仕、己不意事歟、早可參入由有院仰云々、晚頭又藏人權左告可出仕之由、進請文畢、入夜參院、先入宮御方見參、次候院御方、...” The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 6/12 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 85.

capable politician; as a result, she was constantly involved with personnel and helped her clients.<sup>49</sup>

Since Shigeko was the mother of the heavenly sovereign, she had the authority to perform direct daily service for monarch Takakura, but she did not cohabit with the heavenly sovereign. With the developing concept of the medieval *ie*, she, as a co-manager of the royal *ie*, was expected to be a guardian of the heavenly sovereign. For instance, she gave much attention to Takakura's success in regard to the first ceremonial offering of rice by the newly enthroned monarch. This was one of the major events for a monarch. It was a symbol of the peace of his reign and the prosperity of his realm. Takakura was seven years old. Shigeko entered the royal palace in the ninth and the eleventh months to prepare for the event and also visited the greater royal palace with Go-shirakawa to preview the site for this important event. Since she did not cohabit with the heavenly sovereign, the degree of her direct daily service, the origin of the mother of the heavenly sovereign's power, decreased. Nonetheless, she could enter the royal palace to directly assist and oversee the heavenly sovereign, unlike Go-shirakawa. In other words, she could wield power by playing her expected roles as co-manager of the royal *ie*, which included directly assisting her son. Here, we could detect the shift of power dynamics, which was deeply associated with the emerging medieval *ie*; now, her role as a wife was more emphasized than that of being a mother.

After she became the grand queen consort, the sources begin to reveal her religious activities. Religious activities were also a great means to display and augment one's wealth and

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<sup>49</sup> For instance, Nobuyori's son was appointed to a post in Go-shirakawa's administrative headquarters, and Nobuyori thanked Shigeko for it, writing "it is all thanks to the grand queen consort (偏是宮御恩也)." The entries of Nin'an 3(1168), 7/18 and 8/4 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 113, 125.

political influence. In the third year of Nin'an (1168), on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month, on the anniversary of her father's death, Shigeko held a Buddhist memorial service (*tsuizenkuyō*) for him. A copy of the *Lotus Sutra* and a painting of a life-sized image of Amitabha Tathagata (*Amida nyorai*) were offered, and a high-ranking monk performed the service; Taira Chikamune (1144-1199), her younger half-brother and personal retainer, was responsible for this ceremony.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the following year, in the second month, Shigeko prepared a marvelous-looking procession and performed her pilgrimage to Hiyoshi Shrine.<sup>51</sup> It was an extensive official event, so the regent and senior nobles were also involved. Moreover, by making the Hiyoshi pilgrimages an official event, Shigeko also gave the impression that she was an influential royal member because previous monarchs, such as Gosanjō, Shirakawa, and Toba, frequently made pilgrimages to Hiyoshi Shrine. Additionally, this performance undoubtedly displayed her social and economic resources through such an extensive procession. Incidentally, Go-shirakawa watched the procession from the capital. Almost a month later, Shigeko made a pilgrimage to Hirano Shrine, an aristocratic Heishi line's clan shrine, with a similar retinue.<sup>52</sup> These two extensive official pilgrimages, performed only a month apart, could exhibit her view that the present regime was a jointly functioning between the royal family and her natal family, an aristocratic Heishi.

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<sup>50</sup> The entry of Nin'an 3 (1168), 7/25 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 115. The monk is Kōken (1110-1193), who held Buddhist rituals for Toba and Go-shirakawa.

<sup>51</sup> The entry of Nin'an 4 (1169), 2/13 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 326-330. The number of people relating to this procession would number more than one hundred guests. Hiyoshi Shrine was also read Hie, and it takes approximately four and a half hours on foot from Shigeko's residence in the present day.

<sup>52</sup> The entry of Nin'an 4 (1169), 3/26 from *Hyōhanki* 4, 362-369. Regarding the relationship between Hirano Shrine and aristocratic Heishi, see details in Tsunoda, "Kenshunmon'in," 127.



Just before Shigeo became the grand queen consort, the lady-in-waiting who left *The Diary by Kenshunmon'in Chūnagon*, also called *Tamakiharu*, started to serve Shigeo at the age of twelve. Written around 1219, the diary reminisces about her days serving as a lady-in-waiting. She recollects the first day she met Shigeo by saying that “even as a child, I was thinking ‘how beautiful she is. I have never thought that there is such a beautiful person in the world.’”<sup>53</sup> She also writes in the diary that “[P]eople used to say that from most of the court affairs to any trivial matters, there was nothing she could not get her way with.”<sup>54</sup> As we will see in the next section, Shigeo’s life as Kenshunmon’in most cogently exemplified this reminiscence.

### 2-3. The Premier Retired Royal Lady (*nyoin*) Kenshunmon’in (1169-1176)

On the twelfth day of the fourth month in the first year of Kaō (1169), Shigeo was elevated to the title of premier retired royal lady and became Kenshunmon’in. Officials in her administrative headquarters included the Grand Minister, her half older brother Tokitada, Tokitada’s son, her younger half-brother Chikamune, and Tokiko and Kiyomori’s son Munemori.<sup>55</sup> On the fifth day of the sixth month, Shigeo entered the royal palace for the first time as Kenshunmon’in. This included another magnificent procession, including at least twelve decorated palanquins for her ladies-in-waiting. She visited her son, the heavenly sovereign, at the

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<sup>53</sup> “あきれみたる幼き心地に、『あなうつくし。世にはさは、かかる人のをはしましけるか』と、...” from *Tamakiharu*, section 7 “Hatsushussi” in Misumi Yōichi, ed. *Towazugatari, Tamakiharu*, vol. 50 of Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1994), 265.

<sup>54</sup> “大方の世の政事を始め、はかなき程の事まで、御心にまかせぬ事なしと、人も思言ふめりき。” *Tamakiharu*, section 4, 277.

<sup>55</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 4/12 from Taira Nobuyori, *Hyōhanki* 5, vol. 37 of Shiryō Taisei zokuhen, ed. Sasakawa Shirō (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki, 1939), 9-13.

palace.<sup>56</sup> This might have been a performance for displaying her status as a premier retired royal lady and the mother of the heavenly sovereign to the court society. On the seventeenth day of the same month, Go-shirakawa took tonsure.<sup>57</sup> On the twenty-first day, Nobuyori was told by Go-shirakawa's personal retainers that Go-shirakawa should not receive any report as he had just taken tonsure. Therefore, Nobuyori reported to Kenshunmon'in instead.<sup>58</sup>

Shigeiko's political involvement had reached the point that a courtier felt required to report any court matters to her. On the thirteenth day of the tenth month in the first year of Kaō (1169), both Go-shirakawa and Kenshunmon'in were each at a "purifying" place for their Kumano pilgrimage. Nobuyori was summoned by Go-shirakawa and ordered to inform the regent about three matters. Nobuyori immediately went to Kenshunmon'in's "purifying" place and reported to her. Nobuyori writes, "even though [Go-shirakawa]in did not order [me] to do so, [these matters] are the court affairs; thus [I] immediately went to Kenshunmon'in's place and let her know about these matters."<sup>59</sup> This entry strikingly illustrates Kenshunmon'in's constant political involvement not only as the proxy of Go-shirakawa but as co-manager of the royal *ie*: she was an individual political figure. Furthermore, Nobuyori was also the head secretary as well; he would not have done anything Go-shirakawa would not want. In other words, there was a tacit agreement in the court or, at the very least, between Go-shirakawa and Nobuyori that the information should be shared with Kenshunmon'in. There were other premier retired royal

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<sup>56</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 6/5 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 34-35.

<sup>57</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 6/17 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 39-48.

<sup>58</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 6/21 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 49.

<sup>59</sup> "...即參女院御精進屋、申入此條々、是雖無院宣、依世事也、次參殿下[撰政基房]、申御旨...." The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 10/13 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 96.

ladies, and there was another queen consort of Go-shirakawa; nevertheless, Kenshunmon'in was the one to whom political matters needed to be reported.

Indeed, the source also suggests Kenshunmon'in's involvement during the *Kaō no gōso* incident (1169-1170). This incident reveals crucial characteristics of the *insei*. It was a conflict involving Owari province, which was under the care of provincial proprietor (*chigyō kokushu*) Narichika, Go-shirakawa's favorite personal retainer. A deputy (*mokudai*) of the governor of Owari province, Fujiwara Masatomo (?-?), insulted an estate official of the Enryaku Temple. On the seventeenth day of the twelfth month in the first year of Kaō (1169), envoys from Enryaku Temple, one of the most powerful religious institutions, came to the court and pled for Narichika's exile and Masatomo's imprisonment; they were turned away. From the evening of the twenty-second day, furious Enryaku Temple monks started to gather, preparing for a martial protest. Amid the uproar, Go-shirakawa gathered nobles at his residence and ordered the Royal Police, Judicial Chief Office (*kebiishichō*), and warriors to protect his residence. The members of the Heike, Kiyomori's younger brother Yorimori (1133-1186), oldest son Shigemori, and the second son Munemori all came, leading their 200, 130, and 150 warriors, respectively. Incidentally Shigemori, the head of the Heike, did not immediately meet the order; he only answered upon the third order's issuance.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, at the royal palace, Myōun, the heavenly sovereign's spiritual protector monk (*gojisō*), the Tendai abbot, and the regent were at Takakura's side. There were far fewer warriors protecting the royal palace. There is no doubt that Go-shirakawa expected the monks to come to his residence, not the royal palace, probably thinking that he was the *de facto* ruler of the state.

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<sup>60</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 12/24 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 69.

Contrary to Go-shirakawa's expectation, the monks went to the royal palace with a portable shrine to pronounce their plea. Go-shirakawa repeatedly sent a messenger, saying that it was unacceptable to scare the child monarch Takakura in such a manner. Further, if everyone went back to Mt. Hiei, where the Enryaku Temple was located, and if Myōun, with two official envoys, came to Go-shirakawa's residence, he would be ready for negotiation. But the monks refused Go-shirakawa's proposal, saying that they could not go to his residence since cases like this should be pled before the heavenly sovereign at the royal palace, be discussed by the State Council at the court, and be announced by the heavenly sovereign. This is the precedent, established custom even if the monarch is still a child. They stayed at the royal palace and insisted that they would leave the portable shrine behind if their plea was not approved; it would lead to the fall of Buddhist norms.

Amidst this uproar, a meeting among high nobles was held at Go-shirakawa's residence. Through Kenshunmon'in's brother Tokitada, Go-shirakawa asked the nobles to discuss whether they should accept their appeal, and if not, whether they should dispatch warriors to disperse the monks. It is evident from his later actions that Go-shirakawa wanted to protect Narichika, his personal retainer and sexual partner, and use military force to fight off the monks. These nobles must have known it; yet the decision of the meeting was not to deploy military force. The decision did not mention a decisive conclusion regarding the acceptance of the plea, suggesting the nobles' awareness of Go-shirakawa's wish. Left with no choice, Go-shirakawa issued a royal edict proclaiming Masatomo's imprisonment and sent Myōun with the edict to persuade the monks. Nevertheless, monks insisted on Narichika's exile as well and left, leaving the portable shrine behind. On the twenty-fourth day, Go-shirakawa finally gave up and decided to fully

approve the monks' request: Narichika's exile. The monks rejoiced, collected the portable shrines, and went back to the mountain.

On the twenty-seventh day, Go-shirakawa suddenly changed his decision; he announced the dismissal and exile of Tokitada, and the head secretary, Nobuyori, with the charge of "having reported inaccurate information" and the dismissal of Myōun from the spiritual protector monk position with the charge of "misleading the monks of the Enryaku Temple." On his diary entry for this day, Nobuyori wrote that "Kenshunmon'in told me [these decisions] beforehand, but I cannot write more details than this."<sup>61</sup> Clearly, Shigeko was actively involved in this chaotic situation, even though how exactly she was involved is unclear. Nevertheless, Nobuyori's second line strongly suggests Kenshunmon'in's deep involvement; considering her regular involvement in personnel decisions, she probably worked on behalf of Nobuyori and her half-brother Tokitada in this case. Nakashima Yutaka suggests that Kenshunmon'in persuaded them to quietly accept the charge and guided them to stay around the capital since they should be able to return soon.<sup>62</sup> Kanezane also reported Kenshunmon'in a matter likely relating to this incident on the twenty-third day.<sup>63</sup> Incidentally, Kanezane wrote about decisions of Go-shirakawa sarcastically in his diary, "people were wondering if it [these decisions] was[were] because of a demon."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "...先是自女院御方、有被仰出之報等、併難祿筆端畢" The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 12/27 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 149.

<sup>62</sup> Nakashima Yutaka, "Heishi seiken no seiritsu to sono gen'in: Kiyomori to Kenshunmon'in," *Rekishi to Kōbe* 48, no. 5 (October 2009): 16.

<sup>63</sup> "...院中無人、以基輔申入女院御方..." The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 12/23 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 69.

<sup>64</sup> "...天魔所為也云々、" The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 12/28 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 70.

In the following year, on the sixth day of the first month, Go-shirakawa even promoted Narichika, astonishing the court. The monks strongly requested the exile of Narichika and reinstating Tokitada and Nobuyori; a rumor of another violent protest by monks was circulated. On the thirteenth day, Go-shirakawa ordered the Royal Police and Judicial Chief to protect the crossroads between the mountain and the capital. On the same day, Kiyomori's younger brother Yorimori left the capital for Fukuhara, likely to seek instructions from Kiyomori. The next day, Kiyomori's oldest son and the head of the Heike, Shigemori, also left the capital for Fukuhara. Nobles held meetings, but they either suspended their final decision or could not reach a consensus.<sup>65</sup> On the seventeenth day, Kiyomori came to the capital, and on the twenty-seventh day, Go-shirakawa accepted the monks' requests. On the sixth day of the second month, he issued the royal edict declaring the decision: the exile of Narichika and nullification of the dismissal and exile of Tokitada and Nobuyori. Finally, the incident was settled.

Go-shirakawa repeatedly changing his decisions has often been viewed as a symbol of his arbitrary despotism; however, we should view it as a result of the diffusion of power. Go-shirakawa's wish had not changed from the beginning: he wanted to protect Narichika through the threat of military force. But he could not carry out this wish since no other group would support him. The spiritual protector monk Myōun, very early on, practically gave up on persuading the monks.<sup>66</sup> It is evident from Kanezane's diary that the courtiers were calm in attitude, quietly and passively defying Go-shirakawa partially because they were seriously afraid of the decline of Buddhist and royal norms, and in part because the Heike, the only military

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<sup>65</sup> "...諸卿定申趣非一云々..." The entry of Kaō 2 (1170), 1/22 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 78.

<sup>66</sup> "...山大衆之非常不敵、不可始干此、若無裁許者、定濫吹出来歟、只今可仰之詞、更以不覺悟、為之如何云々、..." The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 12/24 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 69.

force, clearly did not want to take Go-shirakawa's side. This was probably due to the close relationship between the Heike and the Enryaku Temple, another gate of power.

Moreover, the argument regarding the precedented and established custom struck at the heart of the legitimacy of the *insei*: even when he was a child, the ruler of the state was supposed to be the heavenly sovereign, not the retired sovereign. The retired sovereign was not the legitimate ruler of the state so could not act like a dictator. The court aristocracy valued what was logically and morally right more than what his majesty personally wanted. As a result, Go-shirakawa struggled and, eventually, he had no choice but to give up. This case well demonstrates the diffusion of power, including the strong influence of a gate of power, Enryaku Temple, and the vulnerability of the *insei*. Being aware of this vulnerability, retired sovereigns grounded their legitimacy more in the concept of the medieval *ie*: as the head of the royal *ie*, rather than as the ex-ruler of the state. This reliance also increased the power of the “primary wife” of the retired sovereign as a co-manager of the medieval royal *ie*. Adding to the fact that she herself was a premier retired royal lady, Kenshunmon'in wielded tremendous influence in the court and regularly involved in court affairs, including personnel decisions, even under such chaotic situations.

A source reveals that a member of the Fujiwara Regent's Family, Kanezane, reported another significant court matter to Kenshunmon'in, and she worked to settle the matter. On the fourteenth day of the fifth month in the fifth year of Shōan (1175), Kanezane heard of the intrusion of the agents of the Royal Police and Judicial Chief Office into a Kujō estate.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The entry of Shōan 5 (1175), 5/14 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 444-445.

Kanezane immediately reported this matter to Go-shirakawa and Kenshunmon'in separately.<sup>68</sup> On the nineteenth day, Kenshunmon'in asked another premier retired royal lady Kōkamon'in (1122-1181), who was from the Fujiwara Regent's Family, to explain the situation and requested that she submit a document, legitimating the right of the Kujō estates to reject an intervention by the governmental authorities.<sup>69</sup> This entry demonstrates that first, Kanezane chose to report the matter to Kenshunmon'in, and second, even the Fujiwara Regent's Family had to submit a written document in order to claim their land ownership, three, Kenshunmon'in was the one who directed the matter toward a solution. It is evident that Kenshunmon'in was recognized as the one to whom a courtier should report such court matters. Kōkamon'in was Kanezane's older sister; still, Kanezane reported to Kenshunmon'in because he knew that Kenshunmon'in was the one who held enough power and influence to solve a court matter. It is apparent that Kenshunmon'in was not a mere proxy of Go-shirakawa; she, herself, was a powerful political individual.

Maybe because she “retired” so that she had more freedom, or maybe because her presence in the court became even more visible so that her every action attracted a courtier's attention, sources begin to reveal more of how she entertained herself. On the twenty-ninth day of the eighth month in the first year of Kaō (1169), Takakura visited Kamo Shrine. Go-shirakawa and Kenshunmon'in went out to watch the procession and enjoyed the sight.<sup>70</sup> In the tenth

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<sup>68</sup> “以経家朝臣、被申去十四日濫行事於院、余仰子細、御返事日、可尋沙汰云々、今夕又如一日、有濫行云々、” and “申入昨日濫行事於建春門院御方、有聞驚之報、” The entries of Shōan 5 (1175), 5/17 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 445.

<sup>69</sup> “...濫行之間子細并九条御領所々使不可乱入之由緒等、可注申之由、自建春門院被申女院、仍注子細、被申達了、...” The entry of Shōan 5 (1175), 5/19 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 445.

<sup>70</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 8/29 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 79. It takes two hours on foot now.



month, they went to the Kumano pilgrimage together.<sup>71</sup> She came back to the capital on the sixth day of the eleventh month, Go-shirakawa on the thirteenth.<sup>72</sup> On the twentieth, she entered the royal palace probably due to the music and dance event held the next day. She enjoyed the event and stayed at the palace, probably to assist Takakura for the Yasoshima festival, a once-in-a-lifetime important event for a monarch. On the twenty-fourth day, she went back to her residence.<sup>73</sup> The next day, with Go-shirakawa, she watched the procession of the Yasoshima festival for monarch Takakura.<sup>74</sup> The Yasoshima festival brought his majesty's clothes by royal envoy to Yasoshima, in modern Ōsaka prefecture, and performed a ritual, praying for the peace of the realm with the monarch's clothes as a proxy for his majesty. The royal envoy was usually served by a nursing mother who also held the *naishi no kami* position, which was the highest of the female court officials. In this case, the envoy was served by Fujiwara Tsuneko (??-??), the primary wife of Shigemori.<sup>75</sup> She left the Rokuhara residence for Yasoshima with a magnificent procession of more than 150 people, which included more than twenty leading members of the Heike.<sup>76</sup> This event must have communicated the message that the prosperity of Takakura's reign was deeply associated with that of the Heike. In other words, this event symbolized the

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<sup>71</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 10/13 from *Hyōhanki*. 5, 97. It takes forty hours on foot now.

<sup>72</sup> The entries of Kaō 1 (1169), 11/6 and 11/13 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 116, 117.

<sup>73</sup> The entries of Kaō 1 (1169), 11/20 and 11/24 from *Go-shirakawa tennō jitsuroku* 2, 820.

<sup>74</sup> The entry of Kaō 1 (1169), 11/25 from *Hyōhanki*. 5, 129.

<sup>75</sup> Tsuneko did not hold the *naishi no kami* position. She held the *naishi no suke* position, which was the second-level manager of the Office of Female Chamberlains (*naishi no tsukasa*).

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* After Kiyomori recovered from his critical condition, he moved to Fukuhara in current Hyōgo prefecture, and Tokiko also moved to a huge mansion called “West Eighth Ward Mansion (*nishi hachijō dai*).” The Rokuhara residence was succeeded by Shigemori and his wife Tsuneko. From there to Yasoshima, it takes ten hours on foot.

Heike regime. We can only speculate, but Shigeiko must have been watching the procession with a feeling of fulfillment, and possibly, ambition.

This capable woman had other grandiose projects in the works, such as her niece (Kiyomori and Tokiko's daughter) Taira Noriko (1155-1214)'s marriage with Takakura. This marriage would have been entirely distinct from Shigeiko's case. Shigeiko was a *nouveau riche*; she started as a lady-in-waiting for a premier retired royal lady, became a sexual partner of a retired sovereign, and won over the position of the retired sovereign's "primary" wife. Following these accomplishments, Shigeiko had earned her titles such as an official wife of a monarch, the grand queen consort, and the premier retired royal lady. Unlike the daughters of senior nobles such as the Fujiwara Regent's Family, Shigeiko's family status, an aristocratic Heishi, could have never offered these titles without creating *fait accomplis*. Now, Shigeiko, her siblings Tokiko and Tokitada, and Kiyomori were trying to break tradition and make a precedent that Noriko—a woman from a warrior Heishi line (the Rokuhara line) and an aristocratic Heishi line (Shigeiko's natal line)—would marry the heavenly sovereign as if she were a daughter of the Fujiwara Regent's Family. To put it another way, they were trying to marry Noriko as the official wife of a monarch from the beginning. Indeed, Shigeiko's achievements undoubtedly had raised her family status and that of the Heike; yet, this would be an arduous project.

It needed to be carefully prepared. First, in the third month in the second year of Kaō (1170), Shigeiko dedicated a sacred treasure (*shinpō*) and offerings (*nusa*) to Itsukushima Shrine.<sup>77</sup> On the twentieth day of the fourth month, Kiyomori joined Go-shirakawa to receive percepts (*jukai*) at Tōdai Temple together by following the precedent of the late retired sovereign

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<sup>77</sup> The entry of Kaō 2 (1170), 3/5 from *Hiroshimakenshi*.

Toba and the late regent Tadazane.<sup>78</sup> This clearly suggests Kiyomori's intention to emulate the Fujiwara Regent's Family in order to display and increase his, and the Heike's, authority. Then, in the fifth month, Kiyomori donated some private land to Itsukushima Shrine as an endowment to maintain rituals dedicated to prayer (*kitōryōsho*) for Go-shirakawa, Kenshunmon'in, and Takakura.<sup>79</sup> These actions must have shown the union of the Heike and Go-shirakawa's Royal *ie*; they could be seen as the preparation for the project.

In the following year (1171), in the first month, Takakura had his coming-of-age ceremony. On the twenty-third day of the tenth month, Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa visited Kiyomori at Fukuhara. They seemed to enjoy the time at Fukuhara, including boating,<sup>80</sup> but considering the timing and the fact that the prominent figures in the Heike also went there, the main purpose of this excursion was probably consultation regarding the marriage of Takakura and Noriko.<sup>81</sup> On the twenty-eighth day of the eleventh month, Kanezane heard about the marriage in some details;<sup>82</sup> on the second day of the twelfth month, the topic was officially discussed by nobles, including the regent, Kenshunmon'in, and many Heike members, at Go-shirakawa's residence.<sup>83</sup> Finally, on the fourteenth day, Noriko first went to Go-shirakawa's

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<sup>78</sup> The entries of Kaō 2 (1170), 4/19 from *Hyōhanki* 5, 156; *Gyokuyō* 1, 93-94. 4/20 from Keizai zasshi sha, ed. *Hyakurenshō* 8, vol. 14 of *Kokushi taikei* (Tokyo: Keizai zasshi sha, 1901), 110.

<sup>79</sup> The entry of Kaō 2 (1170), 5/5 from *Hiroshimakenshi*.

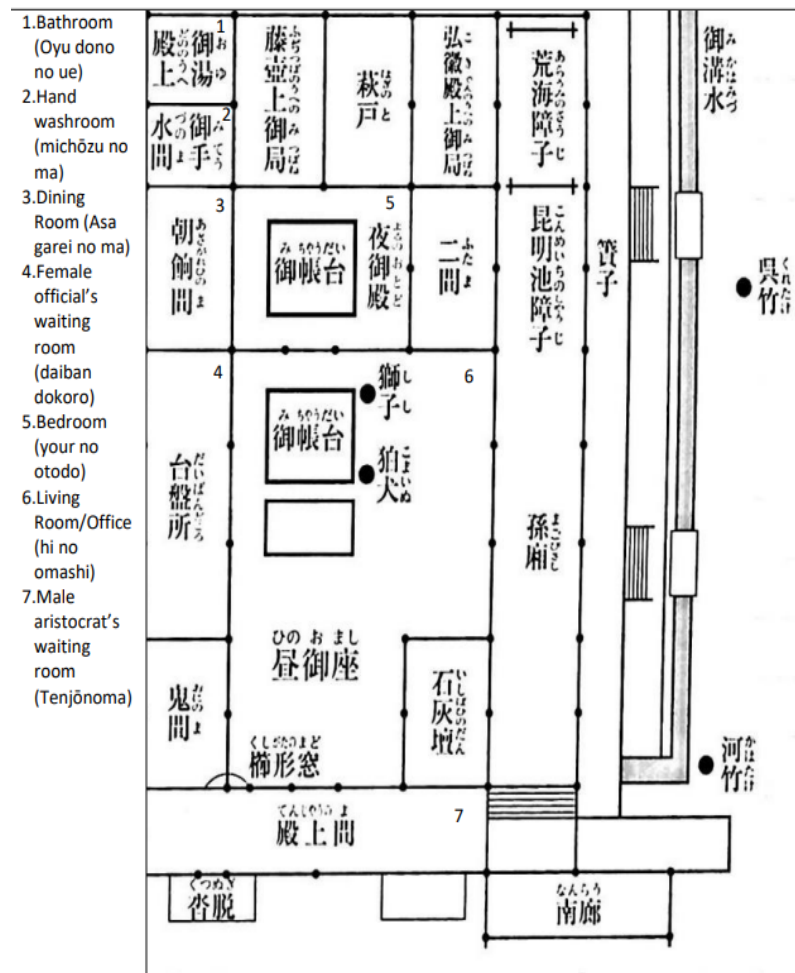
<sup>80</sup> “太上法皇建春門院御幸入道太政大臣福原別業。有船遊事。遊女賜祿。” The entry of Shōan 1 (1171), 10/23 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 112.

<sup>81</sup> “今曉、上皇渡御入道太相国福原別業、公卿六人、重盛卿、資盛卿、兼雅卿、成親卿、宗盛卿、時忠卿、等也、殿上人十人許、不及記云々、” The entry of Shōan 1 (1171), 10/23 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 164.

<sup>82</sup> The entry of Shōan 1 (1171), 11/28 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 167.

<sup>83</sup> The entry of Shōan 1 (1171), 12/2 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 168.

residence and held her coming-of-age ceremony; Noriko's mother Tokiko, father Kiyomori, the leading Heike members, and many high nobles such as the regent were present. Kenshunmon'in played the key part of the ritual: tying Noriko's waist strap. At night, Noriko, with a magnificent procession, entered the royal palace as an adopted daughter of Go-shirakawa, following the precedent of Taikenmon'in becoming an adopted daughter of Shirakawa for her marriage with Toba.<sup>84</sup> Noriko was immediately elevated to the junior queen consort.



**Map 3: Heavenly Sovereign's Private Day-quarter in the Royal Palace**

The marriage was not the ultimate goal; it was a step to the ultimate goal of Noriko's pregnancy with the heir who would take the throne. Kenshunmon'in continuously supported and often conducted the direct daily service for this young couple and seemed to pray assiduously for Noriko's pregnancy.<sup>85</sup> Regarding the couple's possible first night, for instance, Kenshunmon'in entered the royal palace at night on the

<sup>84</sup> The entries of Shōan 1 (1171), 12/14 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 170-172; *Hyōhanki* 5, 175-176.

<sup>85</sup> Considering Takakura's age, which was ten, these prayers were more likely for the future.

fourteenth day of the fifth month in the second year of Shōan (1172).<sup>86</sup> At night on the next day, Lady Shirakawa Taira Moriko (1156-1179), Kiyomori's daughter and a widow of the previous regent, also entered the palace.<sup>87</sup> On the sixteenth, Noriko entered the heavenly sovereign's bedroom (*yoru no otodo*) and spent the night. Kenshunmon'in and lady Shirakawa were standing by at the *daibandokoro* and ladies-in-waiting at the *oninoma* (Map 3).<sup>88</sup> Around that date, sources show some *kechigan*, the completion of the prayer; these were probably conducted for their successful first night, and possibly, future pregnancy. For the *kechigan* on the eighteenth, the regent and Kiyomori were involved, and on the twenty-sixth day, Kenshunmon'in's prayer was completed.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, on the eighteenth day of the sixth month, Kenshunmon'in ordered the commencement of the prayer, which was completed on the twenty-sixth day. Historian Tsunoda suggests this prayer was for Noriko's pregnancy.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, at the end of the fourth month, Kenshunmon'in officially visited Hirano Shrine with many nobles, including the leading Heike members, and ten dancers whose performance she dedicated to the shrine.<sup>91</sup> This might have also been for the wish for her niece/daughter-in-law to conceive, as well as undoubtedly for showing gratitude for completing Noriko and Takakura's marriage successfully.

This project unquestionably shortened the distance between Go-shirakawa and the Heike. Another symbolic event was Shigeo's Itsukushima pilgrimage, which courtiers recorded in their

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<sup>86</sup> The entry of Shōan 2 (1172), 5/14 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 201.

<sup>87</sup> The entry of Shōan 2 (1172), 5/15 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 203.

<sup>88</sup> The entry of Shōan 2 (1172), 5/16 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 203.

<sup>89</sup> The entry of Shōan 2 (1172), 5/26 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 203.

<sup>90</sup> Tsunoda Bun'ei, "Kenshunmon'in," 135.

<sup>91</sup> The entries of Shōan 2 (1172), 4/27 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 113; *Gyokuyō* 1, 199.

diaries. Fujiwara/Yoshida Tsunefusa emphasizes how unprecedented it was and the high risk of going to Itsukushima Shrine by ship. He goes, “from high to low, people were surprised of the weirdness; well, there is nothing we can do about it... Nyūdōshōkoku [Kiyomori] came from Fukuhara to serve [Kenshunmon’in and Go-shirakawa]”<sup>92</sup> Kanezane says, “this shrine has been especially active for these seven or eight years due to the special worship by Nyūdōshōkoku [Kiyomori]’s family. It is said that that is why [Kenshunmon’in and Go-shirakawa] visited there.”<sup>93</sup> Clearly, courtiers recognized the close relationship between the Heike and Itsukushima, and between the Heike and the royal “retired” couple who were the co-managers of the royal *ie*.

Moreover, even though it has been assumed that Go-shirakawa visited Itsukushima taking Kenshunmon’in with him, according to *Ryōjinhishō kudenshū* written by Go-shirakawa, Go-shirakawa accompanied Kenshunmon’in.<sup>94</sup> Religious scholar Abe Ryūichi also argues that Shigeko clearly planned this pilgrimage, and her husband Go-shirakawa followed along, by pointing out that it was Shigeko who presented the dedicatory vow at the shrine; courtiers at the dedicatory service found it utterly incomprehensible that Go-shirakawa did not prepare his own vow.<sup>95</sup> This evidence comes from *Genpei seisūiki*, which was possibly written around the late thirteenth century; thus, it is not safe to accept this evidence at face value. Nonetheless, at least it

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<sup>92</sup> “今暁、院并建春門院令發向安芸伊津岐嶋給、己無先規、希代事歟、風波路非無其難、上下雖奇驚、不及是非、...” The entry of Shōan 4 (1174), 3/16 from Fujiwara Tsunefusa, *Kikki* 1, vol. 22 of Shiryō Taisei, ed. Sasakawa Shirō (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki, 1939), 43.

<sup>93</sup> “法皇并女院向入道相国福原別業給、来十九日可参詣伊津岐嶋給云々、件社此七八年以来靈驗殊勝、入道相国之一家殊以信仰、仍所参給也云々、” The entry of Shōan 4 (1174), 3/16 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 364. *Hyakurenshō* also mentions this event and says that Kenshunmon’in and Go-shirakawa came back to the capital on the ninth day of the fourth month. *Hyakurenshō* 8, 117.

<sup>94</sup> あきの巖島へ、建春門院に相ぐして参る事ありき。The exert from Tsunoda Bun’ei, “Kenshunmon’in,” 142.

<sup>95</sup> Abe Ryūichi, “Women and the Heike Nōkyō,” 121

means that during the thirteenth or fourteenth century, Shigeo's initiative, rather than Go-shirakawa's, was recognized.

Here again, we do not know Shigeo's real motivations for this pilgrimage; maybe she felt indebted to Tokiko and the Heike with regard to Takakura's succession; maybe she simply wanted to cooperate with her siblings for the prosperity of their line and, thus, cement the new royal-heishi *ie*; and as an intelligent woman, she knew that she needed a military ally in order to secure the new royal *ie*. Whatever her motivation was, Kenshunmon'in's Itsukushima pilgrimage, accompanied by Go-shirakawa, was a highly effective performance for the court. By visiting Kiyomori at Fukuhara, by supporting her niece Noriko, and by the unprecedented pilgrimage to Itsukushima, Kenshunmon'in made publicly clear the characteristic of Takakura's reign: cooperation between, if not the integration of, the Heike and the royal *ie*.

Having such an influential figure on their side was essential for the Heike to maintain the regime. Nobles, high and low, tried to make connections with the ones who had strong influence in the personnel decisions; resources gathered around him/her. Kenshunmon'in's strong influence on such decisions is frequently mentioned in the sources as seen. For instance, Kenshunmon'in's brother Tokitada, who was "exiled" due to the Kaō violent protest by monks, came back with a small appointment of court officials on the twenty first day of the fourth month in the first year of Shōan (1171). What astonished nobles was that he was immediately promoted by forcibly increasing the prescribed number of regular personnel positions. Kanezane said, "this is unprecedented."<sup>96</sup> This entry also suggests that Kenshunmon'in's nephew, Munemori had also

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<sup>96</sup> "...昨日有小除目、...権中納言平時忠、(乗闕、十人例始歟、宗盛始九人之例、今人如此、未曾有[之、]..." The entry of Shōan 1 (1171), 4/22 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 148.

been promoted by increasing the number. The notable thing here is that it was these two who were promoted by breaking the rules: Tokitada—her brother—and Munemori—her nephew/fostering son—. Munemori was Kiyomori’s second son, but Shigemori—Kiyomori’s oldest son and the heir of the Heike at this point—was not Tokiko’s son; Shigemori was technically not Kenshunmon’in’s nephew.<sup>97</sup> Only the members who were close to Kenshunmon’in were promoted by breaking the rules suggests her influence. As a matter of fact, when Kenshunmon’in’s uncle Nobuyori was appointed to the head of the ministry in charge of military affairs (*hyōbukyō*) by surpassing other competitors who held upper ranks, Kanezane inferred Nobuyori won the position probably because he was close to Kenshunmon’in.<sup>98</sup> This entry suggests the court society’s cognizance of Kenshunmon’in’s influence on the appointment of the court officials. Incidentally, due to Kenshunmon’in’s nomination, Tokitada was also bestowed the Junior Second Rank, and Fujiwara Motomichi (1160-1233), who was from the Fujiwara Regent’s Family and the key person for the close relationship between the Heike and Fujiwara Regent’s Family, was bestowed the Junior Third Rank at the age of fifteen, skipping some ranks in the fourth year of the Shōan (1174).<sup>99</sup>

Even a leading member of the Fujiwara Regent’s Family, Kanezane, contacted Kenshunmon’in regarding the first appointment of his son, Fujiwara Yoshimichi (1167-1188). Yoshimichi was a fostering child of his aunt, Kōkamon’in, so she had been acting as his

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<sup>97</sup> Kenshunmon’in’s support for Munemori eventually made it possible that Munemori won the heir position over Shigemori’s line. I will explore this in detail in the next “legacy” section.

<sup>98</sup> “兵部卿從三位信範任之、納言之中、其人甚多、最末之散三位拝任如何、依女院御傍親歟、” The entry of Shōan 3 (1173), 1/22 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 278.

<sup>99</sup> Keizai Zasshi sha, ed. *Kugyō bunin zenpen*, vol 9 of *Kokushi taiki* (Tokyo: Keizai Zasshi sha, 1899), 487, 489.



guardian.<sup>100</sup> On the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth days of the second month in the first year of Angen (1175), Kanezane visited Kōkamon'in regarding Yoshimichi's first appointment in the court since Yoshimichi was having his coming-of-age ceremony soon. On the twenty-eighth day, Kanezane made sure to ask Wakasa, Shigeiko's nursing mother, to let Kenshunmon'in know about this issue.<sup>101</sup> On the fourth day of the third month, Taira Chikamune, Go-shirakawa's personal retainer and Kenshunmon'in's younger half-brother, was sent to Kanezane by Kenshunmon'in. It seems to have concerned the first appointment of Yoshimichi.<sup>102</sup> A few days later, Yoshimichi was bestowed the Junior Fifth Rank, Upper Grade, which was above what Kanezane had initially expected. It is clear that Kenshunmon'in was involved in the appointment, and Kanezane knew that Kenshunmon'in, not Kōkamon'in or other premier retired royal ladies, was the one who had a strong influence on the appointment of the court officials. It is highly likely that the contemporary courtiers saw her in the light of the words of *Tamakiharu*: "there was nothing she could not get her way with."

This example also reveals another significant facet, what historian Shimogōri calls "the human network," that formed around Kenshunmon'in. As seen in the previous entry, Kanezane asked a lady-in-waiting/the nursing mother of Shigeiko, Wakasa, to convey his message to Kenshunmon'in. When a courtier had a matter he needed to convey to a royal member, it was common to have one or multiple persons as a cushion before the royal member. As mentioned in Chapter 1, ladies-in-waiting usually fulfilled such roles for the heavenly sovereign and premier retired royal ladies. Naturally, Wakasa was fulfilling the role for Kenshunmon'in, as seen in the

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<sup>100</sup> Kuriyama Keiko, *Chūsei ōke no seiritsu to insei*, 176.

<sup>101</sup> The entries of Angen 1 (1175), 2/24, 2/25, and 2/28 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 430.

<sup>102</sup> The entry of Angen 1 (1175), 3/4 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 431.

previous case. But Wakasa also served monarch Takakura, and she was actually fulfilling a role as the “transmitter of a message (*densō*).”<sup>103</sup> The “transmitter of a message” is one of the most important posts of the administrative nobility. It involved not only transmitting royal records, but setting the agenda for council meetings, adjudicating cases, and recording the minutes of these meetings. Wakasa continued serving monarch Takakura after Shigeeko passed away, became a “person who was dominating the court,” as a courtier Tadachika addresses in his diary, and unusually, kept delivering political messages even after Takakura became a retired sovereign.<sup>104</sup> As we will see in the next section, this human network, including Wakasa’s position, would become a significant means for the Heike to communicate with the court members, especially after the death of Kenshunmon’in. Incidentally, Munemori, as Kenshunmon’in’s fostering child, greatly benefitted from the network as he was a part of it, and eventually won the position of the head of the Heike.

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<sup>103</sup> For instance, the entry of Nin’an 3 (1168), 9/15 from *Hyōhanki* 3, 250; the entry of Shōan 4 (1174), 9/9 from *Kikki* 1, 60; *Jishō* 1 (1177), the entry of 9/19 from Hanawa Hokiichi, ed., *Jingibu* 8, vol. 8 of *Gunshoruijyū* (Tokyo: Tokyo Kokusho kan, 1875), 25.

<sup>104</sup> “...若狭局（故建春門院御乳母、当今又如御乳母、執權之人也、）...” The entry of *Jishō* 3 (1179), 1/3 from Fujiwara Tadachika, *Sankaiki* 2, vol. 20 of *Shiryō Taisei*, ed. Sasagawa Tanerō (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki, 1934), 183.

The more male personal retainers gathered around a retired sovereign, the more male personal retainers started to fulfill the message delivery role: they were called the “transmitter of a message for a retired sovereign (*in no densō*).” Historian Mikawa Kei and Shimogōri point out that delivering messages to the heavenly sovereign by ladies-in-waiting was still common, but to a retired sovereign, it became rare during the *insei* period; Takakura’s court was the exception. See details in Shimogōri Go, “*Densō no nyōbō: Takakura inseiki no sei to sei*” in *Kenryoku to Bunka*, vol. 1 of *Inseiki bunka ronshū*, ed., *Inseiki bunka kenkyūkai* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2001), 128.

Furthermore, Gomi Fumihiko also points out that under monarch Gotoba’s court, ladies-in-waiting delivered messages to Gotoba; his nursing mother, Fujiwara Kaneko (1155-1229), was designated to deliver more important messages, which encompassed important political matters. Incidentally, Jien refers to her by saying that “in the Eastern provinces, Hōjō Yoshitoki (1163-1224) and his sister Hōjō Masako (1156-1225) administered the affairs of the military government, whereas in the capital, Lady Second Rank (Kaneko) was firmly in control. So this country of Japan really is a state where ‘women are the finishing touches.’” But, Gotoba’s court was technically during the Kamakura period, not during the *insei* period.

Hosting cultural activities and the Buddhist rituals could also be a great means to display and enhance Shigeo's wealth and political power. The biggest cultural activity she held was, arguably, the Poetry Contest held at the North Wing of Hōjūji by Kenshunmon'in (Kenshunmon'in hokumen utaawase) on the sixteenth day of the tenth month in the second year of Kaō (1170). During Go-shirakawa's absence, while on pilgrimage to Kumano, Kenshunmon'in held a big poetry contest at her residence; twenty poets, divided ten for the left side and ten for the right, attended, and the judge was the famous poet, Fujiwara Shunzei (1114-1204).<sup>105</sup> These poets were pro-Heike nobles who surrounded Kenshunmon'in.<sup>106</sup>

The faces of the attendees could suggest two intriguing things. One is that many of them were relatives of her ladies-in-waiting. This might be an indication of one, through their female members, male members of the same family tried to get favors from Kenshunmon'in, or two, since Kenshunmon'in was such a politically influential figure, the male members of the family sent their female members as a lady-in-waiting to make connections with Kenshunmon'in. Considering the senior ladies-in-waiting, the relatives of the attendees, were serving Shigeo even before Shigeo became such a prominent political figure, the former is most likely accurate.

Another notable thing is that none of the Rokuhara line, warrior Heishi, participated. In actuality, there was only one Taira member: Taira Chikamune, Shigeo's younger half-brother. It is not hard to imagine that if Shigeo's older half-brother Tokitada and uncle Nobuyori had

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<sup>105</sup> Tsunoda, "Kenshunmon'in," 130, 131. Takeda Motoharu, "Kenshunmon'in hokumen utaawase chūshaku," *Ōtsuna joshi daigaku kiyō bunkei* 41, no. 41 (March 2009): 13.

<sup>106</sup> Fujiwara Takasue (1127-1185), Minamoto Yorimasa (1104-1180), and Minamoto Michichika (1149-1202), et cetera.

already come back to the court, they would have probably been there.<sup>107</sup> Either way, Chikamune, as Tokitada and Nobuyori, was from the aristocratic Heishi. What does the absence of the Rokuhara line, indicate? It could simply be because members of the Rokuhara line were too boorish to be a part of this “elegant” cultural activity.<sup>108</sup> Or, and most likely, Kenshunmon’in wanted to appreciate her ladies-in-waiting, or, or and, she wanted to cement relationships with the relatives of her ladies-in-waiting. *Tamakiharu* shows how Shigeko was doting and took great care of her ladies-in-waiting.<sup>109</sup> She probably knew that winning the hearts and minds of her personal retainers would lead to her political power. In court society, poetry was a very important skill to have, even politically. If one was great at poetry, he could have been promoted due to this skill. For the attendees of this poetry contest, mostly the Second and Third rank senior courtiers, receiving an invitation by Kenshunmon’in and attending the contest held by her must have been a great chance to demonstrate their skills and also display their strong connection with her; meanwhile, Kenshunmon’in could also demonstrate her political entourage.

One remarkable thing here is that none of Kenshunmon’in’s entourage, including ladies-in-waiting, were from a warrior Heishi line.<sup>110</sup> This actually might be one of the indications of the absence of Shigeko’s direct cooperation with Kiyomori. As said in the introduction, Shigeko

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<sup>107</sup> As seen earlier, embroiled in the Kaō violent protest by monks (*Kaō no gōso*), Tokitada, as well as Nobuyori, had been sentenced to exile in the twelfth month in the first year of Kaō (1169) and annulled in the first month of the next year. But they could not come back to the court until the twelfth month of the second year of Kaō (1170). See the entry of Kaō 2 (1170), 12/8 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 111.

<sup>108</sup> Taira Tadanori (1144-1184), Kiyomori’s half-brother, is a famous poet, and Taira Koremori (1159-1184), Kiyomori’s grandson, is also famous for his beauty and great skills in dance. But at this point (1170), they were not even the Fourth Rank yet. Most of the attendees were of the Second or Third Rank.

<sup>109</sup> Tsunoda, “Kenshunmon’in,” 132.

<sup>110</sup> Nishii Yoshiko proposes that Wakasa was from the warrior Heishi and a daughter of Taira Masamori, Kiyomori’s grandfather in her chapter “Wakasa no tsubone to Tango no tsubone” in *Go-shirakawain*. If we adopt her theory, Wakasa was the only lady-in-waiting who was from the warrior Heishi.

and Tokiko, as well as Tokitada, were from an aristocratic Heishi line, originating from prince Takamune, and Kiyomori was from the Rokuhara line—a warrior Heishi line—which was an Ise Heishi line, descended from prince Takamochi. Both are the Heike in my definition, but technically, they were two separate lines. They cooperated because of the marriage between Kiyomori and Tokiko and because of their common goal: the Heike regime. However, I argue that they were not completely merged, at least, in each member's mind. It might be even possible that when Shigeiko considered the Heike regime, it was the cooperation or the integration of her line, not the Rokuhara line, and the royal line. As seen, sources clearly show Shigeiko's direct cooperation with Tokiko and Tokitada and demonstrate Shigeiko's numerous instances of support for members of her line, including Tokiko and Kiyomori's oldest son, Muemori, but not of the members of the Rokuhara line directly. The absence of the members of the Rokuhara line at the poetry contest, and in her ladies-in-waiting, could be an indication of the absence of the direct connection and cooperation between Kiyomori and Shigeiko.

Hosting not only cultural activity, but also Buddhist rituals could be a great means to display and enhance one's wealth and political power: the construction of Kenshunmon'in's royal vow temple (*goganji*), Saishōkōin unquestionably provided her with more movement, wealth, authority, and power. Royal vow temples existed from the early Heian period but reached its peak during the *insei* period; influential royal members, starting with Shirakawa, built royal vow temples one after another. According to scholar Maruyama Hitoshi, we can define the royal vow temples built during the *insei* period that the temples for praying for the spiritual protection of the state (*kokka chingo*) and also for the deceased souls of the royal family.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Maruyama Hitoshi, *Inseiki no ōke to goganji: zōei jigyō to shakai hendō* (Tokyo: Kōshi shoin, 2006), 9. <sup>111</sup>

The construction of a royal vow temple was a big state event. For Saishōkōin, Shigeo's half-brother the Senior Third Rank Taira Tokitada was assigned to be the senior noble in charge of this important event, and Fujiwara Tsunefusa, who was an official of Kenshunmon'in's administrative headquarters, was appointed to be the controller (*ben*) for the construction.<sup>112</sup> It had been long assumed that Saishōkōin was built under Go-shirakawa's instructions since his beloved wife Kenshunmon'in wished for it, but Tsunefusa's diary *Kikki* evidently shows Kenshunmon'in's initiatives and direct involvement. For example, Shigeo declared to appoint a monk to be an attendant of Saishōkōin and transfer a courtier's estate to Saishōkōin. Two days later, Tsunefusa visited Go-shirakawa to report the matter.<sup>113</sup> He often reports matters relating to Saishōkōin to Kenshunmon'in.<sup>114</sup> Go-shirakawa's involvement is unquestionable, but Kenshunmon'in's involvement is also evident.

First, three months before the first ritual for construction (*jōtō*) for the royal vow temple, Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa went to Byōdōin to view a model on the first day of the eleventh month in the first year of Shōan (1171). It is noteworthy that it was on the way back from Fukuhara where they privately settled the marriage between Shigeo's son, monarch Takakura, and her niece Noriko.<sup>115</sup> On the third day of the second month in the second year of Shōan (1172), the first ritual was conducted. Needless to say, Kenshunmon'in, Go-shirakawa,

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The actual rituals for "state protection" at that time typically focused on monarchs or the royal family. Those individuals will be protected as the body of the ruler is the body of the state. They are one and the same. Therefore, rituals for protecting monarchs or the royal family were equivalent to praying for "state protection."

<sup>112</sup> He was also an official of Go-shirakawa's administrative headquarters.

<sup>113</sup> The entries of Shōan 4 (1174), 9/10 and 9/12 from *Kikki* 1, 63.

<sup>114</sup> For instance, Shōan 3 (1173), 6/22 from *Kikki* 1, 8.

<sup>115</sup> The entry of Shōan 1 (1171), 11/1 from *Go-shirakawa tennō jitsuroku* 1, 325; *Gyokuyō* 1, 165.

and all senior nobles attended the ritual.<sup>116</sup> It is also noteworthy that this day, the decision that Noriko would be elevated to the junior queen consort was settled. It could be a coincidence, but it also could be argued that at least in Shigeke's mind, her royal vow temple was a prayer for the next monarch being a son of her son and niece. Maybe for Shigeke, that was equivalent to the "peace of the realm."

Twenty months after the ritual, on the fifteenth day of the tenth month in the third year of Shōan (1173), the royal vow temple was named Saishōkōin, and Fujiwara Kanezane, a senior member of Fujiwara Regent's Family and the minister of the right, was requested to write the calligraphy of the name on the sign.<sup>117</sup> Ten days earlier, on the fifth, both Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa came to the site. On the seventeenth day, a rehearsal for the ritual for completion of the construction (*rakkeikuyō*) was conducted. What is notable here is that this rehearsal was considered to be an equivalent to a realm-protecting official Buddhist ceremony celebrated at court over seven days at the beginning of the new year (*gosaie*), which is one of the most important state Buddhist rituals.<sup>118</sup> On the twenty first day, the actual ritual for completion of the construction was carried out; most senior nobles, including the top four—viceroy, minister of the left, right, and inner palace minister—and most importantly, monarch Takakura, attended the ritual.<sup>119</sup> An ordained royal prince (*hosshinnō*) Shukaku (1150-1202), one of Go-shirakawa's sons, was assigned to supervise the ritual. It is unquestionable that the construction of

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<sup>116</sup> The entry of Shōan 2 (1172), 2/3 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 188.

<sup>117</sup> The entry of Shōan 3 (1173), 9/9 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 318.

<sup>118</sup> Abe Takeru, et al., "Gosaie," *Heian jidai gishiki nenjū gyōji jiten* (Tokyo: Tokyodō shuppan, 2003), 32.

<sup>119</sup> The entry of Shōan 3 (1173), 10/21 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 325-327.

Kenshunmon'in's royal vow temple was considered a significant state event and it must have demonstrated Kenshunmon'in's enormous political power, her importance in the state, and her wealth as a leading member of the royal *ie*. Kanezane wrote in his diary that “its flamboyance was beyond precedent.”<sup>120</sup>

Royal vow temples were enormous monuments that displayed the wealth, power, and authority of the royal member who vowed and the royal family itself, and they were exemplified through the state Buddhist rituals regularly held at these temples. Four months after the ritual for the completion of the construction, on the ninth day of the second month in the fourth year of Shōan (1174), Kenshunmon'in held a Buddhist ritual for the state protection held in the second month (*shunie*) at Saishōkōin. Many courtiers were there, as well as famous monks.<sup>121</sup> Incidentally, Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa came to Saishōkōin by boat. On the thirtieth, another Buddhist ritual (*rishukyō hōe*) was conducted at Saishōkōin, praying for the peace of the reign and expiation of past transgressions. Many nobles, including Jōsaimon'in—Go-shirakawa's sister and Shigeiko's previous mistress—, the viceroy, and ministers, attended the ritual. In the next year, on the fourteenth day of the second month, Kenshunmon'in started the one-hundred-day repentance rite and, on the fifteenth day, held that year's Buddhist ritual for the state protection at Saishōkōin.<sup>122</sup> On the last day of the one-hundred-day repentance rite (*hyakkanichi gosenbō*), on the twenty seventh day of the fifth month, again, most senior nobles

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<sup>120</sup> “...華麗過差、己超先例...” The entry of Shōan 3 (1173), 11/21 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 325.

<sup>121</sup> The entry of Shōan 4 (1174), 2/9 from *Kikki* 1, 25.

<sup>122</sup> The entry of Angen 1 (1175), 2/14 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 429.



came to Saishōkōin to attend the ritual for the last day of the rite.<sup>123</sup> In response to this rite, the court pardoned petty criminals.<sup>124</sup>

Saishōkōin also gathered landed estates, which was a source of income for gates of power.<sup>125</sup> Pro-Heike nobles, Kiyomori's younger brother Yorimori, Kenshunmon'in's ladies-in-waiting and their family members donated their landed estates to Kenshunmon'in, and they were later called the Saishōkōin estate that included more than twenty landed estates. The premier retired royal ladies' holding of their own enormous estates is well-known at this point,<sup>126</sup> but their independence of management of the estates from male retired sovereign, was demonstrated by historian Banse Akemi in 1993.<sup>127</sup> She also carefully points out, however, that in the cases of these ladies cohabiting with their husband—retired sovereign—their estates were jointly managed. The income from these estates were mainly for the Buddhist rituals held at Saishōkōin.<sup>128</sup>

Saishōkōin evidently offered Shigeiko more movement and also entertainment. On the sixth day of the second month in the fourth year of Shōan (1174), monarch Takakura came to Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa's residence. After enjoying a cockfight, they took a boat

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<sup>123</sup> The entry of Angen 1 (1175), 5/27 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 447.

<sup>124</sup> The entry of Angen 1 (1175), 5/29 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 119.

<sup>125</sup> See footnote 22 in Chapter 1.

<sup>126</sup> From historical records, it is obvious that Heian elite women held their own estates, but the androcentric academia had been assuming for a long time that these women's estates were managed only by men.

<sup>127</sup> Banse Akemi, "Inseiki-Kamakuraki ni okeru nyoinryō ni tsuite: Chūsei zenki no ōke no arikata to sono henka," *Nihonshi kenkyū*, no. 374 (October 1993).

<sup>128</sup> Maruyama, *Inseiki no ōke to goganji*, 112.

altogether and visited Saishōkōin.<sup>129</sup> On the nineteenth day of the same month, Kenshunmon'in visited Saishōkōin in order to watch a plum tree, which had been transplanted one day before.<sup>130</sup> On the seventeenth day of the fourth month in the second year of Angen (1176), Kenshunmon'in visited Saishōkōin to watch rice transplanting with Go-shirakawa.<sup>131</sup>

In sum, Saishōkōin was a symbol and source of Kenshunmon'in's wealth, power, and authority and also provided Kenshunmon'in with entertainment. Incidentally, Taira Munemori, her full nephew and fostering child, was bestowed the Senior Third Rank as a reward for the roles he played in the completion ritual for Saishōkōin in the third year of Shōan (1173).

At the apex of her power, Shigeko fell ill, but at least she could enjoy her life for a short time before her death. In the third month in the second year of Angen (1176), Takakura organized a magnificent ceremony for Go-shirakawa's fiftieth birthday. All nobles, including many of the Heike and the royal members, attended it; needless to say, Kenshunmon'in, her previous mistress Jōsaimon'in, and the junior queen consort Noriko did too. On the fourth day of the month, they came to Go-shirakawa's residence, on the fifth day, the party started—all nobles, including Kenshunmon'in, the junior queen consort and her niece Noriko, and their ladies-in-waiting took a boat, and music and *kemari*, an ancient ball game using feet played by aristocrats in Japan, were played—and the sixth day, at the after-party, Takakura played the flute.<sup>132</sup> On the

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<sup>129</sup> The entry of Shōan 4 (1174), 2/6 from *Kikki* 1, 21.

<sup>130</sup> The entries of Shōan 4 (1174), 2/18 and 2/19 from *Kikki* 1, 31.

<sup>131</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 4/17 from *Kikki* 1, 76.

<sup>132</sup> The entries of Angen 2 (1176), 3/4-6 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 544-552; *Hyakurenshō* 8, 120.

ninth day, Kenshunmon'in went to Arima hot spring with Go-shirakawa.<sup>133</sup> This was also unprecedented. In the fourth month, she visited Hiyoshi Shrine,<sup>134</sup> and on the twenty second day, she and Go-shirakawa secretly watched and enjoyed the Kamo festival.<sup>135</sup> On the twenty-seventh day, Go-shirakawa left the capital to climb Mt. Hiei to receive precepts from Enryaku Temple, and many leading members of the Heike, including Kiyomori himself, accompanied him; Kenshunmon'in watched the grandiloquent, with many horses and ox carts, procession.<sup>136</sup> On the twenty-eighth of the fifth month, Takakura visited their residence; this was the last meeting between mother and son.<sup>137</sup>

On the eighth day of the sixth month, she fell ill; she got tumors on her chest, abdomen, and armpit.<sup>138</sup> Go-shirakawa heard the news and came back as soon as possible.<sup>139</sup> Many prayers and rituals were conducted by high-ranking monks, starting on the ninth day, but her condition did not get any better.<sup>140</sup> Supposedly, she had diabetes, so her condition became worse and worse.<sup>141</sup> On the seventeenth day, she probably realized that she would not make it, so she told

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<sup>133</sup> It is in the current Kōbe prefecture, and it takes 14 hours to walk now. The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 3/9 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 120.

<sup>134</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 4/4 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 579.

<sup>135</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 4/22 from *Kikki* 1, 76.

<sup>136</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 4/27 from *Kikki* 1, 78-83. This was also a step for reconciling between Go-shirakawa and Enryaku Temple. As seen before, in the Kaō violent protest by the Enryaku monks, Go-shirakawa and Enryaku Temple had been on bad terms for a long time. Most likely, Kiyomori, who was rather close to Enryaku Temple, became a mediator for them, so he came from his residence at Fukuhara to accompany Go-shirakawa to Mt. Hiei.

<sup>137</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 5/28 from *Kikki* 1, 85.

<sup>138</sup> The entries of Angen 2 (1176), 6/13 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 586; 6/8 from *Kikki* 1, 87.

<sup>139</sup> The entries of Angen 2 (1176), 6/9 and 6/11 from *Kikki* 1, 87, 88; 6/11 and 6/13 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 586.

<sup>140</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 6/9 from *Kikki* 1, 87.

<sup>141</sup> *Tamakiharu*, 58-70.

Go-shirakawa that she wanted to return her premier retired royal lady title, including the privileges coming with the title, to the court, and that she wanted to build an Amida hall (*midō*) at her father's tomb.<sup>142</sup> On the eighteenth day, her first wish was announced, and the court also issued an irregular general amnesty (*taisha*).<sup>143</sup> On the twentieth day, the first ritual for construction of the Amida hall was already conducted.<sup>144</sup> All kinds of treatment—acupuncture, medicine, and rituals—were performed day by day; her condition was getting worse and worse. On the twenty-seventh day, she received precepts.<sup>145</sup> On the eighth day of the seventh month in the second year of Angen (1176), her short but tumultuous life was quietly closed.<sup>146</sup>

### 3. The Legacy (1176-)

Jien stated that "...after Kenshunmon'in's death, conditions at the retired sovereign's palace seem to deteriorate..."<sup>147</sup> The relationship between the Heike and Go-shirakawa indeed rapidly deteriorated after her death, and due largely to this conflict, the realm became violently unstable again.

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<sup>142</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 6/17 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 587.

<sup>143</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 6/18 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 587.

<sup>144</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 6/30 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 121.

<sup>145</sup> The entry of Angen 2 (1176), 6/27 from *Kikki* 1, 91.

<sup>146</sup> The entries of Angen 2 (1176), 7/8 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 591; 7/8 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 121.

<sup>147</sup> “カクテ建春門院ハ安元二年七月八日瘡ヤミテウセ給ヒヌ。ソノ、チ院中アレ行ヤウニテ過ル程ニ....” *Gukanshō* vol. 5, Japanese Historical Text Initiative, 244 paragraph 1. <https://jhti.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/jhti/kensaku.cgi>.

Looking at the political situations after her death, it becomes even more evident how well Shigeo had been handling Go-shirakawa for herself and, as a result, the Heike's favor; in other words, she was *the* mediator for the Heike and Go-shirakawa. First, in the tenth month of the year Kenshunmon'in passed away, Go-shirakawa secretly called one of his sons to the royal palace and had Takakura adopt the boy.<sup>148</sup> This action, which implied Go-shirakawa's intention to create a new royal *ie*, excluding the Heike, must have seriously provoked Kiyomori since Noriko had not yet become pregnant. In the twelfth month, Go-shirakawa exceptionally promoted one of his personal retainers, who held lower status, to the head secretary, instead of Kiyomori's "beloved" son from Tokiko, Taira Tomomori (1152-1185) who held higher status than the retainer.<sup>149</sup> This aggressive and provocative appointment would, or could, not have been done if Kenshunmon'in had been alive.

In the fourth month of the next year, another violent protest by monks (*Angen no gōso*/the Hakusan incident) happened, and it followed a very similar course to the violent protest in Kaō. Monks from Enryaku Temple violently protested by coming to the capital with a portable shrine while requesting the exile of Go-shirakawa's personal retainer's son who had burned one of the Enryaku Temple's branch temples. Unlike Angen's time, at least Shigemori, Kiyomori's oldest son and technically the head of the Heike at this point, responded to Go-shirakawa's order and protected the capital without asking Kiyomori.<sup>150</sup> An arrow that one of his retainers shot accidentally hit the portable shrine, so the situation became chaos. Go-shirakawa repeatedly sent

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<sup>148</sup> The entries of Angen 2 (1176), 10/29 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 700.

<sup>149</sup> The entries of Angen 2 (1176), 12/5 from *Gyokuyō* 1, 624-627.

<sup>150</sup> This response might be an indication of Shigemori's oppositions to Kiyomori, and as a result, his isolation in the Rokuhara family became more evident later.

Myōun, the previous spiritual protector monk and the Tendai abbot, and conveyed a compromise to the monks. But the monks did not agree with it. Go-shirakawa ordered another member of the Rokuhara line to protect the capital, but they did not move, saying it would be against Kiyomori's wish. On the twentieth day, Go-shirakawa finally gave up and accepted the monks' request.

Similar to the Kaō time, however, Go-shirakawa revoked his edict and mounted a counterattack in the next month. He dismissed Myōun from the Tendai abbot position, confiscated his estates, and arrested him. The rumor that the monks would come to get Myōun reached the capital; the capital became panicked again. At the council to decide Myōun's charges, again, nobles were extremely unmotivated. Go-shirakawa forcibly decided to exile Myōun. But, while Myōun was transported, he was kidnapped, or rather, saved, by the Enryaku monks. Go-shirakawa was furious and ordered the members of the Rokuhara line to attack the Enryaku Temple. This time, even Shigemori, let alone all other Heike warriors, did not move, saying that they would follow Kiyomori's order.<sup>151</sup> Eventually, Go-shirakawa requested Kiyomori, who lived in Fukuhara, to come to the capital to persuade the Heike warriors; on the twenty-seventh day, Kiyomori entered the capital. The next day, Go-shirakawa and Kiyomori had a meeting, and the former persuaded the latter to attack Enryaku Temple; Kiyomori was unhappy about it.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> The entry of Jishō 1 (1177), 4/14 from Fujiwara Kanezane, *Gyokuyo* 2, ed. Ichijima Kenkichi (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōsha, 1906), 31.

<sup>152</sup> "...然而入道内心不悦云々、..." The entry of Jishō 1 (1177), 5/27 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 51.

The next night, on the twenty-ninth, the information about the scheme to overthrow the Heike regime by Go-shirakawa's personal retainers was leaked, and Kiyomori immediately made a move: the so-called Shishigatani Incident (1177). Supposedly, Go-shirakawa's main personal retainers were gathered at Shishigatani and planned to overthrow the Heike regime.<sup>153</sup> On the first day of the sixth month, Kiyomori mercilessly killed or exiled these participants, including Narichika, the brother of Shigemori's primary wife, despite Shigemori's appeal to Kiyomori. Consequently, Go-shirakawa lost most of his reliable personal retainers, so his political power was significantly weakened. After all, without Shigeeko's mediation, the Heike could not control Go-shirakawa without force. Yet, Kiyomori made only Go-shirakawa's personal retainers take all the blame and did not "punish" Go-shirakawa directly in spite of Go-shirakawa's alleged involvement in the scheme. Probably, Kiyomori knew that he still needed to cooperate with Go-shirakawa in order to preserve the Heike regime since, for now, the regime was equal to the Go-shirakawa-Heike royal *ie*; but without Kenshunmon'in, it was a very formidable task.

In the second year of Jishō (1178), Kiyomori's daughter Noriko finally gave birth to Takakura's son; the baby Antoku was immediately elevated to the position of crown prince.<sup>154</sup> Now, especially once Antoku takes the throne, Takakura becoming a retired sovereign, and Noriko being recognized as the mother of the heavenly sovereign they could preserve the Heike

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<sup>153</sup> This incident itself does not appear in any diaries, only in tales. Some scholars think that the meeting at Shishigatani to overthrow the Heike regime by these personal retainers of Go-shirakawa actually happened, and others think that it was a made-up story. Either way, as seen, the timing for this meeting at Shishigatani was too perfect for Kiyomori's favor to be a coincidence.

<sup>154</sup> Despite the deteriorated relationship with Kiyomori, probably knowing the deceased Kenshunmon'in's ardent wish, Go-shirakawa seemed to sincerely care for and worry about Noriko's delivery. Go-shirakawa held many Buddhist rituals, and he secretly visited Noriko's residence at least twice. The entries of Jishō 2 (1178), 10/7 and 1011 from Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo, ed., *Shiryōsōran* vol. 3 (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppan, 1926), 594, 595.

regime without Go-shirakawa. With the reconstitution of the Takakura-Heike royal *ie*, Go-shirakawa could be pushed out of the picture. After some provocation by Go-shirakawa, in 1179, Kiyomori finally came to the capital with troops, confined Go-shirakawa, and forced the abeyance of Go-shirakawa's court: the so-called Coup d'état in the Third Year of Jishō.<sup>155</sup> In 1180, Antoku, at the age of one, took the throne, and Takakura's court commenced. It seemed that Kiyomori and Shigeo's efforts finally bore fruit.

In the very same year, however, prince Mochihito (1151-1180), another son of Go-shirakawa, issued a "royal edict," calling for the overthrow of the Heike regime, and many Genji, scattered throughout the realm, responded to the call, initiating the Jishō Juei War (1180-1185).<sup>156</sup> At the end of the war, the Heike regime was ended by the hand of Shigeo's sister Tokiko, Kiyomori's wife; the first shogunate was established by a Genji, Minamoto Yoritomo. The shogunate inaugurated a system of rule by shoguns (military chiefs), and the system lasted until the nineteenth century.

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<sup>155</sup> Scholars generally recognize the three events as the main causes of the coup based on Kanezane's observation (*Gyokuyō* 2, 308-309). One is Lady Shirakawa's property inheritance. In the sixth month of the third year of Jishō (1179), when Lady Shirakawa, who was Kiyomori's daughter and the primary wife of the previous head of Fujiwara Regent's Family, passed away, Kiyomori wanted monarch Takakura to inherit the property. However, the viceroy Motofusa wanted to inherit it, and Go-shirakawa intervened and took it under his control. Due to the limitation of pages, I will not go deep into the complicated relationship between Kiyomori and Fujiwara Regent's Family, and more importantly, fierce conflicts within Fujiwara Regent's Family, but Kiyomori advanced his *ie* to the central court through the close relationship with Fujiwara Regent's Family as well, not only through the royal family. See details in Higuchi Kentarō, *Sekkanke no Chūsei: Fujiwara Michinaga kara Toyotomi Hideyoshi made* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2021) and Tanaka, *Heishi seiken no kenkyū*.

The second reason is Shigemori's property inheritance of Echizen province which he had governed since 1166. In the next month of Lady Shirakawa's death, Shigemori died. His oldest son Koremori inherited the province, but in the tenth month, Go-shirakawa suddenly seized it. Third is the court appointment announced at the same day as the seizure. At the appointment, instead of twenty-year-old Motomichi who was Lady Shirakawa's adopted son and whom Kiyomori had been supporting, the viceroy's eight-year-old heir was suddenly promoted to a middle counselor (*chūnagon*).

<sup>156</sup> The "prince" was Go-shirakawa's third son but had not received the title of the prince of the blood, so he was technically not a prince, a royal member. This means, the order he issued was not a royal edict (*ryōji*), but he claimed it was by stating that he should take the throne instead of Antoku in the "edict."



Having looked at the significant roles Shigeiko played and the violent political situation that ensued after her death, it is evident that she contributed to the peace of the realm by successfully accommodating the Heike, the court aristocracy, and Go-shirakawa. She made the best use of her position as the biological mother of the heavenly sovereign, acted as an intermediary between the royal family and her natal family, and as the “primary” wife of a retired sovereign, co-managed the royal *ie* and functioned as a part of the court led by Go-shirakawa. By doing so, Shigeiko established the Heike regime; she would not have been able to do so without Kiyomori’s existence as the military leader, but Kiyomori also would have never been able to do so without Shigeiko’s existence and her actions: they both were active founders of, and contributors to, the Heike regime. Shigeiko injected the power of the warriors into the court and this legacy undoubtedly contributed to the establishment of the warrior government of the shoguns.

She left another great legacy for the Heike, especially for her nephew, Munemori. This legacy became an essential means for the Heike to reflect their opinions on court affairs. As seen in Chapter 1, the court affairs were generally handled by the aristocratic coalition—specifically, 1) a council meeting by the reigning monarch, retired sovereign, and the regent or viceroy (*renraku gōgi*), 2) a meeting of senior nobles to support the council (*kugyōgijō*), 3) advisory (*shimon*) in which monarchs or the regent asked a senior noble individually for advice. Scholars have pointed out that members of the Rokuhara line, including Kiyomori himself, were not able to attend the council meeting. Kiyomori was neither from the royal family nor the Fujiwara Regent’s Family. They also did not, or could not, attend the meeting to support the council of

nobles.<sup>157</sup> Additionally, the senior nobles for the advisory role were those familiar with the protocols for ritual practices and precedents, so the members of the Rokuhara line, newcomers to the court, were never able to be capable enough to be one of these advisors. In other words, the members of the Rokuhara line did not possess the means to consort with the central court nor to reflect their opinions on court affairs. When Shigeiko was alive, Kiyomori could convey the Heike's interests to Go-shirakawa, who was a leading member of the council, through Tokiko and Shigeiko, or through official channels; after Shigeiko passed away, as the relationship with Go-shirakawa was rapidly deteriorating, Kiyomori did not have an effective means of communication route to the central court. All he could do was convey his interests to the pro-Heike nobles.

After the Shishigatani Incident, which considerably damaged Go-shirakawa's political power, Takakura mainly led the court. Even though Takakura was the monarch "the Heishi placed on the throne," the fact that members of the Rokuhara line were neither royal members nor the Fujiwara Regent's Family did not change;<sup>158</sup> the situation of Kiyomori and the center of the court did not change. Kiyomori and the members of the Heike were officially never in the position of handling court affairs. With this, Kenshunmon'in left a valuable legacy for the Heike: the human network. Kiyomori was able to convey Heike interests to monarch Takakura through this human network. The key person here is Wakasa, Shigeiko's nursing mother.

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<sup>157</sup> Shimogōri, "Densō no nyōbō," 124; Tanaka Fumihide, *Heishi Seiken no kenkyū*, 273.

<sup>158</sup> "平氏タテマイラスル君" *Gukanshō*, vol. 5 in Japanese Historical Text Initiative, 265, paragraph 2. <https://jhiti.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/jhti/print.cgi>.

Wakasa became the main lady-in-waiting for monarch Takakura when he took the throne, and as seen earlier, fulfilled the “transmitter of a message” role for Takakura. It was not uncommon for ladies-in-waiting to fulfill this role for the reigning monarch, but it seems that Wakasa mainly handled politically important messages. For instance, in the eleventh month in the first year of Jishō (1177), according to Kanezane, Wakasa secretly told Kanezane about what Takakura and Go-shirakawa discussed at the council meeting in detail regarding appointing Kanezane’s son Yoshimichi to a mid-level commander (*chūjō*) in the Inner Palace Guards (*Konoefu*). He actually received the position six days later.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, in the twelfth month in the next year, Kanezane went to the royal palace one day, and Wakasa told him that the court had decided Yoshimichi’s promotion to the Senior Third Rank. Kanezane was extremely happy and asked the viceroy about it; the viceroy said he was not aware of it. Kanezane told Wakasa about it and Wakasa told Kanezane that the viceroy should know it and if he said he was not aware of it, that would be probably because he was pretending since he was not happy about the decision.<sup>160</sup> After all, Yoshimichi did receive the Senior Third Rank later that day. Clearly, Wakasa was deeply involved in court matters. Wakasa took hold of Takakura’s rear palace and became “the person who was dominating the court.”<sup>161</sup> In order to contact monarch Takakura, nobles had to contact Wakasa first.

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<sup>159</sup> The entry of Jishō 1 (1177), 11/18 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 108-109.

<sup>160</sup> “...此間関白被参、余申中将所望事、未聞及、若有沙汰者可存此旨、云々、（女房語曰、豫関白所被承也云々、而今被稱未聞及之由、疑不甘心事歟）...” The entry of Jishō 1 (1177), 12/24 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 233.

<sup>161</sup> See footnote 104.

Even though Wakasa was close to the Heike through Shigeke, after Shigeke passed away, how did Kiyomori contact Wakasa? It was his second son Munemori, who was a part of Kenshunmon'in's human network as a fostering child of Kenshunmon'in. Munemori was Kiyomori's second son but Tokiko's first son and whom Kenshunmon'in had supported as we have seen many times. First, the court seemed to recognize Munemori as a messenger to Kiyomori who lived in Fukuhara. For instance, on the twentieth day in the first month in the second year of Jishō, Munemori was sent from the court as their messenger to Kiyomori regarding the Enryaku monks' uprising.<sup>162</sup> What is notable here is that Munemori was not officially in the position of being a messenger: he was neither the head of the Heike—the head of the Heike was Shigemori and still alive at this point—nor a secretary. Why was Munemori chosen by the court? It was due to the connection between Munemori and Wakasa, made through Kenshunmon'in. With Wakasa transmitting politically important messages for Takakura, Munemori was the best person for the court to be a cushion between the court and Kiyomori.

While Munemori's special connection to the court through the late Kenshunmon'in was recognized by the court, the power balance in Kiyomori and Tokiko's *ie* was gradually shifting. First of all, Munemori's mother, Tokiko's importance in the *ie* tremendously increased. The previous mother of the heavenly sovereign was her half-younger sister; the reigning monarch was her nephew; and the current crown prince was her grandson. In fact, she received the Junior Second Rank in the first year of Nin'an (1166) and the status equivalent to that of the three

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<sup>162</sup> “延曆寺衆徒蜂起、三塔會合、催未寺庄園兵士、是為燒園城寺云々、法皇來月十日於園城寺、以前權僧正公顯為大阿闍梨可令受伝法灌頂給、仍來月一日可有御幸平等院、（寺也、）...仍雖不被仰子細、事已火急之由聞食、今日辰剋許、以右大將（宗盛）、遣入道大相國撰津福原亭、被仰合...”The entry of Jishō 2 (1178), 1/20 from *Sankaiki* 2, 116.

queen-consorts (*jyun sangū*) when crown prince Antoku took the throne.<sup>163</sup> The first son of this significant woman; the fostering child of the previous mother of the heavenly sovereign who paved the way for the Heike to advance to the court; and the one who currently, even after the pioneer's death, possessed a means to connect with the reigning monarch Takakura; it was only natural that Munemori's position in the *ie* rose.

In the meantime, Kiyomori's first son Shigemori's position gradually decreased. First, his mother was long dead. In this society, where the mother's power and importance still considerably mattered to their children's political position, it meant that he was lacking one of the greatest supports. Second, unlike Munemori, Shigemori did not have someone like Kenshunmon'in, who held tremendous influence in the court and supported him. Relating to that, third, he also did not possess a special connection with the court through someone like Kenshunmon'in. His position had already become jeopardized.

Additionally, the incidents that happened in the first year of Jishō (1177) were fatal blows for Shigemori. In the fourth month, as we saw earlier, his retainers accidentally shot the portable shrine that the Enryaku monks brought to the capital and became a huge problem. The decline of the Buddhist norms was equivalent to the decline of the royal norms, and Shigemori's retainer, thus, Shigemori, was responsible for the decline. Subsequently, in the sixth month, at the Shishigatani Incident, one of the schemers whom Kiyomori exiled and killed was Shigemori's brother-in-law Narichika. Shigemori and Narichika's *ie* had a really close relationship. Narichika was a favorite personal retainer of Go-shirakawa. In a way, Narichika was the connection to the court that Shigemori possessed even though Narichika's influence in the court, including his rank

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<sup>163</sup> The entry of Nin'an 1 (1166), 10/21 from *Hyōhanki* 3, 118; the entry of Jishō 4, 6/10 from *Hyakurenshō* 8, 133.

and position, was nothing compared to Kenshunmon'in's. Shigemori supposedly begged for Narichika's life to Kiyomori; yet, Narichika was exiled and killed.<sup>164</sup> Clearly, this incident negatively affected Shigemori. Lastly, Shigemori's connection to the court through Narichika was Go-shirakawa, not monarch Takakura. After Shigeeko passed away, while the relationship between the Heike and Go-shirakawa rapidly deteriorated, the Heike wanted Takakura, not Go-shirakawa, to handle court affairs. It was natural that the position of the head of the Heike came to Munemori instead of Shigemori's oldest son when Shigemori died in the third year of Jishō (1179).<sup>165</sup> Sources do not tell us whether Shigeeko was planning this—Munemori pushing out Shigemori's son and becoming the next head of the Heike—while supporting Munemori, but either way, it is unquestionable that thanks to Kenshunmon'in's legacy, Munemori's political importance in both the court and Kiyomori and Tokiko's *ie* considerably grew, and, as a result, he was able to become the head of the Heike.

The communication route Kiyomori-Munemori-Wakasa-monarch Takakura (thus, the court) played the central role in the Coup d'état in the Third Year of Jishō (1179). As seen, provocation by Go-shirakawa, who now turned to the viceroy Fujiwara Motofusa (1144-1231) for his ally, induced Kiyomori to launch a military coup. Kiyomori proceeded to the capital with his army and controlled the capital by force. This might sound very familiar and common in world history, but in Japanese history, especially before the fourteenth century, it was

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<sup>164</sup> “...重盛モ思モヨラデアキレナガラ、コメタル部屋ノモトニユキテ、コシウトノムツビニヤ、「コノタビモ御命バカリノ事ハ申候ハンズルゾ」ト云ケリ。サヤウナリケルニヤ。肥前國ヘヤリテ、七日バカリ物ヲ食セデ後、サウナクヨキ酒ヲ飲セナドシテヤガテ死亡シテケリ....“*Gukanshō*, vol. 5, Paragraph 245.

<sup>165</sup> According to *The Tale of the Heike*, Shigemori became ill and refused to take any medicine, saying he wants to die. Additionally, his oldest son followed the members of the Heike heading to west but separated himself from them and committed suicide at Kumano without fighting any battles with the Heike. Clearly, the isolation of Shigemori and his line in the Heike was recognized in the fourteenth century.

unthinkable. As seen in Chapter 1, Japanese aristocrats virulently hated blood and despised physical violence. If a boorish warrior rose in revolt somewhere in the middle of nowhere—anywhere except for the capital and its vicinity, in aristocrats' minds—, they simply sent another boorish warrior to force it under control; it was not their immediate problem. This is probably one of the reasons why Japanese monarchs did not possess a state army. In this kind of society, Kiyomori's military coup was completely unexpected. People were panicked and frightened: the end of Buddhist and royal norms were truly at an end.<sup>166</sup>

Despite this unprecedented military coup, however, the means Kiyomori took in order to usurp the state were legitimate under civil authority; they were backed by bureaucratic procedure. On the fourteenth day of the eleventh month, Kiyomori entered the capital. At that night already, Takakura's royal decree was conveyed to the state council through a secretary. The decree ordered the appointment of Fujiwara Motomichi, the late Lady Shirakawa's adopted son whom Kiyomori had been supporting, to the viceroy, the inner palace minister (*naidaijin*), and the head of Fujiwara Regent's Family. Furthermore, the current viceroy Fujiwara Motofusa and his son, who was just promoted to a middle counselor, were dismissed. The form for the decree was made by controllers, re-written by council secretaries, and reported to monarch Takakura under another middle counselor's command; it was finally issued after all of these procedures. On the seventeenth day, another royal order was announced that the new viceroy Motomichi, who held the Senior Second Rank, should be recognized to be superior to both Ministers of the Left and Right, who held the Junior First Rank.<sup>167</sup> The contents of these orders

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<sup>166</sup> Kanezane wrote in his diary that people in the capital were frightened and in a panic. He even ordered his house servants not to speak in a loud voice. The entry of Jishō 3 (1178), 11/14 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 308.

<sup>167</sup> Concretely, Motomichi was allowed to sit at a higher seat than both ministers.

were unprecedented and very forceful. Nonetheless, the procedures of these orders followed the exact procedures that had been carried out under civil authority since the middle of the ninth century.

Against Go-shirakawa, too, Kiyomori made the best use of the authority of the reigning monarch. On the fifteenth day, the rumor that Kiyomori would take the junior queen consort Noriko and crown prince Antoku to either Fukuhara or west, and the palanquins for both were gathering at the palace was spread. In the middle of the chaos, Kiyomori sent a messenger to monarch Takakura and said that he wanted to go to the middle of nowhere for his retirement before his sinfully becoming an enemy of the court. He would therefore like to bring both the junior queen consort and crown prince with him, so he would like Takakura to give permission for both to enter Tokiko's house in the capital.<sup>168</sup> Receiving this message, monarch Takakura immediately sent back a messenger with the royal order and ordered the state council to proceed with the process. Kiyomori's indirect message was to blame Go-shirakawa for conspiring with the viceroy Motofusa against the Heike, and the reigning monarch indirectly agreed with it by permitting what Kiyomori wanted. On the same day, Go-shirakawa sent a messenger to Kiyomori; Go-shirakawa gave excuses and finally declared his non-intervention in the court affairs.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> As mentioned before, after Kiyomori moved to Fukuhara, Tokiko was the owner of the Heike mansion in the capital.

<sup>169</sup> As we saw earlier, the authority of retired sovereign was limited, especially compared to that of the reigning sovereign. Thus, attacked by someone like Kiyomori who acquired the reigning sovereign's support, or controlled the reigning sovereign, a retired sovereign did not possess the means to justify his involvement with court affairs. Yet, Go-shirakawa was confined on the twentieth day, and with this confinement, the court led by retired sovereign Go-shirakawa was completely shut down.



The whole process was carefully planned beforehand, and the key individuals who were enabled to do so were Munemori and Wakasa. According to Kanezane, since the early morning of this day, Munemori and Wakasa flew back and forth between Kiyomori and the court, and after private dialogues (*naigi*), Kiyomori sent the messenger to monarch Takakura.<sup>170</sup> In other words, everything had been thoroughly planned and coordinated beforehand by discussing privately between Takakura and Kiyomori. Between a monarch and a warrior noble, such as Kiyomori, however, face-to-face discussion was impossible; therefore, Kiyomori made the best use of the communication route *Kenshunmon'in* left for the Heike. Since Kiyomori clearly chose, or had to choose, the court led by heavenly sovereign Takakura as the political form of the regime now, this private dialogue became crucial for handling the court affairs in his favor. It is unquestionable this communication route became essential for the Heike.

In the third month of the fourth year of Jishō (1180), Antoku finally took the throne and the court led by retired sovereign Takakura started; as I mentioned earlier, under this court too, Wakasa continued to be the “transmitter of a message” for Takakura.<sup>171</sup> With the political form Kiyomori chose, or had to choose, communication and cooperation with Takakura became even more important. This means, undoubtedly, the importance of Wakasa and Munemori only increased.

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<sup>170</sup> “... (其實自今旦、右將軍及若州等、數遍往還、内々義定之後、被進使云々、) ...” The entry of Jishō 3 (1179), 11/15 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 309.

<sup>171</sup> Historian Shimogōri found this transmitter of a message for a retired sovereign by a female official the unique characteristic of the court led by retired sovereign Takakura as well as the court led by retired sovereign Go-toba (1180-1239). See details in Shimogōri, “Densō no nyōbō,” 127-129.

As the finale of her legacy, we now look at the infamous transferring of the capital to Fukuhara enforced by Kiyomori; this event demonstrates the strong influence of Kenshunmon'in even after her death; this helped Munemori again but would stain Kiyomori's legacy. As is known, in the sixth month of the year Antoku took the throne, Kiyomori forced the capital to be moved to Fukuhara despite strong oppositions by the court. On the second day, Go-shirakawa, Takakura, and the reigning monarch Antoku were moved to the new capital at Fukuhara with several nobles and ladies-in-waiting.<sup>172</sup> Already in the eighth month, Takakura requested Kiyomori to move the capital back through pro-Heike nobles, including Tokitada, Shigeiko's half-brother; Kiyomori did not listen.<sup>173</sup> The court probably thought that since Kiyomori did not lend his ear to Takakura's request through the pro-Heike nobles, the only means left for them was to employ Munemori.

Two days later, retired sovereign Takakura supposedly had a dream of Kenshunmon'in, and the dream was probably used to persuade Munemori to negotiate with Kiyomori. According to Kanezane who heard from someone, Kenshunmon'in appeared in Takakura's dream and was very upset. The reason why she was upset was the transference of the capital. They have gone too far away from her; it was absolutely against her wish.<sup>174</sup>

We do not have a source directly mentioning how the dream was utilized, but by looking at later entries, it is possible to assume that it was used to persuade Munemori. In the eleventh

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<sup>172</sup> The entry of Jishō 4 (1180), 6/2 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 413.

<sup>173</sup> The entry of Jishō 4 (1180), 8/12 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 427.

<sup>174</sup> “...又語云、新院有御夢想事、建春門院夢中參院中給、深懷怨心、其故遙棄我遷幸給、尤非本意云々...” The entry of Jishō 4 (1180), 8/4 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 426.

month, Munemori had a huge argument with Kiyomori regarding returning the capital to Kyoto. The people who overheard the argument were very surprised, probably due to the intensity of the argument and also the fact that Munemori openly defied Kiyomori.<sup>175</sup> From what we have seen, Munemori seems to have been rather obedient to Kiyomori. Why was he defiant this time? On the second day of the eighth month, previously, pro-Heike nobles had tried to persuade Kiyomori and immediately failed. Two days later, Takakura supposedly had the dream. We cannot know when Munemori heard about the dream, but there must have been negotiations between Munemori and Kiyomori for, probably, a few months before this argument. Yet, Kiyomori had not agreed with returning the capital to Kyoto, though Munemori had patiently and persistently negotiated. Then the argument in the eleventh month ensued. It is quite possible to assume that it was the dream of Kenshunmon'in which moved Munemori and made him determined. On the twenty third day, eighteen days after the argument, Kiyomori finally agreed to return the capital to Kyoto. Most likely, Takakura had eagerly desired to return the capital to its former location, and his desire was conveyed by Wakasa to Munemori as both Takakura and Kenshunmon'in's wish; Munemori exerted himself to realize the wish, and as a result, the returning of the capital to Kyoto was realized. Kenshunmon'in's influence was certainly recognized even after her death.

Meanwhile, the Jishō Juei War had already started, and during the turmoil of the war, in the first year of Yōwa (1181), *the* key figure of the Heike-royal *ie*, retired sovereign Takakura, passed away, and a few months later, Kiyomori, the *de facto* leader of the regime, died. In the third month of the fourth year of Juei (1185), at Dannoura, the Heike regime, which Shigeeko brought the opening of, was officially put to an end by her sister Tokiko, who jumped into the

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<sup>175</sup> “...前將軍宗盛、可有遷都之由、示禪門云々、不承引之間、及口論、人以驚耳云々、...” The entry of Jishō4 (1180), 11/5 from *Gyokuyō* 2, 440.

ocean, holding one of the three sacred regalia of the royal family and her six-year-old grandson, monarch Antoku, in her arms.

## Chronology of Kenshunmon'in's Life

- 1142(0) Shigeko was born  
1145(3) Kiyomori and Tokiko married  
1148(6) maternal grandfather Fujiwara Akiyori died  
1149(7) father Tokinobu died  
?? mother Sukeko most likely died  
1155(13) Go-shirakawa temporarily ascended the throne  
1156(14) the Hōgen Turbulence  
1158(16) Go-shirakawa abdicated  
1159 (17) the Heiji Turbulence  
~1160 (18) started to work for Jōsaimon'in as a lady-in-waiting  
1161 (19) delivered Takakura  
Tokitada was exiled  
1165 (23) monarch Nijō died  
Takakura received the title of the prince of the blood  
1166 (24) Received the Junior Third Rank
- 1167 (25)**  
1<sup>st</sup> month received the nyōgo title--an official wife of a monarch--  
3<sup>rd</sup> month joined Go-shirakawa for the Buddhist service to recite sūtras by a thousand clerics (sensō midokyō)  
6<sup>th</sup> month gave Nobuyori permission to enter the crown prince's palace  
9<sup>th</sup> month went on a pilgrimage to Kumano with Go-shirakawa  
10<sup>th</sup> month returned from Kumano
- 1168 (26)**  
1/13 Go-shirakawa entered the purifying stage for another Kumano pilgrimage  
1/15 Shigeko issued an unofficial memorandum for the court appointments during Go-shirakawa's absence  
1/28 Shigeko sent Nobuyori to the Rokuhara residence  
2/2 Nobuyori went to Shigeko, Tokitada, Takakura, Shigemori, and Kiyomori  
Kiyomori started to feel ill  
2/9 Kiyomori's condition became critical  
2/10 Shigeko secretly visited the Rokuhara residence  
2/11 Kiyomori and Tokiko took tonsure  
2/15 Go-shirakawa came back from Kumano and secretly visited the Rokuhara residence  
2/16 Takakura's succession was suddenly brought up in the court  
2/19 Rokujō abdicated  
2/20 Takakura ascended the throne  
Shigeko dedicated a congratulatory prayer (norito) to Itsukushima Shrine  
Shigeko became the grand queen consort  
4/15 Nobuyori unofficially reported his uncomfotableness with Go-shirakawa  
6/12 Shigeko unofficially told Nobuyori to come back to the court before the official messenger came to Nobuyori  
7/1 received the report regarding Takakura's ceremony  
7/10 received an official report from the senior nobles  
7/18 helped Nobuyori's son's appointment  
7/25 held a Buddhist memorial service for her father Tokinobu

9/4 received the report regarding an ad hoc appointment of court officials and the court banquet

### **1169 (27)**

1/13 received a report regarding a change of the court appointment and issued an official royal order regarding the appointment  
2/13 performed her pilgrimage to Hiyoshi Shrine with a marvelous looking procession  
3/26 made a pilgrimage to Hirano Shrine, an aristocratic Heishi line's clan shrine, with a similar procession  
4/12 became Kenshunmon'in  
6/5 entered the royal palace with a magnificent procession and visited the heavenly sovereign  
6/17 Go-shirakawa took tonsure  
6/21 received a report for Go-shirakawa from Nobuyori  
8/29 watched the procession of Takakura's visit for Kamo Shrine  
10/13 Go-shirakawa and Kenshunmon'in went to the Kumano pilgrimage  
Nobuyori felt required to report any court matters to Kenshunmon'in  
11/6 Kenshunmon'in came back to the capital  
11/13 Go-shirakawa came back  
11/20 entered the royal palace for the music and dance event  
11/24 left the royal palace  
11/25 watched the procession of the Yasoshima festival

### **Kaō no gōso**

12/17 envoys from Enryaku Temple turned away  
12/22 Enryaku monks started to gather, and Go-shirakawa ordered the Royal Police and warriors to protect his residence  
12/24 the Heike warriors led their warriors and came to Go-shirakawa's residence, and Go-shirakawa fully accepted the monks' request  
Kanezane also reported "something" to Kenshunmon'in  
12/27 the dismissal and exile of Tokitada and Nobuyori was announced. Kenshunmon'in told Nobuyori about this decision beforehand and did or said something more important.  
Nobuyori "cannot write more details than this."

### **1170 (28)**

1/06 Go-shirakawa promoted Narichika  
1/13 Go-shirakawa ordered the Royal Police to protect the crossroads between the mountain and the capital.  
the leading Heike warrior, Yorimori, left the capital for Fukuhara to seek instructions from Kiyomori  
1/14 the head of the Heike, Shigemori, also left the capital for Fukuhara to seek instructions from Kiyomori  
1/17 Kiyomori came to the capital  
1/27 Go-shirakawa accepted the monks' requests  
  
2/6 Go-shirakawa issued the royal edict declaring the decision  
3/5 dedicated a sacred treasure and offerings to Itsukushima Shrine  
4/20 Kiyomori and Go-shirakawa received precepts  
5/5 Kiyomori donated private land to Itsukushima as an endowment to maintain rituals for

Go-shirakawa, Kenshunmon'in, and Takakura  
10/16 held a big poetry contest at her residence

#### 1171 (29)

4/22 Tokitada was promoted by forcibly increasing the prescribed number of regular personnel positions  
10/23 Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa visited Kiyomori at Fukuhara  
11/1 on the way back to the capital, Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa stopped by Byōdōin to view a model for Saishōkōin  
11/28 Kanezane heard about the marriage between Takakura and Noriko  
12/2 the marriage was officially discussed  
12/14 Noriko had her coming-of-age ceremony and married Takakura

#### 1172 (30)

2/03 the first ritual for Saishōkōin was conducted. Also, the decision that Noriko would be elevated to the junior queen consort was settled.  
4/27 officially visited Hirano Shrine and dedicated dancers' performance to the shrine  
5/14 at night, Kenshunmon'in entered the royal palace  
5/15 lady Shirakawa entered the royal palace  
5/16 Noriko entered Takakura's bedroom and spent the night, and Kenshunmon'in was standing by near the bedroom  
6/18 ordered the commencement of the prayer for possibly Noriko's pregnancy

#### 1173 (31)

1/22 Nobuyori was promoted by surpassing other competitors who held upper ranks thanks to Kenshunmon'in's support  
10/15 the name Saishōkōin was dedicated  
11/17 a rehearsal for the ritual for completion of the construction of Saishōkōin was conducted  
11/21 the actual ritual for completion of the construction was carried out

#### 1174 (32)

2/06 Takakura came to Kenshunmon'in and Go-shirakawa's residence, and after enjoying a cockfight, they took a boat together and visited Saishōkōin  
2/9 held a Buddhist ritual for the state protection  
2/19 visited Saishōkōin in order to watch a plum tree  
2/30 Buddhist ritual (*rishukyō hōe*) was conducted at Saishōkōin  
3/16 went to Itsukushima bringing Go-shirakawa with her.  
4/9 both came back to the capital

#### 1175 (33)

2/14 started the one-hundred-day repentance rite at Saishōkōin  
2/15 held that year's Buddhist ritual for the state protection at Saishōkōin  
2/28 Kanezane asked Wakasa to let Kenshunmon'in know about his son's first appointment  
3/4 sent Chikamune to Kanezane about the appointment  
5/14 Kanezane reported the intrusion of the Royal Palace into a Kujō estate to Kenshunmon'in  
5/19 Kenshunmon'in asked Kōkamon'in to explain the situation and submit a document  
5/27 held the ritual for the last day of the one-hundred-day repentance rite at Saishōkōin, and the court pardoned petty criminals

**1176 (34)**

- 3/4-6 a magnificent ceremony for Go-shirakawa's fiftieth birthday
- 3/9 went to Arima hot spring with Go-shirakawa
- 4/4 visited the Hiyoshi Shrine
- 4/17 visited Saishōkōin to watch rice transplanting with Go-shirakawa
- 4/22 secretly watched and enjoyed the Kamo festival
- 4/27 watched the grandiloquent procession of Go-shirakawa taking many leading members of the Heike
- 5/28 Takakura visited her residence
- 6/8 fell ill
- 6/9 many prayers and rituals were conducted
- 6/17 returned her title and privileges to the court and asked to build an Amida hall at her father's tomb
- 6/18 the court issued an irregular general amnesty
- 6/20 the first ritual for construction of the Amida hall was already conducted
- 6/27 received precepts
- 7/8 passed away



## Conclusion

This is a success story. Shigeko is the quintessential Japanese Cinderella: a lady-in-waiting from a lower aristocratic family to the grand queen consort, eventually receiving the title of premier retired royal lady—the top ladies of the realm. Through her biography, however, it is evident that Shigeko was not passively waiting for dreams to come true while lamenting the unfairness of the hierarchal world she was living in. According to her lady-in-waiting, Shigeko always told them the following: “women can be anything depending on your mindset; it has nothing to do with your parents and other people’s support. If you control your mindset very well and look after yourself without deprecating yourself, you will obtain unexpected happiness one day.”<sup>1</sup> This indeed illustrates her life. She loyally lived by her words.

But when one thinks about how much effort Shigeko had to exert in order to live her life, s/he must recognize Shigeko’s determination and resilience. Historian Tsunoda wrote that Shigeko was the happiest queen in Japanese history, emphasizing how influential she was, and most importantly, how much she was truly loved by her husband, the powerful retired sovereign. Indeed, Go-shirakawa’s love for Shigeko was profound and for Tsunoda, who was born in 1913, the women who were loved by their husbands wielded much power and capital such that they must have been the happiest of women. Nonetheless, for women living in the twenty-first century, it would be hard to ignore all the effort she had to put in to obtain/maintain that love. The lady-in-waiting recalls Kenshunmon’in’s residence was always being cleaned, organized, and all manner of minutiae were taken care of. Her residence always exuded a nice aroma, and it was always prepared for visits, even by the heavenly sovereign. Strict decorum in the residence

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<sup>1</sup> “女はただ心から、ともかくもなるべき物なり。親の思ひ掟て、人のもてなすにもよらじ。我心をつつしみて、身を思ひくたさねば、おのづから身に過ぐる幸ひもある物ぞ“ *Tamakiharu*, section 2, 255.

was exceptional.<sup>2</sup> This was possibly due to Shigeko's personality, but most likely, Shigeko knew what she, as a *nouveau riche* woman, had to do to maintain her status, including keeping her husband's love. She must have always lived in tension. It is beyond our imagination how determined and resilient she was in order for her to climb up to the top of the social ladder and maintain the position.

Not only with determination and resilience, but with her intelligence, capability, and agency, Shigeko maximized the position she earned for her own favor. The previous court organization allowed for a noble woman with leverage; once her child became the heavenly sovereign, she acquired tremendous authority and power. Under the court led by a retired sovereign, these women lost their power, to a certain degree, but still held a considerable degree of authority. In addition, a woman of lower birth rose by building clientships with the gates of power and thus wielded power. In addition, the concept of the new medieval *ie* afforded the "primary" wife of a retired sovereign tremendous power as co-manager of the royal *ie*. Accelerated factionalism gained warriors, a new power block, leverage. Shigeko utilized all of these facets in her favor: establishment and maintenance of the Heike regime. Her contributions to Japanese history were so momentous that they even determined the future of Japan. Without her, and if she had lived longer, the first shogunate would probably not have existed. It is not an exaggeration to say that Shigeko and Kiyomori were co-founders of the Heike regime.

While Shigeko was the "female Kiyomori," as the co-founder of the Heike regime, in order to maintain the regime, other female members' contributions were also necessary. As seen, Wakasa played significant roles under Takakura's court even after Shigeko's death, and Lady Shirakawa, who was a daughter of Kiyomori, also played a crucial role of connecting the

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<sup>2</sup> Tamakiharu, 255.

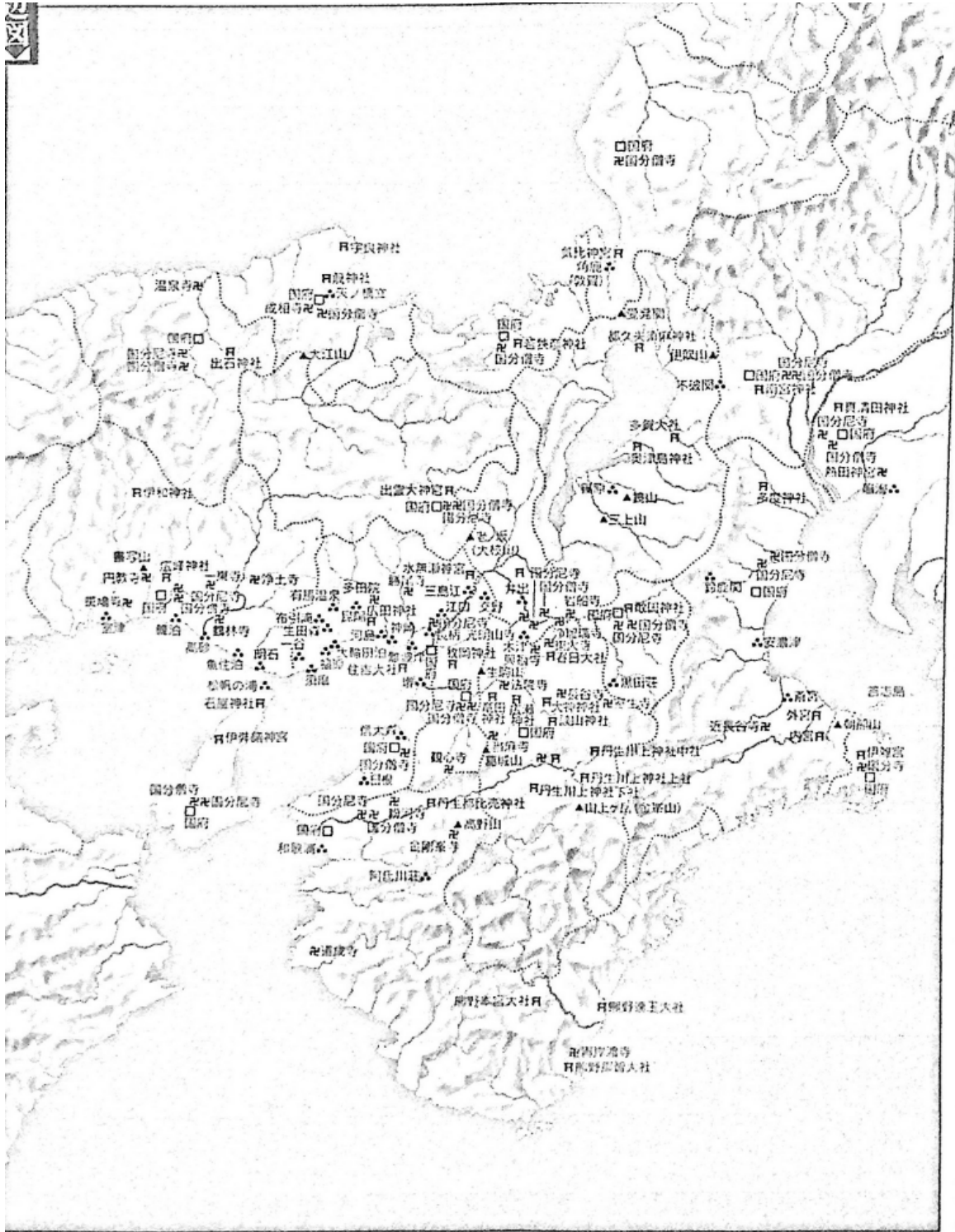
Rokuhara line and the Fujiwara Regent's Family, another gate of power. Most importantly, Shigeiko's sister, Tokiko, who connected the two co-founders and brought down the curtain on the Heike regime, was indispensable. Some aspects of Tokiko's legacy were carried on during the Kamakura period by Hōjō Masako (1157-1225), who was the primary wife of Yoritomo, the first shogun of the first shogunate. These women have made an impact on history so profound as to have fundamentally altered a millennium of Japanese history, and yet have been relegated to near obscurity for too long.

It is my hope that this work inspires readers to engage in questions such as what women's strength is, what an obstacle, and the benefit of being a woman is. This work is the opening of my grandiose project: scrutinizing elite women's status through each period of premodern history to capture the shifts of expected and substantial roles of elite Japanese women. The constructive macrohistory of Japanese women cannot be written without detailed microhistorical works: case studies. Even in Japan there are not many historical biographies of female figures; in the U.S. the situation is worse. Wakasa, Tokiko, and Lady Shirakawa, as well as other women from different periods need far more scholarly attention that I believe will serve to empower contemporary women. They are my future projects.

APPENDIX A

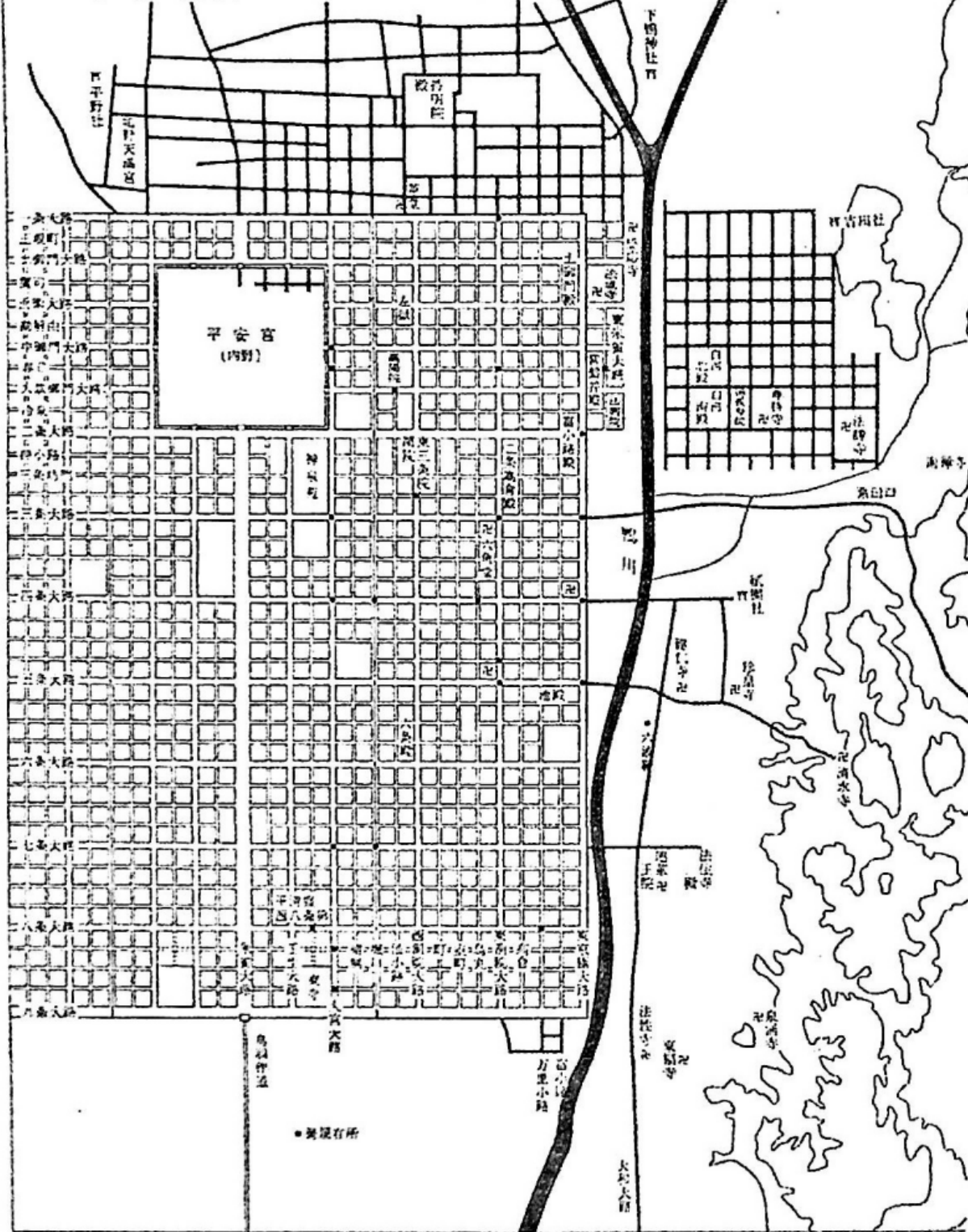
The Ritsuryō Post and Rank Systems			
Post System	Rank System		
<i>Council of State: Decision-making elites, appointed by royal decree from among eligible elites</i>	First	Senior	
		Junior	
	Second	Senior	
		Junior	
	Third	Senior	
		Junior	
<i>Middle Management: Top managers of most ministries and bureaus (Full-time officials)</i>	Fourth	Senior	Upper Lower
		Junior	Upper Lower
	Fifth	Senior	Upper Lower
		Junior	Upper Lower
<i>Lower Bureaucrats: Staff of ministries, bureaus, provincial headquarters (Full-time officials)</i>	Sixth	Senior	Upper Lower
		Junior	Upper Lower
	Seventh	Senior	Upper Lower
		Junior	Upper Lower
	Eighth	Senior	Upper Lower
		Junior	Upper Lower
<i>Apprentice Bureaucrats: Clerks in ministries, bureaus, provincial headquarters (On-call officials)</i>	Initiate	Senior	Upper Lower
		Junior	Upper Lower
	No Rank		

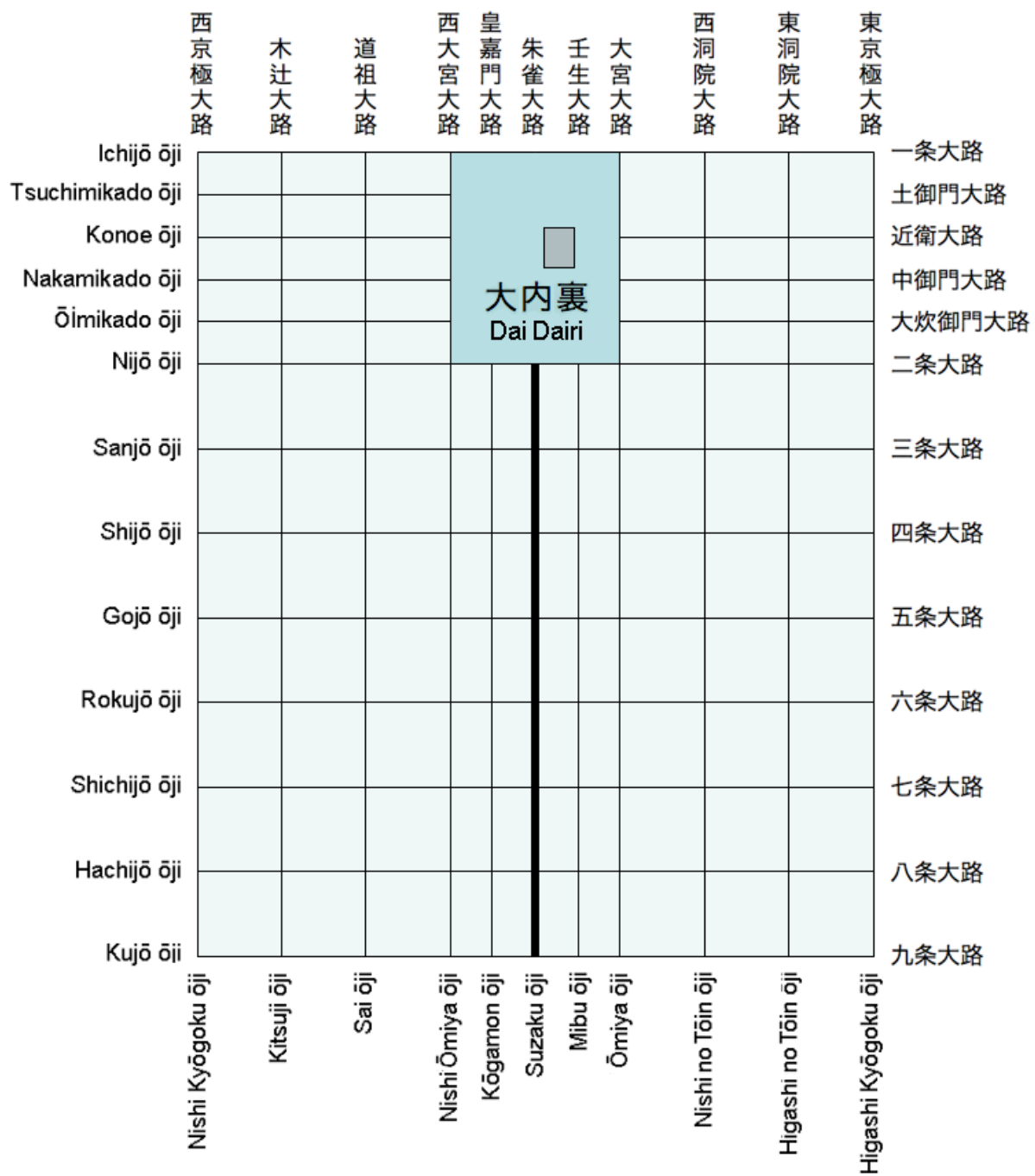
APPENDIX B  
Maps





# 中世京都の形成







**Appendix C**  
**Character List of Years, Names, and Places**

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Akashi Kakuichi 明石覚一  
Angen 安元  
Angen *no gōso*/the Hakusan incident 安元の強訴/白山事件  
Antoku 安徳  
Bifukumon‘in 美福門院  
Byōdōin 平等院  
Chiba Tsunetane 千葉常胤  
Coup d’etat in the Third Year of Jishō 治承三年のクーデター(政変)  
Daiban dokoro 台盤所  
Dannoura 壇ノ浦  
Edo 江戸  
The Enryaku Temple—比叡寺  
Fukuhara 福原  
Fukutō Sanae 服藤早苗  
Fujiwara Akimitsu 藤原顕光  
Fujiwara Akirakeiko 藤原明子  
Fujiwara Akisue 藤原顕季  
Fujiwara Akiyori 藤原顕頼  
Fujiwara Asako 藤原朝子  
Fujiwara Chikako 藤原親子  
Fujiwara Ishi 藤原苡子  
Fujiwara Ishi 藤原威子  
Fujiwara Kaneko 藤原兼子  
Fujiwara/Kujō Kanezane 藤原/九条兼実  
Fujiwara Kenshi 藤原賢子  
Fujiwara Kinsji 忻子  
Fujiwara Kinzane 藤原公実  
Fujiwara Kusuko 藤原薬子  
Fujiwara Masatomo 藤原政友

Fujiwara Michiie 藤原道家  
Fujiwara Michinaga 藤原道長  
Fujiwara Michitaka 藤原道隆  
Fujiwara Moromichi 藤原師通  
Fujiwara Morozane 藤原師実  
Fujiwara Motofusa 藤原基房  
Fujiwara Motomichi 藤原基通  
Fujiwara Mototsune 藤原基経  
Fujiwara Motozane 藤原基実  
Fujiwara Narichika 藤原成親  
Fujiwara Nobuyori 藤原信頼  
Fujiwara Norimichi 藤原教通  
Fujiwara Sanesuke—藤原実資  
Fujiwara Senshi 藤原詮子  
Fujiwara Shinzei/Michinori 藤原信西 / 通憲  
Fujiwara Shōshi 藤原彰子  
Fujiwara Shunzei 藤原俊成  
Fujiwara Sukeko 藤原佑子  
Fujiwara/Nakayama Tadachika 藤原/中山忠親  
Fujiwara Tadahira 藤原忠平  
Fujiwara Tadazane 藤原忠実  
Fujiwara Tamako 藤原璋子  
Fujiwara/Yoshida Tsunefusa 藤原/吉田経房  
Fujiwara Tsuneko 藤原経子  
Fujiwara Yasuko 藤原穩子  
Fujiwara Yorimichi 藤原頼通  
Fujiwara Yoshifusa 藤原良房  
Fujiwara Yoshiko 懿子  
Fujiwara Yoshimichi 藤原良通  
Fujiwara Yoshinobu 藤原能信

Genpei seisuiki/jōsuiki 源平盛衰記  
Go-ichijō 後一条  
Go-reizei 後冷泉  
Go-sanjō 後三条  
Go-shirakawa 後白河  
Go-toba 後鳥羽  
*Gukanshō* 愚管抄  
*Gyokuzui* 玉蘂  
*Gyokuyō* 玉葉  
Hachijōin 八条院  
Hashimoto Yoshihiko 橋本義彦  
Heian 平安  
the Heiji Turbulence 平治の乱  
Heishi 平氏  
Heizei 平城  
Heizei Retired Sovereign's Incident 平城太政天皇の変  
Hirano Shrine 平野社  
Hiyoshi Shrine 日吉社  
the Hōgen Turbulence 保元の乱  
Hōjō Masako 北条政子  
Hōjō Yoshitoki 北条義時  
Hōjūji 法住寺  
Horikawa 堀河  
*Hyakurenshō* 百鍊抄  
*Hyōhanki* 兵範記  
Ichijō 一条  
Ishii Susumu 石井進  
Ishimoda Shō 石母田正  
Itsukushima 厳島  
Jien 慈円  
Jishō 治承

Jishō Juei War 治承寿永の乱  
Jōsaimon'in 上西門院  
Kamo Shrine 賀茂神社  
Kanmu Heishi 桓武平氏  
Kaō 嘉応  
Kenshunmon'in chūnagon 建春門院中納言  
Kenshunmon'in hokumen utaawase 建春門院北面歌合  
*Kikki* 吉記  
Kōkamon'in 皇嘉門院  
KōKō 光孝  
Konoe 近衛  
Kumano 熊野  
Kuroda Toshio 黒田敏雄  
the Kusuko Incident 薬子の変  
Lady Shirakawa 白河殿  
Meiji 明治  
Minamoto Meishi 源明子  
Minamoto Rinshi 源倫子  
Minamoto Toshiaki 源敏明  
Minamoto Yoritomo 源頼朝  
Mt. Hiei 比叡山  
Myōun 明雲  
Nagai Michiko 永井路子  
Nijō 二条  
Nin'an 仁安  
Nishi hachijō dai 西八条第  
*Nyūdōshōkoku* 入道相国  
*Oni no ma* 鬼間  
Prince Mochihito 似仁王  
Prince Sanehito 実仁皇子  
Prince Sukehito 輔仁皇子

*Rishukyō hōe* 理趣經法会  
Rokujō 六条  
Rokuhara 六波羅  
*Ryōjinhishō kudenshū* 梁塵秘抄口伝集  
*Saburau* 侍う  
Saga 嵯峨  
Saishōkōin 最勝光院  
Samurai 侍  
*Sankaiki* 山塊記  
Seiwa Genji 清和源氏  
Shichijōin 七條院  
The Shishigatani Incident 鹿ヶ谷事件  
Shirakawa 白河  
Shōji Ayako 東海林亜矢子  
Shukaku hosshinnō 守覚法親王  
*Shōyūki* 小右記  
Shūmeimon'in 修明門院  
Shōan 承安  
Sōma Mikuriya 相馬御厨  
Sutoku 崇徳  
Takakura 高倉  
Takamura Itsue 高群逸枝  
Takashina Eishi/Tango no tsubone 高階栄子/丹後局  
*The Tale of the Heike* 平家物語  
Taira 平  
Taira Chikamune 平親宗  
Taira Kiyomori 平清盛  
Taira Masamori 平正盛  
Taira Munemori 平宗盛  
Taira Nobunori 平 信範  
Taira Noriko 平徳子

Taira Norimori 平教盛  
Taira Shigeko/Kenshunmon'in 平滋子/建春門院  
Taira Shigemori 平重盛  
Taira Tokiko 平時子  
Taira Tokinobu 平時信  
Taira Tokitada 平時忠  
Taira Tomomori 平知盛  
Taira Yorimori 平頼盛  
Toba 鳥羽  
Tōdai Temple 東大寺  
Tsunoda Bun'ei 角田文衛  
Wakasa no tsubone/Taira Masako 若狭局/平政子  
Yōwa 養和

## Appendix D Glossary

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- Amida nyorai* 阿弥陀如来—Amitabha Tathagata
- Asobime* 遊び女—female entertainers
- ben* 弁—a controller
- Bogō* 母后—the mother of the heavenly sovereign
- buke* 武家—the warrior aristocracy
- bunsho no ri* 文書理—the logic of written documents
- chigyō kokushu* 知行国主—provincial proprietor
- Chūgū* 中宮—junior queen consort
- chūjō* 中将—a mid-level commander. The post of *chūjō* was often held by an advisor (*sangi*) on the Council of State.
- chūnagon* 中納言—middle counselor
- Chūsei* 中世—the medieval period
- Daijōdaijin* 太政大臣—Grand Minister
- Daijōe* 大嘗会—the court banquet on the occasion of the first ceremonial offering of rice by the newly enthroned monarch.
- Dairi* 内裏—the royal palace
- Daidairi* 大内裏—the greater royal palace
- Densō* 伝奏—transmitter of a message. It involved not only transmitting royal records, but setting the agenda for council meetings, adjudicating cases, and recording the minutes of these meetings.
- Fuko* 封戸—governmental taxes from sustenance households
- Gaiseki* 外戚—queen consort's natal family
- ganmon* 願文—a written prayer, offered to shrines
- Goganji* 御願寺—royal vow temple
- gojisō* 護持僧—the heavenly sovereign's spiritual protector monk
- gosaie* 御齋会—a realm-protecting official Buddhist ceremony celebrated at court over seven days at the beginning of the new year
- Gōso* 強訴—a violent protest that featured monks and shrine personnel demonstrating in the capital with divine symbols associated with their shrines, such as portable shrines
- Gunji kizoku* 軍事貴族—military nobles
- haru no jimoku* 春の除目—the annual spring appointment of court officials

*Hashitamono* 半物—servants  
*hosshinnō* 法親王—an ordained royal prince  
*hyakkanichi gosenbō* 百ヶ日御懺法—one-hundred-day repentance rite  
*hyōbukyō* 兵部卿—the head of the ministry in charge of military affairs  
*ie* 家—Japanese medieval familial system  
*In* 院/*Jōkō* 上皇—the retired sovereign  
*In no kinshin* 近臣—a retired sovereign’s personal retainers  
*Insei* 院政—the court led by a retired sovereign  
*Jikiro* 直廬—the regency’s personal space in the royal palace  
*jisha* 寺社—the religious institutions  
*jōkei* 上卿—a senior noble who was in charge of a court matter such as an event and a ceremony  
*jōtō* 上棟—the first ritual for construction  
*jukai* 受戒—receiving precepts  
*junbo* 准母—quasi-mother  
*Jusangō* 准三后—rank equivalent to that of the three queen-consorts status  
*Kagyō* 家業—the specialization of a family  
*Kakaku* 家格—the status of the family  
*Kanpaku* 関白—the viceroy  
*Kansō* 官奏—the ceremony of a report to the throne from the State Council  
*Kebiishichō* 檢非違使庁—the Royal Police and Judicial Chief Office  
*kechigan* 結願—the completion of the prayer  
*kemari* 蹴鞠—an ancient football game played by aristocrats in Japan  
*Kenmon* 権門—the gates of power  
*kitōryōsho* 祈祷料所—the land for prayer  
*Kō* 后—the official highest wife of a monarch  
*Kodai* 古代—the classical period  
*Kōgō* 皇后—senior queen consort  
*Kōhi* 皇妃—royal wives  
*Kojitsu* 故実—protocols for rituals and practices  
*kokka chingo* 国家鎮護—the spiritual protection of the state  
*kōke* or *kuge* 公家—the court nobles



*kōken* 後見—general support, backing up  
*kokuō no ujidera* 国王の氏寺—the family temple of the king of the realm  
*Kōkyū* 後宮—the rear palace  
*Konoe chūjō* 近衛中将—a mid-level commander of the Inner Palace Guards, frequently held a concurrent appointment as a commander of another guard unit as well.  
*Konoefu* 近衛府—the Inner Palace Guards  
*Kōtaigō* 皇太后—grand queen consort  
*Kugyō* 公卿—senior nobles  
*kugyōgijō* 公卿議定—a meeting of senior nobles to support the council  
*kurōdo* 蔵人—a secretary  
*kurōdo no tō*, 蔵人頭—the head secretary,  
*Mappō* 末法—declining of Buddhist norms  
*midō* 御堂—Amida hall  
*Miuchi* 身内/ミウチ—quasi-family  
*Mizuishin-dokoro* 御隨身所—the Bureau of Official Bodyguards  
*mokudai* 目代—a deputy appointed by the court and sent from the capital  
*musha-dokoro* 武者所—the Warriors’ Bureau  
*naidaijin* 内大臣—inner palace minister  
*naigi* 内議—private dialogues  
*Naishi no kami* 内侍—the highest of the female court officials  
*Naishi no suke* 典侍—the second-level manager of the Office of Female Chamberlains  
*Naishi no tsukasa* 内侍司—the Office of Female Chamberlains  
*Nikki no ie* 日記の家—Families with Diaries  
*ninjin origami* 任人折紙—an unofficial memo regarding the personnel  
*norito* 祝詞—a congratulatory prayer  
*nusa* 幣—offerings  
*Nyōbō* 女房—ladies-in-waiting  
*Nyoin* 女院—premier retired royal ladies  
*Nyoin no chō* 女院の庁—a nyoin’s administrative headquarters  
*Nyokan* 女官—female court officials  
*Nyōgo* 女御—the title of one of monarch’s official wives  
*Ōbō buppō sōi* 王法仏法相依—interdependence of royal norms and Buddhist norms

*Ōke* 王家—the royal family  
*rakkeikuyō* 落慶供養—the ritual for completion of the construction  
*renraku gōgi* 連絡合議—council meeting by the reigning monarch, retired sovereign, and the regent or viceroy  
*Ritsuryō* 律令—the penal and administrative codes imported from China in the eighth century  
*ryōji* 令旨—royal orders issued by the women of the three *kō* posts and also by the crown prince under the *ritsuryō* system.  
*Sadaijin* 左大臣—Minister of the Left  
*Saiō* 齋王—royal princess who were appointed to serve the deities of Kamo or Ise shrine as a deputy of the heavenly sovereign  
*Sanshu no jingi* 三種の神器—the three sacred regalia of the royal family  
*Sei* 政—the state affairs/the court  
*Seiryōden* 清涼殿—Heavenly Sovereign’s private day-quarter in the royal palace  
*Sekkan* 摂関—a regent and viceroy  
*Sekkanke* 摂関家—the Fujiwara family of the regent→Fujiwara Regent’s Family  
*Sekkan seiji* 摂関政治—the court led by a regent/viceroy  
*sensō midokyō* 千僧御読経—the Buddhist service to recite sūtras by a thousand monks  
*Shōen* 莊園—a landed estate  
*Sesshō* 摂政—the regent  
*Shiki* 職—multi-layered vertical division of rights  
*shimon* 諮問—advisory, which monarchs or the regent asked a senior noble individually for advice.  
*Shinnō* 親王—prince of the blood (a royal descendent who had received a royal command to be officially registered in the royal house)  
*shinpō* 神宝—a sacred treasure  
*shōden* 昇殿—entering a palace  
*shōensei* 莊園制—a new landholding system  
*Shōgatsu harei* 正月拝礼—visit to pay respects on the New Year’s Day  
*Shōgun* 将軍—the military chief in the shogunate  
*shōjimoku* 小除目—small appointment of court officials  
*Shukke* 出家—taking tonsure  
*sōsen* 宋錢—Chinese Song’s coins  
*Taikōtaigō* 太皇太后—senior grand queen consort

*taisha* 大赦—general amnesty

Takamochiō ryū Ise Heishi 高望王流伊勢平氏—Ise Heishi line, ascended from Prince Takamochi

Takamuneō ryū Heishi 高棟王流平氏—Heishi line, originating from Prince Takamune

*Tennō* 天皇—the heavenly sovereign

*Tōshi no chōja* 藤氏長者—the head of Fujiwara families

*tsuizenkuyō* 追善供養—Buddhist memorial service

*Uba* 乳母—nursing mother

Udaijin 右大臣—Minister of the Right

*Uji* 氏—clans

*Ushiromi* 後見—the direct daily “service”

Yasoshima festival 八十島祭—a once-in-a-lifetime important event for a monarch. It brought his majesty’s clothes by royal envoy to Yasoshima and performed a ritual, praying for the peace of the realm with the monarch’s clothes as a proxy for his majesty

*yoru no otodo* 夜御殿—heavenly sovereign’s bedroom

*Yūshi* 猶子—fostering child

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