

For Want of a Disciple:

**Personnel Challenges Among Kantō Area Buddhist Temples in the
Early Modern Period**

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Abstract

Even though modern scholars do not closely adhere to the model of Buddhist “decline” during Japan’s early modern period (1600–1868), the effects of this interpretation continue to influence topics of research and our perspectives of the Buddhist clergy during that time frame. One such example is our understanding of the experiences of non-famous, non-elite clerics who lived in temples across rural Japan. Although new studies of clerical networks and temple economics have gained traction in recent years, other aspects of clerical life still merit further attention. Drawing upon data presented by recent research, this paper delves into the ramifications of one challenge: the need to find and train disciples in the mid-18th to early 19th centuries, a period when economic and social changes affected family dispositions of younger sons who might have been put up for ordination. It will start with a brief survey of these transformations, and then it will survey recruiting issues and the processes involved with clerical advancement. These discussions are punctuated with examples of problematic youths whose choice to enter the clergy was not theirs to make. While it is easy to dismiss such cases as further evidence of moral turpitude within the clergy, this paper argues that we must study this element of clerical life as a social issue. It also argues that the heretofore focus on clerical decline has marginalized the efforts of rural abbots to maintain their temples and communities in the face of such challenges.

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1. Introduction

As Orion Klautau notes in his study of Meiji era interpretations of early modern Japanese Buddhism, present research projects on this topic are no longer bound by the interpretative constraints of the “theory of [Buddhism’s] decline” (*darakuron* 墮落論) that informed anti-Buddhist polemics from the mid-1800s onwards. Although he was not the only advocate, the prominent historian Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助 (1877–1955) is often most associated with this perspective, and thus post-war scholars have been motivated by the goal of “overcoming Tsuji.”¹ This revision of perspective has motivated new studies of early modern religion and politics, clerical intellectual endeavors and education, and the complex networks and practices that operated between religious figures (including Buddhist clerics) and peasant communities. Furthermore, whereas earlier studies focused on individual clerics who were lauded for resisting the overall trend of increasing decadence (for example, Jiun Onkō 慈雲飲光 [1718–1805] and Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 [1686–1769]), better access to data in local archives provides the means for more nuanced views of other Buddhist clerical lives and experiences.

These same local sources also hold the potential for new insights on the difficult challenges that confronted the rural abbots who comprised the largest segment of early modern Buddhist organizations. A case in point is the growing body of data indicating a pronounced decline in village-level clerical populations in the greater Kantō region from the mid-1700 onwards. This led to increasing numbers of abbot-less (*mujū* 無住) temples that appear in organization network lists (*honmatsuchō* 本末帳) maintained by regional head temples (*honji* 本寺). The “decline theory” argued that early modern Buddhist corruption arose from clerical avarice at urban temples and the abuse of samurai

¹ Klautau, “Against the Ghosts of Recent Past,” 264–268.

anti-Christian/anti-heterodoxy policies to extract financial benefits from *danka* 檀家 lay families who were obligated to support the clergy in exchange for clerical certification of their compliance with these codes. While such cases did exist, local archives provide evidence that the rising strata of newly wealthy and thus economically empowered elite farming families (*gōnō* 豪農) used their growing stature in village life to play the role of peasant patrons who exerted their own agency in clerical-lay interactions.² In practice, rising vacancy rates led to increased clerical reliance upon active lay participation in temple management practices.³

The lack of sufficient personnel naturally raises questions about the causes of this trend and its effect on clerical networks in areas where it occurred. Building upon earlier studies of empty temples, this paper takes up these issues to consider the implications of such population pressures for clerical leaders who were charged with maintaining the integrity of Buddhist sectarian networks in rural communities. I will begin with a short survey of data taken from studies of the Kantō and then move to consider the impact of larger early modern demographic and socio-cultural shifts on clerical recruitment. From there I will use several case studies involving problematic disciples of rural abbots to examine the personnel challenges that confronted temple abbots in the mid- to late- early modern period.

The examples of problematic clerics naturally evoke the specter of a Tsuji-esque vision and support for the decline model. There is no denying the examples of lax clerics that appear in local records, and the case studies no doubt reenforce the overall import of the earlier view that there were serious issues among early modern clerical communities. However, that interpretation's focus on willful acts of clerical greed and lust makes an implicit argument for a pervasive culture of degeneracy at all Buddhist temples, and it does not consider the impact of larger social trends and transformations on Buddhist recruitment practices. Furthermore, the decline model does not consider efforts by local clerical leaders who struggled with the management of problematic individuals within their temples. By drawing upon insights from six decades of research on early modern economic developments, social changes and cultural transformations like the spread of literacy among commoner elites, this paper seeks to offer a more nuanced explanation for Buddhist clerical problems that appear in historical records.

2. The State and Implication of Empty Abbacies

To start with a brief overview of Buddhist networking principles, rural temples were organized into tiers based on a ranking system. At the top were “head temples” (*honji* 本寺) and their abbots performed the following functions: the management of their networks of subordinated temples; acting as liaisons between their subordinates and higher clerical authorities at sectarian headquarters (*honzan* 本山) and the special “liaison temples” (*furegashira* 触頭) in or near Edo that handled many administrative

² Vesey, “Peasants as Clients and Patrons of Buddhism in Early Modern Village Life.”

³ Hōzawa, *Bakuhau kenryoku to jidan seido*.

matters; and, depending on the school, the running of local training halls (*danrin* 檀林) for *shoke* 所化 (ordinands who had trained for several years under their ordination masters prior to entering a *danrin*). Under the head temples were one or more layers of “branches” (*matsuji* 末寺). These temples were fully accredited as sites of a head temple’s Dharma lineage (*hōryū* 法流), and thus their abbots were empowered to recruit and initially train disciples, and to lead funeral/memorial services. Given this latter right, the majority of village lay families had formal “funeral *danka*” (*metsuzai danka* 滅罪檀家) affiliation with branches, which meant they were obligated to financially support these temples in exchange for the abbot’s certification of their religious registry (*shūmon aratamechō* 宗門改帳).

While the head-branch and temple-funeral *danka* relationships have both received extensive treatment in studies of early modern Buddhism, there was a numerically extensive lower layer in these hierarchies that has not drawn as much attention, particularly in non-Japanese scholarship. These entities were known as *monto* 門徒 (“followers”) in the Tendai and Shingon schools, while other schools such as Jōdo and Sōtō called them *heisōchi* 平僧地 (“common cleric’s site”).⁴ As suggested by such nomenclature, these bottom strata consisted of small temples that were in the system but not recognized as a lineage site. Their abbots were not permitted to train disciples or to conduct funeral services; therefore, they had few funeral *danka*, and often their fiscal viability depended upon small land holdings that might be rented out.

In the case of Shingon and Tendai *monto*, this scarcity of resources could be partially off-set by support from “prayer” (*kitō* 祈祷) *danka* that patronized a temple for rituals that provided protections against fire, illness and other afflictions of daily life.⁵ Branches and *monto* could have both kinds of *danka* families, although the ratio of funeral vs. prayer was usually greater at branches. For this reason, temples including *monto* that did not have funeral *danka*, and thus their activities centered on votive practices, were also called “prayer” temples (*kitōji* 祈祷寺). Prayer families did not carry financial burden of a funeral *danka* house, but at least in some regions, their association with a *monto* evolved into a formal relationship that was recognized by secular and clerical authorities. This position gave prayer *danka* a say in temple management issues along with the funeral *danka*, although it also meant that these *danka*, too, could not easily break their relationship with their prayer temples.⁶

These institutional ranking limitations also affected the careers of their residents. Following their ordination and years in training, a *shoke* who met their school’s certification criteria could eventually attain the abbacy of a prominent branch or head temple. However, regardless of their personal attainments, the limits placed on *monto/heisōchi* functions applied to their abbots as well, such that even a fully certified cleric who happened to reside in a *monto* did not have the rights and privileges accorded to those posted to a branch.

⁴ Tanaka covers many aspects of these lowest level temples (Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jiin keieishi no kenkyū*).

⁵ The general term for these wishes was “worldly benefits” (*genze riyaku* 現世利益).

⁶ Hōzawa, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku to jidan seido*, 282–283.

In theory, Buddhist sectarian communities were well integrated into transregional and trans-domain networks that that united elite headquarters in the Kyoto/Nara region with even the lowliest temples in small villages. These structures were the organizational basis of the clergy's legal status (*mibun* 身分) within early modern society.⁷ Based on the figures in head-branch registries, there were thousands of Buddhist temples in the Kantō provinces. In the upper part of Musashi, in what is now Saitama Prefecture, the figure was 3363.⁸ However, recent studies of Kantō area temple archives now suggest the Buddhist clerical presence was less substantial than it might appear on paper. Tanaka Yōhei has recently highlighted this discrepancy with a series of surveys of abbatial lists produced by head temple administrators.⁹ To summarize some of his data points:

According to a Bunsei 文政 13 (1830) register at the Nichiren school's Hondoji 本土寺 (in Matsuo, modern Chiba Prefecture), ten out of thirty-nine branches (20%) did not have abbots. Six of these had less than twenty *danka* families and small landholdings valued at under 7.5 *koku* 石 of rice production.¹⁰

Comparing data on thirty-four prayer temples supervised by the prominent Tendai regional head Senmyōji 千妙寺, all were staffed in Genbun 元文 3 (1738) but that number fell to twenty in An'ei 安永 5 (1776), and then to only eighteen in Kansei 寛政 2 (1790). Here, too, weak finances were the main cause of the decline in abbatial numbers.¹¹

Myōjōin 明星院 was a major Shingi Shingon temple in the upper Musashi region and according to Tenmei 天明 7 (1787) data, it supervised twenty-one branches (one was empty), and fifty-nine *monto* (twenty-eight empty). Most of these *monto* were established as administrators (*bettō* 別当) of village tutelary shrines (*chinju* 鎮守).¹² In a later Ka'ei 嘉永 1 (1848) survey of twenty-nine *monto*, only six had abbots.¹³

Sōrinji 雙林寺 was a prominent Sōtō temple that supervised networks in Kōzuke 上野 Province (modern Gunma Prefecture) and regions to the north. Mid-18th century temple registries stated Kōzuke had 429 Sōtō school sites of all ranks. In a Tenpō 天保 14 (1843) survey of empty abbacies compiled by its abbot, fifty branches lacked abbots, and the

⁷ Vesey, "Clerical Agency and the Formation of Buddhist Organizations in the Early Modern Period."

⁸ SSKT 4: 882. The chart on this SSKT page lists a total of 3791, but this includes 428 temples affiliated with Shugendō networks. I have removed these non-Buddhist temples to obtain 3363. A footnote also states that some of the tallies here do not match those from an earlier edition of the prefectural history.

⁹ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jūin keieishi no kenkyū*.

¹⁰ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jūin keieishi no kenkyū*, 32–36. One *koku* is 180.39 liters; supposedly it was enough to supply one person for a year. Of course, rice alone was not sufficient to maintain the abbot's health, and this figure is the purported productive value of the land. The actual income depended on the fluctuating rice market and any income from the rental of productive lands to local peasants. Judging from the 1830 Hondoji records, five branch temples managed to support a resident cleric, but it was a financial challenge at others.

¹¹ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jūin keieishi no kenkyū*, 70–71.

¹² Since these temples had few funerary *danka* and were established as shrine administrators for the worship of protective deities, their widespread existence indicates the building of these rural Buddhist temples was due to local faith and effective proselytization activities by Shingi clerics, and not to Buddhist participation in the suppression of heterodoxies like Christianity.

¹³ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jūin keieishi no kenkyū*, 196–205.

average duration of these vacancies was eighteen years. In the same period, another survey revealed sixty empty *heisōji*. (According to Tanaka, differences in the collection of data suggests Sōtō leadership was particularly worried about the vacancies at the more important branches, which indicates they had a lower regard for *heisōji*.)¹⁴

In addition to this data, Hōzawa Naohide's study of Shingi Shingon networks in Awa 阿波 (modern Chiba Prefecture) includes research on vacant abbacy lists compiled in the first half of the 19th century. There were at least 253 temples in the province. According to a 1843 survey submitted by the regional head Hōjuin 宝珠院, 113 sites lacked an abbot. Some of these had been un-staffed for decades and many had fallen into varying degrees of disrepair.¹⁵

Similar findings appear in Higurashi Yoshiaki's detailed survey of the network supervised by Daihiganji 大悲願寺, a Shingi Shingon head temple in modern Akiruno あきる野市 (Tokyo Metropolitan Area). All totaled there were ten branches, nineteen *monto*, and three subtemples within Daihiganji's precincts.¹⁶ In Kyōhō 享保 6 (1721), all of the branches were staffed, with seven of them having two clerics in residence (the abbot and a disciple or retired cleric; Daihiganji alone had four disciples in residence), and thirteen *monto* also had abbots (three of them had two clerics in residence.) Furthermore, eight of the branches listed the presence lay-staff (again Daihiganji had the most with eight laymen) as well as villagers who resided in the area before the temple precincts. Subsequent surveys were conducted in 1732, 1756, 1816 (data appears to be limited), 1822, 1840, 1852, and 1864. Judging from these lists, Daihiganji and its three largest branches maintained stable populations with at least two clerics apiece, but the other seven branches began to experience declines in residency to one cleric only (i.e., the abbot without a disciple in training), and four were vacant in either 1840 or 1856. For the *monto*, staffing conditions were more severe: between 1756 and 1822, all the abbacies became vacant, and only a very few were maintained by clerical caretakers.

Records at Shingi temple of Yakuōin 薬王院 on Mt. Takao show a similar trend. A Kansei 1 (1787) register of temple residents for Yakuōin and fourteen of its seventeen branches shows that Yakuōin alone had an abbot and two disciples. Another three subordinates had a resident abbot and one disciple; two others had both active and retired abbots but no disciples; five had only an abbot (again, there were no potential successors in residence); and five were staffed by caretakers.¹⁷ The list does not provide information on three other branches.¹⁸

¹⁴ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jiin keieishi no kenkyū*, 162–170.

¹⁵ Hōzawa, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku to jidan seido*, 137–146.

¹⁶ Higurashi “Shingi Shingonshū inaka honji Daihigan to sono monmatsu ni kansuru kisoteki kenkyū,” 86.

¹⁷ *TYM* 2: 81–83.

¹⁸ Yoshioka provides general information on Yakuōin's network (Yoshioka, “Kinsei jiin ni okeru monmatsu chitsujo to chiiki no ronri.”). Other evidence on the prominent numbers of *monto* in Shingi systems appears in Kushida Ryōkō's survey of Shingi network lists for the whole of Musashi (including what is now the Tokyo Metropolitan area as well as Saitama) that were compiled in 1675. These documents show there were 3107 temples in the province. Separated by kind, their numbers were: 220 heads; 258 branches; and 2629 *monto* (Kushida, *Shingon mikkyō seiritsu katei no kenkyū*, 1011). Uda

Looking at another Tendai source, Kitain 喜多院 was the most prominent cloister within the precincts of Muryōjuji 無量寿寺 in Kawagoe 川越 (modern Saitama Prefecture), and its abbots kept diaries of temple affairs including the *Administrator's Records* (*Chijiroku* 知事録) from the 1780s until the 1850s. An entry for the first day of Bunsei 3 (1820) noted that vacant branches and *monto* of Nakain 中院 (another cloister) were not required to make monetary gift at New Years. According to the diary, two out of Nakain's twenty-four branches and nineteen of its *monto* were vacant. Among another ten *monto*, five had caretakers and only five had seated abbots.¹⁹

While not exhaustive, the appearance of similar data within these different Kantō-area Buddhist networks suggests two common and closely interwoven trends during the latter half of the early modern period, one of which was temple impoverishment. If a temple had few funeral *danka* families who were obligated to provide donations of money and goods (*dantoku* 壇徳), it might balance the books with income from renting temple lands to local farmers, but those without such resources faced severe economic challenges.²⁰ Gifts from prayer *danka* were another vital source of income, but as Tanaka shows in his study of Senmyōji's *kitōji* prayer temples, these *danka* numbers were also low, hence the overall small fiscal bases of these *monto* could often only provide limited support for a full-time abbot.²¹ Under such circumstances, it was also difficult to replace buildings lost to fire or age, which further eroded a temple's sustainability as a viable site of Buddhist activities.

Impositions by regional heads and headquarters placed further burdens on constrained finances. As temples of some prominence, these elite institutions often received grants of tax-exempt lands from Tokugawa and domain lords, but the head temples nonetheless expected annual gifts from their subordinates. Even higher ranked temples in Edo and the Kansai issued their own requests for funds whenever they rebuilt their halls, performed special memorial services for school founders, etc. Abbots of well-appointed branches and *monto* could meet such demands, but their poorer brethren were severely pressed, and if necessary they had to draw upon saved money (*shidōkin* 祠堂金) to meet these obligations.²² As I shall discuss below, it was possible for

and Tokunaga's study of the network supervised by Sokushōin 息障院 (in modern Saitama Prefecture.) shows it consisted of nineteen branches and seventy-eight *monto* (Udaka and Tokunaga, *Musashi Yoshimi Sokushōin monjō*, 208–212).

¹⁹ KN 4: 162–163. While it was only one of several cloisters that were created at Muryōjuji during the medieval period, Kitain assumed overall control of the precincts once its abbot Nankōbō Tenkai 南光坊天海 (1536?–1643) became an advisor to Tokugawa Ieyasu, and the cloister received patronage from Kasuga no Tsubone 春日局 (1579–1643; the wetnurse of the second shogun Hidetada 秀忠). The *Administrator's Record* and other accounts were compiled into the *Daily Record of Kitain* (*Kitain nikkan* 喜多院日鑑). An earlier petition for the relief of Nakain's empty *monto* was submitted in the last days of Bunka 文化 15/Bunsei 1 (the names changed in 1818) (KN 3: 416). There was no mention of it in the following year, but the 1820 approval strongly suggests continuing financial problems in the Nakain network.

²⁰ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jiin keieishi no kenkyū*, 71–79.

²¹ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jiin keieishi no kenkyū*, 59–62.

²² Hasegawa, *Daiganji shiwa*, 89.

monto/heisōchi to raise their stature to full-branch status, but this, too, was very expensive, hence difficult to achieve.

The second issue that clearly challenged rural clerical networks in the Kantō was the gradual growth of severe personnel shortages. Vacancies at poor temples is not surprising, but the reduction to just one cleric (the abbot, with no disciple for the next generation) at mid-level branches in various networks suggests the impact of other demographic and social factors at work in the early modern Kantō. Despite Buddhism's relatively high social position above peasants, Shugendō and shrine clerics, and the outcaste groups, it faced a unique challenge. With the exception of Ikkō 一向 School (modern Jōdo shinshū 浄土真宗) clerics who married and fathered sons, Buddhist abbots had to recruit disciples (i.e., their successors and the next abbatial generation) from other status groups. Ideally, adult males joined from a personal desire for a religious vocation, but data from various temple archives indicates much earlier ages for their recruits. In Higurashi's study, eighteenth~mid-nineteenth century personnel records for forty-one Daihiganji branch and monto abbots show a wide range at the time of initial ordination. Fifteen was often seen as the age of transition into adulthood, and ten disciples were that age or older when they entered the Shingon clergy. Of the others, three boys were six years old or younger; fifteen were between seven and ten; and another twelve of them were in the eleven to fourteen age range. (The starting age for one other cleric in the list is not given.)²³ Tanaka has examined similar records for six Sōtō clerics at Kōshōji 廣正寺 (Kōnosu 鴻巣, Saitama Pref.), and their ages at entry were "0" (i.e., infancy; two boys); seven years (one boy); 8 years (two boys); and 11 years (one boy).²⁴

Further indications of low induction ages appears in Shingi Shingon personnel data garnered from late Tokugawa lists of candidates for the abbacies of the Edo liaison temple Enpukuji 円福寺 (1857),²⁵ the headquarters Chishakuin 智積院 in Kyoto (1868),²⁶ and personal resumés (*nintai kiryūsho* 人体起立書) in Yakuōin's archives.²⁷ Most of these clerics were between the ages of seven to fifteen when they took ordination, with ten being the average. There were of course exceptions: Yakuōin's file for a cleric named Shūsei states he came from a samurai background and entered the Shingi Shingon school at the late age of twenty-five.²⁸

In short, Kantō temple networks had to maintain their staffing levels by ordaining and training a steady stream of boys who were bestowed upon the clergy before they reached adulthood. As Or Porath reminds us, children of elite families were sent to medieval monasteries for an education and their potential for disruptions necessitated discipline manuals.²⁹ The induction of pre-adult novices thus had long standing precedents. However, by the early modern period, Buddhist abbots in small temples

²³ Higurashi, "Shingi Shingonshū inaka honji Daihiganji to sono monmatsu ni kansuru kisoteki kenkyū," 93–96.

²⁴ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jiin keieishi no kenkyū*, 158–162.

²⁵ TYM 1: 207.

²⁶ TYM 1: 211.

²⁷ TYM 1: 246–247, 253; TYM 2: 145.

²⁸ TYM 1: 250.

²⁹ Porath, "Nasty Boys or Obedient Children?"

scattered across the Kantō increasingly had to compete with major population shifts due to urbanization, migration and market expansion, as well as rising levels of literacy that influenced the worldview and aspirations of commoners who might have considered placing a second or third son in the Buddhist clergy. In following section, I will summarize these factors before looking at their impact on Buddhist temple communities.

3. Society-Wide Pressures on Buddhist Recruiting

Although Buddhist clerics and temple networks operated as discrete entities with unique social functions, they were but one constituent within Kantō area society, hence our understanding of their personnel challenges requires at least some framing of Buddhist communities within the context of social and economic changes that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. The following will not cover each aspect in depth, but it will provide general observations on how non-religious societal shifts could affect clerical recruiting and training.

Broadly speaking, the population grew in most areas of Japan during the seventeenth century, but greater regional fluctuations appeared as society under the Tokugawa shogunate entered its second century.³⁰ The greater Kantō region experienced a general decline during the eighteenth century, with the northern areas of what is now Gunma, Tochigi and Ibaragi Prefectures experiencing significant downward shifts. These losses were particularly severe following the eruption of Mt. Asama in 1783 and widespread starvation due to crop losses,³¹ but even in normal years village populations were under pressure.³² Infant mortality due to disease always restricted numbers, but according to Hayami the growth of Edo was also an important factor in rural declines. By mid-period the population of this city steadied to about 1,000,000, but poor hygiene and the increased danger of rapidly spreading diseases in the dense commoner districts created conditions for higher urban mortality and lower birth rates. The resulting vacuum in Edo's population due to the "urban graveyard" effect was offset by the influx of excess labor from the greater Kantō region.³³ He estimates that in the 1843–1868 period, between 21.7% and 29.5% of Edo's population was born outside the city.

Hayami's observation reminds us that demographic shifts were closely intertwined with social transformations in Kantō area villages. Households that adapted well to

³⁰ Hayami, *The Historical Demography of Pre-Modern Japan*, 46; *Rekishi jinkō kenkyū*, 22–40.

³¹ Hayami, *The Historical Demography of Pre-Modern Japan*, 49.

³² To provide concrete figures, Hayami's data for northern Kantō populations between the 1720s and 1840s and shows a 27.9% overall drop, with the rate of fall of -13.6% in normal years and -14.2% following disasters. In southern the Kantō region (modern Saitama, Tokyo, Chiba, and parts of Kanagawa Prefectures), the rates were -5.2 overall, -0.7 in normal years and -4.5% in disaster periods (Hayami, *Rekishi jinkō kenkyū*, 30, 152). These changes as measured by percentages are depicted in map form in *Rekishi jinkō kenkyū* (28–29), and *The Historical Demography of Pre-Modern Japan* (48).

³³ Hayami, *The Historical Demography of Pre-Modern Japan*, 52–56; *Rekishi jinkō kenkyū*, 32–33. Hayami discusses in depth similar trends in the Kansai region around Osaka and Kyoto. Conversely, he also notes that population shifts in regions without large urban centers and castle towns require further research (Hayami, *Rekishi jinkō kenkyū*, 35).

commercialization, whether they were descended from late-medieval patriarchal families (*dogō* 土豪) or newer families with the entrepreneurial skills required for developing new technologies and goods, emerged as wealthy peasant elites (*gōnō*). At the lowest levels of rural society, less adroit or economically challenged peasants lost what little land they possessed, and thus they had to rent paddies and fields from more affluent families in order to continue farming.³⁴ Commercialization brought opportunities as well, and even mid-level families that retained their own agricultural lands increasingly engaged in by-employments or off-season work migrations (*dekasegi* 出稼ぎ) to earn additional income.³⁵ For example, a talented child could become a “jobber,” who was a peasant agent acting between village-level cotton producers in the northern Kantō and urban buyers.³⁶ The emergence of these market-oriented industries contributed to the rise of not just Edo but also to regional centers of production such as Kiryū 桐生 (a site of silk production in modern Gunma). Conversely, if heavy debts or natural disasters overwhelmed a family’s resources, sons might join the exodus to Edo in search of employment.³⁷ In the grimmest moments, infanticide was an option for reducing additional burdens—a choice which also had a long-term impact on later population growth.³⁸

According to Tanaka’s survey of temple finances, the overall decline in farming populations could be highly detrimental to temples with small *danka* bases, because they could not rent out their lands to gain enough extra income for the support of a full-time abbot. Like the poorer strata of peasants whose debts ultimately forced them to sell off their holdings, temples at the lowest levels lost what land they had and thus became even more destitute.³⁹

Another option that drew second or third sons of farming families away from village homes for long-term gainful employment was the evolution of the service system.⁴⁰ Originally, the term *hōkō* 奉公 referred to military services rendered to a samurai overlord, but it eventually indicated the hiring of servants by wealthy samurai households, commoner families (in towns and in villages), and even temples and shrines. Whereas servitude in the earlier decades of the 17th century could be life-long and carried the legacy of slavery, it shifted to contract service practices by the mid-1700s.⁴¹ The *bakufu* initially tried to regulate the contact periods by placing a ten-year limit, but enforcement proved to be difficult, hence the hiring master and the servant negotiated the length. Poorer peasant families could opt to place their children in service to off-set debts in the home village, and masters might abuse their advantageous position to force

³⁴ See Pratt’s “Introduction” in his *Japan’s Protoindustrial Elite* for an overview of the *gōnō* elites and their influence over village life. Saitō notes the impact of peasant “differentiation” due to economic transformations (Saitō, “The Rural Economy,” 403).

³⁵ Saitō, “The Rural Economy.”

³⁶ Pratt, *Japan’s Protoindustrial Elite*, 108.

³⁷ Pratt, *Japan’s Protoindustrial Elite*, 111.

³⁸ Kodama, *Kinsei nōmin seikatsushi*, 273–275.

³⁹ Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jiin keieishi no kenkyū*, 78.

⁴⁰ Kodama, *Kinsei nōmin seikatsu shi*, 271–273.

⁴¹ Leupp, *Servants, Shop Hands and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan*, 16–27.

involuntary extensions of service, but in general the concept of life-long servitude (*fudai* 譜代) faded. On a more advantageous note, service in a samurai or affluent commoner household exposed village-born peasant children to business and cultural practices that could be useful if they returned to their families. Contract service was not limited to Edo, and economically rising families in the smaller towns and farming villages also hired them. One example from Leupp's study was the growing textile center of Kiryū noted above, in which servants were 22% of the population in 1757 and 19% in 1819.⁴²

Taking stock of these points, the expansion of Buddhist temple networks in the Kantō during the seventeenth-century was contemporaneous with an expanding population, but from the mid-eighteenth-century onwards, the pool for potential clerics declined as region-wide economic shifts negatively affected some families, while new means for increasing income afforded other families with opportunities to advantageously use the labor of sons who would not succeed the father. In comparison, a child placed into the Buddhist clergy took on clerical orders and thus underwent a fundamental change in their status identity. This shift was signified by the removal of their name from village registers, and the addition of their new clerical name to temple personnel lists. As we shall see below, a cleric could still maintain personal connections with his natal family, but his social transformation placed him beyond the reach of parents who later might want to place their son in more profitable activities or bring him back home. In short, the pressures on Buddhist ordinand recruitment grew as the overall rural population declined and options for gainfully employing extra sons emerged during the second half of the early modern period.

In addition to these demographic implications, the politico-economic transformation of Kantō village practices generated new opportunities for creating cultural empowerment. The rise of such aspirations among elite villager families did benefit temples, because these peasants-as-patrons were willing to sponsor elaborate rituals and rebuilding projects as expressions of faith and as acts of cultural-social capital creation.⁴³ Furthermore, whenever an abbacy became vacant, these families often worked with head temple administrators to maintain the grounds and facilities until a new abbot could be found, and there are cases in which they played an important role in the actual search for a successor.⁴⁴ Quite frankly, village-level data shows that such lay families were vital to the continuity of Buddhism's presence in rural society.⁴⁵

At the same time, the rising cultural aspirations of this same stratum of elite peasant families posed additional challenges to Buddhism's place in village communities. Aside from their roles as ritualists, spiritual guides and certifiers of orthodoxy, it is well known

⁴² Leupp, *Servants, Shop Hands and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan*, 30.

⁴³ Hōzawa, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku to jidan seido*, 205–258; Vesey, “Peasants as Clients and Patrons of Buddhism in Early Modern Village Life.”

⁴⁴ Hōzawa, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku to jidan seido*, 230–238; Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jūin keieishi no kenkyū*, 79–86; Vesey, “Clerical-Lay Relations in Edo Period Local Temples.”

⁴⁵ Hōzawa shows this in his study of the Saitō family, who exerted influence over temples in their home village of Hirayama (Hōzawa, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku to jidan seido*). Aoki also reveals their role as employers of peasants in service (Aoki, “Kinsei no Kantō hatasaku nōson ni okeru koyō to rōdō no henshitsu katei”).

that rural Buddhist clerics provided basic education to peasant children at temple schools (*terakoya* 寺子屋). This function continued throughout the early modern period, but in the eighteenth-century increasing numbers of teachers came from the laity.⁴⁶ To a certain extent, Buddhist educational activities contributed to this trend because they fostered basic literacy among commoners. More importantly, shifting land ownership trends and increasing access to the economic benefits of marketization stimulated interest in the value of education among elite peasant families, because the ability to read and write was vital to the creation and control of documents that were mandatory for village administration. Therefore, families with elite aspirations came to see a child's efforts in school as more valuable than working in the fields.⁴⁷ Such literacy also facilitated the elite's participation in regional networking activities with their economic and social peers,⁴⁸ and it allowed them to access cultural trends and the growing body of published materials that flowed out of cities like Edo and Kyoto. When displayed during the course of village activities, these intellectual attainments further enhanced the stature of elite families.⁴⁹ Finally, on the point of increasing options for the deployment of youthful labor, the growth of schools meant that teaching became a viable vocation for intellectually oriented sons who might have otherwise considered a clerical career to obtain knowledge. (According to Tone's study of *terakoya* in the upper Musashi [modern Saitama] region, 57% of the teachers were first born, while another 25% were second-born sons).⁵⁰

Decades of scholarship on early modern history has detailed the intellectual and ideological transformations among peasant elites that also contributed to the decentering of the Buddhist clergy in village life. These developments, too, surely affected the consideration of a clerical career for children among the rising stratum of villagers who had cultural and local socio-political aspirations. Increasing literacy not only provided access to technical knowledge, but it also facilitated well-read peasants' ability to draw upon Buddhist concepts while developing lay oriented practices and movements. Examples of such intellectual agency are the Sekimon Shingaku 石門心学 movement in which non-clerical thinkers formed a belief system through a synthesis of Confucian and Zen ideas,⁵¹ and the various discourses on personal cultivation that emerged during the

⁴⁶ For the upper Musashi region, see *SKS* 1: 195–202. Platt's study of commoner teachers in the Shinano region notes a similar trend. In Shinano, teachers of peasant origins were always numerous, but up to the mid-1700s, 35% were Buddhist (with a few Shinto) clerics and another 25% were of samurai origins. By end of Tokugawa period, clerical and samurai teachers were still present, but commoners had assumed the most active role in expanding rural education (Platt, *Burning and Building*, 28).

⁴⁷ Platt, *Burning and Building*, 51–51.

⁴⁸ This integrative aspect of literacy was already an important element in the maintenance of transregional Buddhist organizations and sectarian identities.

⁴⁹ Platt, *Burning and Building*, 39–43. In this sense, the ability to control knowledge was comparable to the socio-cultural benefits accrued from acts of temple patronage by commoner elites that drew upon older aristocratic and samurai precedents (Vesey, "Peasants as Clients and Patrons of Buddhism in Early Modern Village Life; "Fashioning the Abbot").

⁵⁰ Tone, *Tera koya to shomin kyōiku no jisshōteki kenkyū*, 273.

⁵¹ Sawada, *Confucian Values and Popular Zen*.

early modern period.⁵² Buddhist clerics increasingly faced even greater challenges from a range of Confucian ideologues and Nativist advocates, including those who supported Hirata Atsutane's efforts to propagate his vision for stabilizing village communal life.⁵³ The potential impact of this latter movement is well reflected in Anne Walthall's study of Matsuo Taseko 松尾多勢子 (1811–1894).⁵⁴ An ardent believer of Buddhist teachings in her early life,⁵⁵ her encounters with the Nativist teacher Iwasaki Nagayo 岩崎長世 (1807–1879) altered her world view.⁵⁶ As in her case, Hirata's ideas were espoused by the *gōnō* stratum of prominent villagers. Therefore, even though these families became rural Buddhism's wealthiest patrons, the diffusion of Nativist beliefs in the latter decades of the early modern period would have dissuaded the adherents of the new ideology from considering a clerical career for their sons.

4. Challenges Facing Regional Clerical Leaders

Even though Kantō area rural population began to rebound from the 1830s,⁵⁷ the continuing records of temple vacancies indicate there was no reduction of the Buddhist clergy's personnel difficulties. Temple abbots thus had to attract possible disciples in an increasingly competitive social environment. While there were surely some boys who expressed a personal interest in a clerical calling, the authority to submit a request for ordination lay with the child's parent or guardian. There is little documentation on how commoner families made the choice to place a son in a temple, but Sakamoto Masahito's study of one young cleric's ordination offers a unique window on the process.⁵⁸ The account comes from the daily record of Tōfukuji 東福寺, a regional Shingi Shingon head temple in the Katsushika 葛飾 district (modern Chiba Prefecture). In 1844, a nine-year old boy named Gakuzō 学蔵 was introduced to the abbot Kan'yū 寛融 by his step-father Matabei 又兵衛, who had taken charge of the boy and his elder brother following his marriage Gakuzō's divorced mother.⁵⁹ Matabei, however, had other sons from own previous marriage, hence, Gakuzō and his older brother occupied an awkward position within the new household. Since Matabei's faith in Buddhism led him to study the *Lotus Sutra* with Tōkufuji's Kan'yū, he first sent his eldest stepson for ordination, and once Gakuzō was of age, the stepfather offered him, too.

In Shingi Shingon, the new arrivals received basic instruction in the sutras and learn to perform simple duties around the temple. There was a subtle name change as well, in that during this probationary period the temple abbot added "maru" 丸 to the end of the

⁵² Sawada, *Practical Pursuits*, 10–88.

⁵³ Platt, *Burning and Building*, 57–64. Harootunian discusses the ideological value of Nativist thought to peasant elites and their efforts to justify their authority over village matters (Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 230–233).

⁵⁴ Wathall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*.

⁵⁵ Wathall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*, 70.

⁵⁶ Wathall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*, 100–120.

⁵⁷ Pratt, *Japan's Protoindustrial Elite*, 115.

⁵⁸ Sakamoto, "Kinsei no shukke."

⁵⁹ Adding to the complications, apparently Gakuzō and his elder brother did not have the same father.

new arrival's secular name. (In keeping with the dictates of status prerogatives, children from elite families were addressed with an official title.)⁶⁰ Gakuzō was thus called Gakuzōmaru at first, which was abbreviated to Gakumaru in the temple's diary.

After an abbot determined his new ward's suitability, he shaved the disciple's head and performed the ordination by giving him the novice precepts (*shamikai* 沙彌戒). He also replaced the lay name with two new clerical names: a courtesy title (*kemyō* 仮名), and a new Buddhist name (*jitsumyō* 実名). After spending nine months at Tōfukuji, Kan'yū agreed to accept the boy as a disciple, and Gakumaru thereby became the young Shingi cleric Jōzanbō 定山房 (his *kemyō*) Yūjitsu 祐実 (his personal name). Temple records indicate that Yūjitsu did receive regular visits from his mother and stepfather at Tōfukuji. He was also allowed a visit their home prior to his ordination. Other parents or guardians may have been less concerned with the children they handed off to the clergy, but Yūjitsu's parents apparently did share a continuing interest in his wellbeing. In 1849, Yūjitsu began the *shido kegyō* 四度加行 training that formed the core of Shingon rituals, which concluded with learning the *goma* 護摩 rite and his anointment (*kanjō* 灌頂). According to Sakamoto's study, Yūjitsu's completion of the training apparently influenced his relationship with his other parent, too. Prior to that point, the father Fujiemon 藤右衛門 does not appear in the temple's account, but once Yūjitsu became a fully anointed Shingi cleric, he performed the *goma* for Fujiemon, and his father attended his Dharma talk.

As in this case, the placement of a child depended on the relationship between a parent/guardian and an abbot, and the initial probation indicates Kan'yū was aware of the need to assess the Gakuzō's ability to accept the new life course set by Matabei's decision. Since ordination did change the boy's identity within the early modern status system, other parties beyond the parent-abbot nexus participated in the process. On the secular side, officials in his village signified their approval by removing him from the village register and sending a certificate authorizing the novice's transfer to a temple registry. In the last decades of the early modern period, *bakufu* intendants and domain officials also reviewed these petitions prior to approval.⁶¹ In order to ensure the intake of suitable novices, higher clerical authorities established guidelines with quite explicit selection criteria. For example, in 1675 the Shingi Shingon headquarter temple Hasedera 長谷寺 in Nara issued regulations for rejecting cripples (*gotai fugu* 五躰不具) and those with dubious backgrounds (e.g. wandering mendicants like *kōya hijiri* 高野聖 or *sarugaku* 猿樂 performers).⁶² A similar list submitted to the *bakufu* in 1802 by the Shingi liaison temples included further conditions for samurai petitioners (they should be investigated and accepted only with the recommendation from their domain lord), and sons of those

⁶⁰ According to the 1802 *Shingi shingonshū shukke seiritsu saisho yori ryō honzan e tenzuru shōshin made no shidai* 新義真言宗出家成立最初方両本山江轉昇進迄之次第 (a description of Shingi Shingon clerical practices that the Shingi liaisons filed with the *bakufu*), a new potential disciple was given a *maruna* 丸名 or *hyakkan kunina* 百官国名; ZGR, 380.

⁶¹ NSS, 498–499. Item dated 1843.

⁶² Saitō, “*Nihon bukkō kyōikushi kenkyū*,” 242–243. While certainly biased, exclusions based on social origins reflected *bakufu* policies for handing or suppressing religious mendicants with no sectarian affiliations.

engaged in “mean trades” (*geshoku shōbai* 下職商売; leather sandal making and brush binding, for example) were to be rejected out of hand.⁶³ In other words, abbots were not allowed to accept petitions from applicants associated with the reviled status groups at the lowest levels of the early modern social hierarchy. (The 1802 statement also hints that families from discriminated communities tried to hide their origins by placing children in peasant, townsmen, and Shugendō households.) The Kan’ei 寛永 9 (1632) Jōdo regulations governing novices at the training halls of Zōjōji 増上寺 also had an appearance clause and restrictions against candidates affiliated with other clerical organizations. In this code, fifteen was the minimum age for ordination.⁶⁴

Following their formal acceptance into a Buddhist organization, ordinands like Yūjitsu were enveloped in a religious milieu that sought to instill the tenets and practices of that school and the social mode of the Edo era Buddhist clergy. Assuming the novice adapted to this dramatic shift in lifestyle and possessed a degree of ability, he proceeded along a well-established career path that would hopefully lead to the abbacy of a rural temple and perhaps spiritual fulfillment. During this process, he was exposed to the socializing influences of temple obligations, regularized education, and clothing regulations that centripetally pulled him into the larger Buddhist order. Given the overall thrust of the status system—social ordering—these forces integrated lay-born sons drawn from villages and urban wards into a legally recognized sectarian community that served specified functions in Tokugawa society.

The process of acculturation began under the guidance of the ordination master (e.g., Kan’yū in Yūjitsu’s case). In the beginning, *shoke* spent the several years learning basic temple practices, including elemental knowledge of sutras, prayers, and some initial hand gestures (*in* 印; *mudrā*) used in rites. In Shingi Shingon, the initial training centered the *shido kegyō*, a four-part curriculum that provided fundamental knowledge in esoteric Buddhism. According to the 1802 description submitted to the *bakufu*, a *shoke* was expected to complete 250 days of training in the “eighteen paths” (*jūhachidō* 十八道), the Diamond Realm (*kongōkai* 金剛界) and Womb Realm (*taizōkai* 胎藏界) *mandalas*, and the *goma* fire ceremony. They could complete the sequence in succession, or split the course over several years, and they might fulfill parts of it in other nearby temples.⁶⁵ Newly ordained Jōdo *shoke* were expected study the three major sutras of the Jōdo tradition.⁶⁶

In addition, they might attend the abbot when he left the temple grounds on business or helped him to perform annual rites such as the offering of prayers and food to hungry spirits (*segaki* 施餓鬼) that was conducted in the eighth month. Since parishioner relations were a major element in temple operations, *shoke* also learnt the proper manners for greeting guests, and they might assist with memorial rites held in parishioner homes. In

⁶³ ZGR, 380–386.

⁶⁴ Hasegawa, “Zōjōji shozō ‘Nyūjichō’ no kenkyū (2),” 320. A footnote particularly notes there was no use for anyone who could not read the sutras.

⁶⁵ Sakamoto, “Kinsei no shukke,” 411–412, 418. The *kegyō* training was also mandated by the *bakufu* in 1615; NSS, 336.

⁶⁶ Jōdo training methods are described in JZ, 157–159.

keeping with its catholic approach to Buddhism, Tendai training combined formats. According to the *Tendaishū sōto keireki senkyo etai no shidai* 天台宗僧徒經歷選舉衣体之次第 submitted to the *bakufu* in 1802, Tendai *shoke* in the esoteric training track followed the *shido kegyō*, while those in exoteric training undertook an extended course of course of textual and doctrinal study.⁶⁷

After several years of such guidance, *shoke* education shifted to regional training halls, many of which were in head temples. Early modern clerical educational systems emerged from medieval cenobitic practices, with additional support coming from Tokugawa *bakufu* policies that acknowledged Buddhist sectarian traditions as the basis for establishing authority over smaller regional networks and individual temples.⁶⁸ As these systems evolved, they came to be known by the number of their constituent institutions, or by the ranks of their abbots. The Jōdo School in the Kantō thus had eighteen *danrin* (*jūhachi danrin* 十八談林) with the main ones being in Edo, while the Kantō Tendai organization consisted of a three tiered “three *sōjōji* 僧正寺, eight *danrin*, and seven *bantōji* 伴頭寺” system.⁶⁹ Within Shingi Shingon, there were eleven main *danrin* affiliated with the Kansai headquarters of Chishakuin and Hasedera, and they sat atop a training system with scores of smaller schools scattered across the Kantō.

Since temple codes for any school stipulated *danrin* training as a key criterion for an abbatial appointment, these halls were vital for the preparation of clerics who could fill temple vacancies, but in an ironic twist, there is evidence indicating the transregional nature of these systems facilitated the drain of personnel from the countryside into Edo (a trend that mirrored the larger demographic changes noted above). In the case of Tendai, Kan’eiji’s elite position in the Kantō heightened the stature of its training facilities (Kan’eiji *gakuryō* 寛永寺学寮) and thus a young cleric might spend his first years in a rural hall and then move to Kan’eiji to complete his studies.⁷⁰ In 1711, Tendai authorities tried to reverse the flow with a requirement of ten years of rural hall training before an application to Kan’eiji (*SKS* 2: 284), but this was later reduced to just seven or eight.⁷¹ The eventual decline among rural Tendai *danrin* is evident in records from Daikōfushōji 大光普照寺 in the northern Musashi region: Kan’eiji granted it with *danrin* stature in 1684, and it initially had over eighty *shoke* in residence. By 1751–1764 the population was only forty, and in the early 1800s it was down to ten *shoke*.⁷²

⁶⁷ Citation in *ZGR*, 356–357. This section of the text directly pertains to practices on Mt. Hiei 比叡, but it notes the Kantō Tendai temples followed the same traditions. This is reiterated in the Kan’eiji 寛永寺 section on pages 360–361. The duration was set for twelve years on Mt. Hiei, but only eight were required at the Nikkō, Kan’eiji and other Kantō rural training halls.

⁶⁸ For further reference, the Tokugawa *bakufu*’s emphasis on clerical training standards is evident in the myriad of codes promulgated between 1600 and 1615. See *NSS*, 321–342.

⁶⁹ The list of Tendai training centers is in Saitō’s *Nihon bukkyō kyōikushi kenkyū* (204–205) and Volume 2 of *SKS* (275, 280). The designations of *sōjōji* and *bantō* indicated temples whose abbots were of the *sōjō* and *bantō* clerical ranks respectively.

⁷⁰ Kan’eiji’s authority stemmed from its position as a Tokugawa house prayer/funeral temple and as the main Tendai liaison to the *bakufu*. In the first part of the period, it also oversaw the whole Kantō-area Tendai training system.

⁷¹ *ZGR*, 362–364.

⁷² *SKS* 2: 282.

The Jōdo school experienced a similar movement among its clerics. Hasegawa Kyōshūn's research of the eighteen Jōdo School training halls reveals that increasing *shoke* residency at the most prestigious Edo temples (Zōjōji, Denzūin 伝通院, Reiganji 靈巖寺, and Reizanji 靈山寺) came at the expense of regional training centers. At Zōjōji, for example, the average annual intake was 142 *shoke*, while the average matriculation rates at regional halls ranged from only four to seventeen new trainees per annum. Jōdo authorities, too, tried to counterbalance this gradual movement towards Edo with admission restrictions and a lottery admission system (*chūsen* 抽籤), but ambitious *shoke* circumvented these methods by becoming the disciples of abbots of the four temples or the sub-temples within their precincts.⁷³ Upon completion of their training, urban-raised clerics did return to rural temples, but exposure to the lifestyle at major monasteries could encourage the better qualified ones to seek positions at temples in or near Edo. Furthermore, since shared training experiences at a regional hall (which were also the regional head temples in the Jōdo school) strengthened communal bonds among clerics in locally networked branch/*heisōchi* temples, this demographic shift broke the links between generations of clerics, and those who trained for years in Edo lost their sense of obligation to their former head temple and local brethren.⁷⁴ There was a negative institutional impact as well, because the decline in *shoke* numbers led to the reduction of residential facilities at regional Jōdo training halls by the early 1800s.

The general demographic shift appeared in Shingi Shingon, too, but the center of gravity was in the Kansai rather than Edo. The school's codes mandated a minimum total of twenty years of training experience for all Shingi clerics seeking an abbacy, at least three of which were to be spent at the Chishakuin or Hasedera.⁷⁵ Thus, there was a constant flow of Kantō area Shingi *shoke* to Kyoto or Nara, and according to the observations of a cleric named Eigaku 英岳, by 1711 the numbers had declined in the Kantō *danrin*.⁷⁶ Shingi authorities tried to counterbalance this shift by appointing some *danrin* as *itenji* 移転寺 ("transfer temples") that were suitable abbatial seats for elite clerics in the headquarter training halls, yet this policy did not really mitigate the declining educational significance of regional Shingi *danrin* relative to the headquarter facilities.⁷⁷

Tsuji's analysis included the critical observation that "formalization" (*keishikika* 形式化) contributed to the overall decline of early modern Buddhism. Compared to early modern clerics who have been praised for their doctrinal or spiritual innovations (e.g., Hakuin or Jiun), Tsuji's comment is not without merit. That being said, the *bakufu* expected clerical leaders to bring order and accountability to their schools. Given the fact that they had to train *shoke* who may not have been personally motivated to follow a path

⁷³ For this data, see Hasegawa, "Zōjōji shozō 'Nyūjichō' no kenkyū (1)"; "Zōjōji shozō no 'Nyūjichō' no kenkyū (2)"; "Zōjōji shozō no 'Nyūjichō' no kenkyū (3)." Hasegawa discusses the circumventions on page 319 and the lottery on page 321 (Hasegawa, "Zōjōji shozō no 'Nyūjichō' no kenkyū (2)").

⁷⁴ Hasegawa, *Daiganji shiwa*, 92–93.

⁷⁵ NSS, 336.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Saitō, *Nihon bukkyō kyōikushi kenkyū*, 225.

⁷⁷ Hōzawa, *Kinsei bukkyō no seido to jōhō*, 67–68. For a detailed analysis, see Kushida, *Zoku Shingon mikkyō seiritsu katei no kenkyū*, 704–754.

of ascetic/spiritual training, the educational systems did provide at least a modicum of general standards. Although Sakamoto's account of Yūjitsu does not follow him into middle age, career path consistency is evident in the biographies of three Shingi clerics in the Yakuōin archives. (The biographies at Daihiganji cited above reflect similar career trajectories.)

*Biographies at Yakuōin*⁷⁸

	Kanzui 環瑞(1797)	Zonkaku 存覚(1807)	Ken'a 賢阿(1844)
Event	(Place; age)	(Place; age)	(Place; age)
Ordination	Kichijōin; 13	Daishōji; 11	Shōrenji; 12
Kegyō	Enpukuji; 16	Daishōji ; 13	Chōfukuji; 17
Shinka	Kichijōin; 16	Daichiji; 12	Shōganji; 18
Kanjō	Hōshōji; 25	Kōtokuji; 24	Hōjūin; 23
HQ period	[Hasedera]; 24–30	[Hasedera]; 20–29	[Hasedera]; 10 yrs.
Hōdan		Daichiji; 32	Shōrenji; 33

Following their initial ordinations, they underwent the *shido kegyō* training and participated in Hōonkō 報恩講 that honored the founder of Shingi Shingon, Kakuban 覚鑁 (Kōgyō Daishi 興教大師 [1095–1143]).⁷⁹ The textual studies centered on question/response dialogues compiled by the medieval-era Shingi cleric Shōken 聖憲 (1307–1392).⁸⁰ For each session, the participants engaged in practice debates or formal exchanges in which a younger *shoke* would raise a question or topic, and then senior clerics offered responses based on the texts being studied. After several years of participation, *shoke* would assume the role of responder. Their first time was known as *shinka* 新加, and judging from the personnel histories, it was a significant milestone in a cleric's progress through the training program. Aside from Shingi texts, their education included studies in Tendai, Hossō 法相, Sanron 三論, Kegon 華嚴, and Hīnayāna 小乘 texts as well as further training in the *goma*.⁸¹ The move to Hasedera (also known as Koikebō 小池坊) took place in their early twenties, after they had passed the *shinka* stage at a rural *danrin* Hōonkō and received anointment. Seventeenth-century Shingi authorities expected *shoke* to have fourteen to fifteen years of rural *danrin* experience before matriculating at a headquarter school, but by the 1760s this requirement was often

⁷⁸ Documents are *TYM* 1: 246–247, and 253.

⁷⁹ The importance of the Hōonkō in *danrin* training is stressed in a Hōei 宝永 1 (1704) announcement promulgated by Shingi authorities (*TYM* 1: 176) and in the explanation of Shingi Shingon given to the *bakufu* one hundred years later in 1801/12 (*ZGR* 382–383).

⁸⁰ For a description of the evolution of these texts and a biography of Shōken, see Katsumata, *Shingon no kyōgaku*, especially 1: 32–38.

⁸¹ *ZGR*, 382–383.

reduced to less than ten.⁸² (The Yakuōin biographies reflect this trend towards reductions in training time.) Eventually they returned to the Kantō, and gave their First Dharma Talk (*hatsu hōdan* 初法談) at a *danrin* or large temple. At this point they were ready to assume a branch temple abbacy.

During the latter stages of training, if a cleric showed a degree of responsibility and managerial ability, he might be appointed to the caretakership of a vacant branch temple by local leaders of his school.⁸³ Since his certification was still incomplete, such an appointment did not confer upon him the right to perform funeral rituals or take on disciples, but it did provide practical experience in temple management and clergy-*danka* relations. While only a temporary response, this employment of older training clerics was a viable means for handling a regional network's personnel issues. If a cleric did not finish his training, his future was permanently limited to this caretaker status, or a possible appointment to a *monto/heisōchi* temple that did not require the completion of the full education/certification process.

4.1 When the robe did not fit: Problems that emerged during training

While clerics such as Yūjitsu appear to have complacently adapted to the vocation chosen for them, many children carry the latent potential for more obstreperous engagement with the social forms and practices that envelope them. In the context of early modern Japan, W. Puck Brecher's 2015 study argues that in contradiction to the descriptions of well-behaved children penned by nineteenth-century western visitors, child disobedience and violence was common. Popular role models of masculine valor contributed to rebellious children, as did social and economic instabilities from the late 1700s onwards.⁸⁴ Responding to these conditions, they used ritually substantiated modes of disruption and mock battles as a means for self-expression and resistance to socially imposed norms.⁸⁵

In stark contrast to the openness this lifestyle, Buddhist clerics were expected to raise *shoke* who could: follow precepts that limited their activities; read the complex texts of their traditions; and perform the rites that were a focal point of clerical life. Therefore, an ordination master had to effectively resituate a disciple (who may have come joined the clergy with a degree of individuality and resistance) into a new context in which there was a strict moral code and little latitude for personal expressions of ambiguous behavior. The training methods of the various schools, while formulaic, did facilitate the acceptance of such a dramatic identity change through years of enculturation, and rural abbots were perhaps guided by instructions for handling disobedient acolytes that they received from medieval temple practices.⁸⁶ However, there should be no surprise that

⁸² SKS 2: 306.

⁸³ Sōtō Zen records refer to the position as *kansu* 監寺 or *kanbō* 看坊 (Tanaka, *Kinsei chihō jiin keieishi no kenkyū*, 165–167).

⁸⁴ Brecher, "Being a Brat," 94–95.

⁸⁵ Ujiie provides numerous examples of children's aggressive behavior in early modern life (Ujiie, *Edo no shōnen*, 99–127).

⁸⁶ Porath, "Nasty Boys or Obedient Children?," 27–30.

among these boys who were forced into this life prior to their physical, social and mental maturation, some would resist such measures. We must also acknowledge the potential for additional psychological pressure from confusion, sadness and anger among children and adolescents who were unwilling leave their families, or who had sufficient self-awareness to realize the looming disjuncture between their personal desires and the path selected for them.

A skillful abbot could combine a firm hand (training as coercion) and empathy (the power of suasion) to overcome resistance, but tensions grew if the child did not adapt. The strongest willed and most resourceful might try to run away, but younger children were less able to do so. The abbot might also decide a case was hopeless and order the resisting child to leave, but there was no guarantee that the biological family would accept their return. While an extreme example, the following case reflects the potential for destructive stress between a recalcitrant novice and the training abbot. In Bunka 4 (1807), the *bakufu*'s deliberative council (*hyōjōsho* 評定所) had to judge the case of a Sōtō school *shoke* named Genzui 元隨 who was convicted of arson. According to the incident description, Genzui was disciple of Hōrinji 芳林寺, a Sōtō temple in Iwatsuki 岩槻, and the abbot had strongly excoriated Genzui for stealing money from the abbot to buy sweets. The abbot also rebuked the disciple for his overall disdain of clerical life. Genzui had decided to return to his uncle's residence, but upon being scolded again he set a fire that consumed the precincts. Genzui's personal statements are not stated in the account, but the report speculates anger with the abbot's treatment motivated his attack. Arson was a capital offence for which adults were executed by burning (*hiaburi* 火炙), but since Genzui was still a minor, *bakufu* officials banished him to an offshore island for life once he became fifteen. Until that time he was under his uncle's supervision. There is insufficient information to judge whether the abbot's training methods were to blame for Genzui's recourse to violence, but he was clearly unsuited to the life.⁸⁷

There is also anecdotal evidence that families with mentally challenged children tried to ease their burden by asking an abbot to assume guardianship. An illustrative case concerns a twenty-six year old man named Sashichi 佐七 who suffered from periods of insanity. His sister and brother-in-law petitioned the family temple of Seiōji 清雄寺 to take him in. The abbot later took Sashichi on a trip to the Kansai, but while in Okayama, Sashichi obtained a knife and killed the abbot's nephew; he also wounded several others.

⁸⁷ OR, 498–499. This compendium contains examples of various crimes and judgments that were selected as juridical precedents for reference. Genzui's case was listed in the section for cases of arson by children and the elderly, hence it was not included as a particularly "clerical" incident. The OR lists another clergy-related case in a section for thieves on the run. This occurred in 1817 when a *shoke* named Shūmin 秀民 at a Jōdo temple in Hitachi Province 常陸国 stole thirty-four *ryō* and ran off to the Shinagawa and Shinjuku post-stations to drink. He also assumed the guise of a doctor and purchased the sexual services from a maid at a Shinjuku inn. Local officials wanted to execute him, while his abbot-master petitioned for leniency (OR, 301–302). Drawing upon earlier precedents, the *bakufu* ordered public exposure (*sarashi* 晒) and expulsion from Edo, and then he was to be handed over to Jōdo liaison officials for intra-school punishment. Luckily for Shūmin, the *bakufu* issued a reprieve for the banishment and exposure when it celebrated the birth of a Tokugawa house child. The maid Ehi 恵 who had unknowingly received some of this stolen money was identified, and officials confiscated the funds (OR, 435–436).

Upon investigation into his mental state, the *bakufu* and domain authorities ordered him into lifelong care under his sister.⁸⁸ Hiramatsu cites this case and adds that if a family had to deal with a potentially disruptive son with such an issue, the options were confinement or disowning him (*kandō* 勘当).⁸⁹ If the latter option was chosen, then placement with the clergy became possible. Hiramatsu further argues that since many were placed in Tendai, Shingon, Nichiren and Sōtō temples, the families may have hoped their prayer rituals could alleviate the affliction.

With the passage of time, the ordinand hopefully settled down to accept his transformation, but records of Kitain indicate this was not always the case. Muryōjuji was an important site of clerical education in the medieval period, and while Kitain assumed overall control of the precincts in the early modern period, Nakain continued this heritage as one of eight Kantō-area Tendai training halls.⁹⁰ The hall supervisor (*ryōsu* 寮主) had the name of Jōjubō 成就坊, and senior *shoke* were appointed to the position of “head seat” (*shuso* or *shuza* 首座). The entries for 1818 indicate there were over twenty trainees at various levels in their careers in residence.⁹¹ In addition to their studies, they played supporting roles in Kitain’s annual rituals and other activities, and if they stayed long enough to acquire certification, then they might be appointed to a branch abbacy in a nearby Tendai temple.⁹²

The hall in 1818 was free of major issues, but Kitain’s 1819 diaries describe a difficult event for the *shoke* in residence.⁹³ On the tenth day of the intercalary fourth month, the temple community discovered an attack on three dogs that were kept within the precincts.⁹⁴ Based upon the evidence, the administrators believed the perpetrators had used a sickle. One died from its deep wounds, and volume of spilt blood near the main hall was so great that the abbot ordered the stripping and replacement of topsoil to purify the spot. Kitain’s head administrator (*chiji* 知事) condemned the act as a transgression against the precepts and ordered the supervisor Jōjubō and the head seat Ichiinbō 一印房 to conduct a thorough inquest. A member of Kitain’s lay staff saw an unidentified culprit running into one of the training hall’s buildings, and that night a *shoke* named Tokunbō 得恩房 was identified as the sole culprit.⁹⁵ Fortunately for him, the harsh animal protection laws of the fifth shogun Tsunayoshi were a distant memory, but Kitain immediately expelled him from the training hall and its general precincts for his heinous act. The temple also strongly reprimanded Ichiinbō for his failure to rigorously investigate the matter. There was subsequent discussion of punishing the head seat and Jōjubō with a period of confinement to quarters, but ultimately Kitain’s administrators withheld this penalty on the expectation of better leadership from them in the future. One

⁸⁸ Fuse, *Hyakkajō shirabegaki*, 4125–4129.

⁸⁹ Hiramatsu, “Nihon bukkyō ni okeru sō to chigo no nanshoku,” 99–100.

⁹⁰ *SMF* 8: 249–250.

⁹¹ *KN* 3: 109, 144.

⁹² *KN* 4: 88, 101, 301.

⁹³ Records for the following case are in *KN* 4: 89–91, 195, 227, 230, and 243.

⁹⁴ *KN* 4: 89–94.

⁹⁵ Tokunbō was listed as trainee on the twentieth day of the first month of Bunsei 2 (*KN* 4: 23). Therefore, he apparently was in residence for only a short period.

month after his expulsion, on the twentieth day of the fifth month Tokuonbō approached the abbot of Minamiin 南院 (another cloister in the precincts) to express his regret for his actions and to plead for an intercession on his behalf in the hope of returning.⁹⁶ The administrator informed Minamiin on the twenty-fifth that Tokuonbō should wait at least 100 days before making such a petition. The diary makes no mention of such a request from him during the rest of that year or the next.

Aside from this recorded expression of regret, Kitain's dog butcher did not leave any personal testimony; hence we can only speculate about his motives. Like Sashichi, innate psychological instability may have incited his aggression. From a comparative perspective, the motivations for his violence against domestic animals may have been like those ascribed to young Parisian workers who killed the cats of their masters as a calculated means for resisting the social inequalities that informed the harsh conditions of their employment in the years before the French Revolution.⁹⁷ The Kitain account does not suggest that Tokuonbō viewed the dogs as a symbolic representation of the clergy or the temple, and while Tokuonbō may have been abused while in residence, the temple's diary makes no mention of such a condition.⁹⁸ Therefore, his actions may not closely match Darton's account of the youthful French cat-killers, but Tokuonbō perhaps used the hapless animal as medium for expressing similar frustrations.

The remainder of 1819 was relatively quiet, but other disciplinary issues arose in 1820. At the start of the fourth month, Ichiinbō was implicated in an incident with another head seat *shoke* named Kōkanbō 興観房, and both were ordered into confinement (*enryo* 遠慮) for fifty days.⁹⁹ The confinement was cut short, when Ichiinbō apologized on the seventeenth and was granted a reprieve.¹⁰⁰ One month later, Kitain held a display of religious objects (*kaichō* 開帳) at the Jieidō 慈恵堂 (its main hall), with the various cloisters and votive chapels also holding events. Myōkanbō 妙観房 was serving in the temple administrative offices, and on the twelfth day he left the precincts without permission and began to drink *sake*.¹⁰¹ Given his position and the religious gravity of the moment, the administrators ordered strict confinement (*oshikomi* 押込). Only three days later, a different cleric named Shōinbō 正因坊 had created friction with other members of the temple and was ordered into light confinement (*sashihikae* 差控).¹⁰² The punishment, however, apparently did not work: on the twenty-third of the fifth month, the

⁹⁶ KN 4: 123.

⁹⁷ Darton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes of French Cultural History*, 75–104.

⁹⁸ This lacuna does not preclude the possibility of such abuse, but if that were the case, then the temple's diarist exercised his authority over the narrative to omit this information.

⁹⁹ KN 4: 194. There were various forms of confinement used in early modern penal practices. *Enryo* meant the recipient was confined to quarters during the daylight hours, but they could quietly leave at night. *Oshikomi* was a stricter form that prohibited leaving the site of confinement. Conversely, *sashihikae* was a lighter sentence in which the recipient was forbidden from publicly leaving their residence via a front gate, but they could discretely leave by side doors.

¹⁰⁰ KN 4: 203. Kōkanbō had been let out earlier to visit a prominent cleric at Kan'eiji who was gravely ill (KN 4: 200).

¹⁰¹ KN 4: 227.

¹⁰² KN 4: 230.

administrators felt that he was unsuitable for Kitain and ordered his departure.¹⁰³ In the fourth month yet another cleric—Kikanbō 起觀坊—was given the same penalty for misbehavior.¹⁰⁴ Eventually he and the previously mentioned Myōkanbō were let out of confinement in the seventh month.¹⁰⁵

Peering through the window of the *Administrator's Record* on this brief segment of Kitain's early modern history, it is evident that even with a long period of structured training, it was not always possible to judge whether the Buddhist clerical life would transform a problematic child into a viable member of the community or create a miscreant who would never conform to the expectations placed on them. Judging from the expulsions and confinements used in response to these cases, Buddhist authorities struggled to strike a balance between the need to train clerics, and the quality of those whom they accepted into their schools. At the same time, the treatment of Tokuonbō suggests the limitations of such punishments. Practically speaking, expulsion from the monastery and the prominent Kitain was paramount to ostracization within Tendai and end the aberrant *shoke's* career: without the credentials, a temple abbacy would not open for Tokuonbō. However, the *Diary* records do not indicate formal disrobement (*datsue* 奪衣) and expulsion from the Tendai school, and the later comment regarding a possible a reprieve suggests some reticence among the leadership to take this most extreme response—an act that would strip Tokuonbō of his clerical identity and thus cast him adrift in the status system. Since he did express regret and such responses were an important element in early modern mechanisms for resolving non-criminal cases and social strife, Kitain officials may have hoped for a change of heart that would allow for his reinstatement at the training hall.¹⁰⁶

4.2 Abbatial Burdens

If a cleric met the full training requirements established for this school, he usually returned to his home area and temples to prepare for entering local society as an abbot. This would involve his participation in rituals such as the First Dharma Talk that was expected of Shingi Shingon clerics.¹⁰⁷ Once he was accepted into a regional network and appointed as the abbot of a branch or *monto* temple, he began to develop relationships with other abbots of the same school. Depending on the size of the local network, his temple might be part of a sub-group (*kumiai* 組合) under the supervision of the regional head, and he could be called upon to support other temples in his group. After several years, an abbot might move to a bigger or more prominent temple within the same school, and if he met the higher training requirements for a *danrin* abbacy, he would exert

¹⁰³ KN 4: 250.

¹⁰⁴ KN 4: 243.

¹⁰⁵ KN 4: 312.

¹⁰⁶ If Tokuonbō had killed a human, he would have come under Kawagoe 川越 domain jurisdiction. The sentence for murder was beheading or possibly post-execution gibbeting (*gokumon* 獄門); hence the dog was an easy and relatively “safe” target. See fn. 87 above for another example of clerical leniency.

¹⁰⁷ This requirement is in the 1615 *Shingonshū shohatto* 真言宗諸法度 of 1615 (NSS, 336, art. 6) and in the 1801 Shingi explanation to the *bakufu* (ZGR, 381).

considerable influence over the next generation.¹⁰⁸ If a cleric with sufficient credentials was appointed to the abbacy of *monto/heisōji*, it was possible to petition the regional head for full branch stature. Success not only required approval from the head temple, its other branches and higher clerical authorities, but also gifts of money. Therefore, a sufficient lay support base (*danka* families, temple lands, village shrine lands, etc.) was necessary. If the petition was accepted, the newly minted branch abbot could take on a greater range of roles.

In addition to the funerals, memorial rituals, and prayer rites expected of him by his fellow clerics and the laity, a rural abbot often shouldered the burdens arising from vacant abbacies within his schools. He participated in searches if there were no viable candidates within his network, and an abbot with social connections to clerics in other areas might be called upon to draw upon these resources in the search. If no candidate appeared, then a head temple could appoint a viable abbot to take on an “added appointment” (*kentai* 兼帯), which meant he would temporarily carry out abbatial functions for an empty temple as well his own.

Most importantly, a branch abbot was allowed to train new disciples, and thereby prepare the next generation of clerics. If he was fortunate enough to attract a viable candidate like Yūjitsubō, the abbot had a relatively easy experience with the initial stages of his ordinand’s training. If the disciple returned to his network following the *danrin* sojourn, then the abbot could influence the abbatial appointment as well. Conversely, as we have seen above, if a disciple grew disaffected or began to resist the limitations imposed by clerical life, then the abbot shouldered responsibility for handling this discord. A case in point appears in the records of the Shingi temple Daihiganji that was a source for the Higurashi survey of temple populations noted earlier. In Tenmei 天明 5 (1785), the temple appointed a cleric named Hōrin Jimyō 法輪慈明 as its twenty-sixth abbot. Jimyō was born to a local peasant family, and like many others in his school, he entered the clergy at the age of twelve. His ordination was at Daikōji 大光寺, a Daihiganji branch, but he became a disciple of Daihiganji’s twenty-fifth abbot. After passing through the regional/headquarter training system, he spent eighteen years at Hasedera in Nara.¹⁰⁹

Three years after his accession (1788) Jimyō took on his first disciple, a nine-year old boy whom he entitled Senzenbō 千全房.¹¹⁰ This brought the clerical population to five: Jimyō; his now retired master Banshin 鑢津; two younger disciples of Banshin named Gigenbō Hōmyō 義現房法明 and Shinkōbō 真光房; and Senzenbō.¹¹¹ The ordination was celebrated with gifts from nine branches and *monto*. Early diary entries give little hint of trouble, and in the eleventh month of Kansei 6 (1795) Senzenbō performed his first *goma* rite, which signified the summation of the *shido kegyō* part of

¹⁰⁸ Hōzawa details many aspects of rural clerical networks (Hōzawa, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku to jidan seido; Kinsei bukkyō no seido to jōhō*), and Sakamoto 1974 and Hasegawa 1974 both discuss the role of sub-groups and “same Dharma” (*hōrui* 法類) relationships in the affairs of rural clerics (Sakamoto, “Edo jidai ni okeru jiin no ‘kumiai/hōrui’ seido ni tsuite”; Hasegawa, “Kantō Jōdoshū kyōdan no matsuji tōsei”).

¹⁰⁹ Jimyō’s resumé (*nintai kiryūsho* 人躰起立書) is in DN 1: 11.

¹¹⁰ DN 1: 75–76.

¹¹¹ DN 2: 206.

Shingi training. As the first disciple of Daihiganji's abbot, the importance of the rite was signified by gifts from all of the temples in Daihiganji's network, and the attendance of Senzenbō's mother, brothers and others from their home village of Hirai 平井.¹¹² However, apparently there were underlying tensions between Jimyō and his disciple, and thirteen months later, Senzenbō ran away from Daihiganji to one of its nearby branches to petition for "time away" (*itoma* 暇) permission from his ordination master.¹¹³ Eventually other clerics in the Daihiganji network effected something of a reconciliation between the master and disciple, and Jimyō allowed Senzenbō to take on caretaker duties at a branch named Sairenji 西蓮寺 in 1799.¹¹⁴ When Senzenbō reached the age for training at Hasedera in 1801, Jimyō provided him with the required referral letter and one *ryō* in gold as a gift.¹¹⁵ Their relationship continued for another three years, but in second month of Kyōwa 享和 4 (1804) tensions reemerged when Senzenbō ran away once more.¹¹⁶ He did not really settle down until he moved to a different Shingi network at the age of thirty-one.¹¹⁷

As the abbot of the network's head temple, Jimyō faced additional problems created by the actions of several other clerics within the Daihiganji system. In Bunka 3 (1806), the disciple Shungenbō 春玄房 at the branch Daikōji 大光寺 disappeared, taking with him 200 *ryō* in gold coins from the temple's coffers. Several years before, the oldest disciple of Shinshōji 真照寺—one Ryōkan 亮環—became abbot, and in Kansei 11 (1801) he and two other young abbots petitioned Daihiganji and Shingi authorities for permission to wear a colored robe, which was the mark of full abbatial accreditation.¹¹⁸ However, three year later (1804) Ryōkan claimed that his temple's debts had increased during his tenure, and he asked to leave his position. The village headman later reported him missing,¹¹⁹ and a new abbot was appointed from another branch.¹²⁰ During the tenure of Jimyō's successor, Ryōkan reappeared in the records as Shinshōji's caretaker in Bunka 10 (1813). However, following a major dispute between several villages over a shrine festival on the temple's grounds, he moved to the position of caretaker at yet another empty branch. Six months later in 1814, he ran away again to parts unknown, taking only his own clothes (i.e., unlike Shungenbō, he did not steal temple funds).¹²¹ Daihiganji reported his disappearance to the *bakufu*.

The cause of Senzenbō's break with Jimyō is not stated, but the fact that he stayed in the Shingi clergy suggests the reasons were personal. As Jimyō's first disciple, Senzenbō was an obvious future candidate for the Daihiganji abbacy, hence Jimyō's expectations

¹¹² DN 1: 172.

¹¹³ DN 1: 196.

¹¹⁴ DN 1: 243.

¹¹⁵ DN 2: 16.

¹¹⁶ DN 2: 30.

¹¹⁷ The DN editors provide a short summary of Daihiganji's disciples and problematic branch abbots in 2: 206.

¹¹⁸ DN 2: 9–10. Shinshōji was the largest and most prominent branch temple in the network.

¹¹⁹ DN 2: 36–37, 206.

¹²⁰ DN 2: 43.

¹²¹ DN 2: 218–223.

would have been high. On a personal level, Jimyō supported his master and retired abbot Banshin, and Senzenbō as abbot would have done the same for him upon his own retirement. Perhaps Jimyō was abusively strict, or Senzenbō did not want to shoulder such burdens. In any event, the tensions resulted in alienation, and eventually Jimyō appointed Gigenbō as his successor.¹²²

4.3 Another Option on the Margins of the Clergy

If there were no readily available clerics with training credentials who could to serve as full-time abbots or caretakers, administrators such as Jimyō could appoint *dōshin* 道心 to care for smaller temples. Over the last twenty years, scholarship on Edo life has brought into focus the existence of numerous subgroups within larger status communities, some of whom occupied ambiguous positions on society's fringes. The range and degree of marginalization depended upon the nature of the occupations that fixed their formal placement within the social hierarchies. In urban areas, hairdressers and firefighters were classified as townsmen (*chōnin* 町人), yet they performed specific functions with a degree of autonomy from other commoners in their neighborhoods. Others such as the street performers and night soil sellers also earned their livelihoods within city wards, but due to the social stigma associated with their occupations they came under the jurisdiction of *hinin* 非人 or *eta* 穢多 leaders who oversaw those distinctly low status communities. On the furthest margins were those who had fallen off the population registers entirely and were thus condemned to survive without the support of any recognized group (*nohinin* 野非人). They were the real "outcastes," because they had no recognized status identity.¹²³

Dōshin (also known as *hosshinsha* 発心者) were a marginal group within Buddhism.¹²⁴ Whereas most disciples were expected to undergo years of training following ordination, *dōshin* took the initial precepts but went no further.¹²⁵ The name derives from a Buddhist term for one who seeks awakening, but based upon the limited data available, often these men entered a temple community to escape economic hardship (as opposed to those who fled to the cities), or their age prevented them from keeping gainful employment.¹²⁶ They shaved their heads, received two-character clerical names

¹²² DN 2: 134–137. Gigenbō's career path resembled that of Jimyō, but it included experience as a liaison official in Edo.

¹²³ Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, 29–30.

¹²⁴ Articles in Yoshida, *Jisha o sasaeru hitobito* discuss other officiants and ritualists who existed on the fringes of recognized sacerdotal groups (Yoshida, *Jisha o sasaeru hitobito*).

¹²⁵ Hasegawa, "Kinsei Jōdoshū no dōshinsha nit suite"; "Kantō Jōdoshū kyōdan no matsuji tōsei"; Kushida, *Shingon mikkō seiritsu katei no kenkyū*, 1066.

¹²⁶ Hasegawa, "Minkan shūkyōsha no ichi tenkei," 201–205. A 1789 Yakuōin temple roster listed five *dōshin* residing within its system. Their average age was sixty with the eldest being seventy-two (*TYM* 2: 81–82). Along similar lines, Hōzawa's study of a ten-temple network on the Bōsō Peninsula shows the average age for eight listed abbots was 32.3 years, while ten *dōshin* were 46.6 years old (Hōzawa, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku to jidan seido*, 124). Higurashi's table of Daihiganji network temple populations lists three *dōshin* caretakers of *monto* in 1816 and 1822, but there was only one in 1840 (Higurashi, "Shingi Shingonshū inaka honji Daihiganji to sono monmatsu ni kansuru kisoteki kenkyū," 98).

for their precept masters, and wore simple clerical garb. They were thus a form of cleric, but it was not uncommon for village registers to list them separately from temple abbots and their disciples. As a result, they were ritualists who occupied a vague position between fully certified clerics and the laity.¹²⁷ Many survived by gathering alms (*takuhatsu* 托鉢) as they wandered from village to village, but if they could find a caretaker position at a small votive hall or temple with a plot of land, they could supplement their income by growing food.¹²⁸ They also received support by acting as extra chanters at major temple events.

The nature and function of such marginal clerics is illustrated by the case of a *dōshin* named Nenjō 念生. Daiganji 大巖寺 in Oyumi 生実 was one of the eighteen Jōdo School *danrin*, and its abbots oversaw both the training facility and subordinate Jōdo temples and halls in the area.¹²⁹ One of these was a Jizō 地藏 shrine, where part of the grounds had gradually become a village grave site. With the support of nearby lay families who filed a petition on his behalf, Nenjō created a permanent position for himself as the regular shrine attendant. In order to legitimize his residency the villagers offered a monetary gift to Daiganji, and its abbot agreed to enter a pro forma teacher-disciple relationship with Nenjō—an act that conveniently slipped him under the umbrella of clerical status legitimacy.¹³⁰ Along somewhat similar lines, Sekiguchi's study of the Matsumura 松村 family in Shitami 志多見 village (modern Saitama Prefecture) notes they supported a succession of *dōshin* from different schools to serve as ritualists in their private chapel for ancestor veneration.¹³¹

Not all *dōshin*, however, quietly shouldered their responsibilities, and unsettled ones generated problems for administrators. Daiganji's twenty-eight abbot Ben'yo 便譽¹³² noted in his temple's diary for 1765 that the caretaker of the Jizō at this time—Gonshin 欣心—was a drunkard and gambler who lost donated items. Writing in general terms, Ben'yo observed that *dōshin* were an uneducated lot. Gonshin's family stood as guarantors to make good the losses, but he was replaced by another *dōshin* named Saijō 西浄. This second *dōshin*'s uncle and older brother twice petitioned Ben'yo for Saijō's appointment, and he was eventually made a disciple of the branch temple Daikakuji 大覚寺. As with Gonshin, Saijō's relatives stood as guarantors to take responsibility for any problems or losses during Saijō's incumbency.¹³³ Another example was a problematic *dōshin* at Kitain's Benten 辯天 dormitory in 1819. Even though he

¹²⁷ Hasegawa, "Minkan shūkyōsha no ichi tenkei," 211–214.

¹²⁸ Sekiguchi, *Kinsei sonraku no ryōiki to mibun*, 307–314.

¹²⁹ Oyumi is in modern Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture. This statue was known as the Yokosuka Jizō 横須賀地藏, because it originally came from Yokosuka in Hamamatsu.

¹³⁰ Hasegawa, "Kinsei Jōdoshū no dōshinsha ni tsuite," 7–8.

¹³¹ Sekiguchi, *Kinsei sonraku no ryōiki to mibun*, 305–325.

¹³² Abbatial tenure: Hōreki 宝暦 11 (1761) to Meiwa 明和 6 (1769); d. 1791 (Hasegawa, *Daiganji shiwa*, 212).

¹³³ See Hasegawa, *Daiganji shiwa*, 126–128, for a brief description of these Jizō hall *dōshin*. Also see DG 5: 215–217 and 236.

knew the Kitain abbot was scheduled to visit this facility, on that day he opted to go drinking in the shops by the front gate. The next day he was expelled.¹³⁴

Reliance upon *dōshin* was a necessity, but their numbers alone were insufficient to cover the deficit in personnel. Therefore, as noted earlier, network administrators like Jimyō often had work with the representatives of a temple's affiliated funeral/prayer families (*danka sōdai* 檀家総代) and village officials to maintain empty branches or *monto*. The laity, of course, could not substitute for an abbot at ritual functions (these would be conducted by a certified cleric from the head or another branch temple), and empty branches were legally owned and controlled by their regional heads. At the same time, the *bakufu* did recognize *danka* authority over the maintenance of their temple's grounds and material properties. Their purview included keeping the account books, compiling lists of temple holdings (lands, artwork, dishes, abbatial robes they had purchased, etc.), and the paying of taxes. If repairs became necessary while the abbacy was empty, the lay leaders filed petitions to the head for permission to use the temple's funds, and there are many examples of requests to cut and sell trees within the precincts for this purpose. Since a lay-managed temple might be in a separate village from the head or other branches, it was possible for predatory lay representatives to abuse their authority to cut and sell trees/bamboo for their own benefit. Hence other abbots in the network had to keep watch over lay managers, which amounted to an additional duty placed on their shoulders.

5. Conclusion

Although clerics in the early 1800s might not have foreseen the challenges that appeared in the last decade of the Tokugawa regime, with hindsight we can see how the issues of vacancies and problematic disciples helped to set the stage for Kantō-area Buddhist temple reductions during the early Meiji period. For example, Murata Yasuo's 1999 study of Shinto-Buddhist separation at the start of the Meiji era notes that abbot-less and economically challenged sites were subject to removal or merger with a staffed temple.¹³⁵ According to his analysis, this led to the closing of over 550 temples in what is now modern Saitama Prefecture. Strong anti-Buddhist sentiments certainly drove acts of wide-spread temple destruction in other regions, and there were similar incidents in some districts of the Kantō, but the data on long-standing vacancies suggests the closings were also inherent to a process of structural rationalization for over-extended clerical communities. Now that we have better information on specific temples, it is possible to trace with greater detail and better nuance the long-term trajectory of changes to Buddhist temple infrastructures over the course of the 19th century.

¹³⁴ KN 4: 134. He was not the only miscreant who felt the temple's anger that day: Myōkanbō served in the administrative office, and due to some *faux pas* before the abbot's appearance, he was ordered into confinement.

¹³⁵ Murata, *Shinbutsu bunri no chihōteki tenkai*, 11, 29, 142–143.

The personnel issues with disciples also offers new insights on clerical transformations during the same period. In some respects, the stories help us to better understand the cause of popular visions of clerical decline in the last half of the early modern period. I have not delved into stories of clerical sexual activities that punctuate this narrative of overall deviancy, but we can see heterosexual or homosexual relations as possible modes of resistance (and personal expression) for disgruntled disciples.¹³⁶ Furthermore, even though clerics of the celibate orders (Shingon, Tendai, etc.) used the phrase “meat eating and being married” (*nikujiki saitai* 肉食妻帯) to denigrate members of the Ikkō School in Edo period sectarian disputes,¹³⁷ there are well known and often-cited claims that some “pure clerics” (*seisō* 清僧) of these schools may have had hidden wives and children.¹³⁸ Gorai Shigeru has further claimed that “half-cleric, half-lay” officiants at small temples who lived among the laity were a mainstay of Japanese Buddhism.¹³⁹ Given these correlations, there is value to further examining the role of disciple-oriented pressures on decisions made by rural and urban temple clerics of all schools to marry once the Meiji state rescinded the older penal codes for punishing fornication.

However, while the popularized stories of married clerics and claims of women on temple grounds fostered images of a wide-spread practice, the data on mid- to late-early modern temple poverty and vacancy suggests that it would have been difficult for rural clerics to maintain such a household. Furthermore, given what we now know of increasing oversight of temple matters by influential *danka* (who were often village officials with their own links to samurai authorities), any liaison between an abbot and a wife-like partner would have depended on implicit lay family acceptance and support, as well as the silent acceptance of other clerics in local sectarian networks. While certainly not impossible, such an arrangement would have required a unique set of understandings that depended on the silence of all parties.

Along the same lines, the records of individuals like Jimyō suggest that the image of clerical deviancy has occluded examples of abbatial diligence from scholarly narratives of early modern clerical life. The sense of responsibility to one’s temple and school is reflected in a Meiwa 2 (1765) tenth month entry by the Daiganji abbot Ben’yo in his *Miscellaneous Records* (*Zatsuroku* 雜録). The following commentary appears among his directives for running his temple:

¹³⁶ Of these choices, the former was more dangerous, because Buddhist and samurai authorities deemed heterosexuality be a major felony (*nyobon* 女犯). Apprehended disciples were subject to public exposure and later sectarian disciplining, while those of abbatial rank faced punishments ranging from island banishment to execution and public humiliation of the head. There are several studies of Buddhist clerics’ sexual relations with women and their punishments, but for a representative sampling of this literature, see Jaffe, *Neither Monk nor Layman*, 14–26.

¹³⁷ Jaffe, *Neither Monk nor Layman*, 36–57.

¹³⁸ For examples, see Morioka, “Sōryo saitai to jiin no seshū,” 31–42.

¹³⁹ Gorai, *Nihon no shomin bukkō*, 31–42.

Repairs

[While] it is needless to say that it is difficult to repair the many buildings, the abbot/educator in principle is not seated for his own ease. If he acts as the leader [literally “the roof ridge and beams”] of his school, working hard for his own temple is a given. In this world, it is worthwhile to engage in such labors. [A cleric] who becomes an abbot/educator and prefers his own ease is ignorant/deluded. [A cleric in this position] should strive to the point of grinding their bones and crushing their bodies. The abbot/educator is the hostage [guarantor] of their school. For example, even the abbot of a *hei[sō]* temple who has the heart [proper mindset] will not prefer his own ease. How much more so for the abbot/educator who, based on this, should take on the labor of beautifying the extant buildings of this temple.”¹⁴⁰

Ben'yo's mid-1700s comments obviously refer to the duty of enhancing the physical infrastructure of Daiganji. However, considering his roles as the head of a Jōdo training hall and supervisor of local Jōdo temple networks, he was regularly engaged in the maintenance of the regional Jōdo personnel infrastructure as well. As shown by the records of Daihiganji, Kitain and other temples in the Kantō, Ben'yo's early nineteenth-century successors and their contemporaries like Jimyō and Jōjubō struggled to meet the staffing challenges posed by the population and economic shifts, and the rise of educated and affluent lay families that affected Kantō society from the mid-1700s onwards.¹⁴¹ Therefore, while the accounts of temple life that are a main source for this study do not carry the prestige of innovative doctrinal treatises, they do reveal how a small cadre of well-trained and dedicated rural abbots emerged from the training system to shoulder the heavy weight of managerial duties for their networks and communities. In short, Jimyō, Yūjitsu, Jōjubō, and Ben'yo's activities were vital to Buddhism's continuity, even survival, in the latter decades of early modern society. They were the ones who strove to recruit and train boys adopted from lay families, so that the next generation carried forth an understanding of their respective schools' teachings and the ability to fulfil the ritual-social functions required of the rural clergy. Ultimately, these abbots set the foundation for succeeding generations who struggled to maintain the integrity of their temples and their schools amidst the more tumultuous changes wrought by the advent the Meiji government and Japan's shift towards modernization.

¹⁴⁰ DN 5: 226. The original text was transcribed under the direction of the Hasegawa Kyōshun, who is Daiganji's sixty-first abbot and former president of Shukutoku University 淑徳大学. I have translated the term *nōge* 能化 as “abbot/educator” to reflect the dual roles of these clerical leaders.

修復ノ事、建ものの多きは修復難儀言二不及、能化ハ元自樂のためにあらず、宗門棟梁[なれ]ば自房の苦勞は勿論也 世界中手に及ぶ苦勞はいたすか克キ也 能化と成自樂を好むハ不覺也 分骨摧身あるへき也 能化ハ宗門人質也 縦ひ平寺の住寺[持]二而も心あるハ自樂をこのます況や能化をや、依之当山なとも先建ものを全美いたし而の上の修復苦勞すへき也。

¹⁴¹ Hasegawa briefly summarizes efforts to fill vacancies in the Daiganji network during this period (Hasegawa, *Daiganji shiwa*, 107–110).

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