

# MOUNTAIN SHUGENDŌ AND KOBUDŌ

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ABSTRACT. Japanese mountain religion (Shugendō) and its long entanglement with the martial traditions — the tengu of the sacred peaks, the Shugendō of Dewa and Kyūshū, and the densho, ritual, and contemplative threads that run through kenjutsu and the wider budō.

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## 1. MOUNTAIN RELIGION

## 1.1. Shugendō [修験道]

Shugendō (修験道), mountain asceticism and Japanese esoteric Buddhism (mikkyō), and their influence on both classical and modern martial traditions. In addition, some material from Zen and broader esoteric Buddhism is examined.

**Essays and Articles**

## 1.2. Haguro Shugendō

**Introduction**

The Inner Dharma writing project started not because of my practice of martial arts but because of my interest in Shugendō, a blend of Buddhism, Daoism and mountain asceticism practiced in Japan.

Visiting sacred places has been an important component of my martial arts training over the years. It was while visiting the Dewa Sanzan area, including the Sanjin Gōsaiden (三神合祭殿) of the Dewa Jinja (出羽神社) on Mt. Haguro — the hall that jointly enshrines the deities of all three mountains — and the Hagurosan Kōtaku-ji Shōzenin (羽黒山荒澤寺正善院) Kogane-dō in Haguro-machi associated with Haguro Shugendō, that I decided to focus my efforts on a practice of classical and traditional arts. The standalone Gassan Jinja (月山神社) itself stands on the summit of Mt. Gassan; what is reached on Haguro is the three-deity Gōsaiden. (Dewa Sanzan Jinja, n.d.)

Haguro means “black wing” — it alludes to the giant *yatagarasu* (八咫鳥; eight-span crow), an important symbol in Japanese mythology. Yatagarasu is associated with divination and divine guidance, and is sometimes depicted with three legs; one common (and relatively late) interpretation reads the three legs as the *ten-chi-jin* (天地人; the three powers of heaven, earth and humanity). In Chinese mythology, the three-legged crow is said to dwell in the sun (日; sun).

**2026 Update**

Much more information is now available about practices like Shugendō. I recommend those interested in Shugendō to first read Ishizuchi-san on Western Mikkyō. Those interested in practice in the West would do well to visit karunamitra.org for an attempt to correct misconceptions about the tradition.

**Haguro Shugendō**

Some Daitō-ryū sources state that Takeda Sōkaku’s grandfather Takeda Sōemon had been trained in Haguro Shugendō, and Takeda Sōkaku himself is said to have gone into retreat in the sacred mountains of Dewa. (Ikezuki Ei 2015) These are traditional, practitioner-side claims rather than independently documented facts, and should be read as such. They have intrigued many people over the years, especially Aikidōka interested in Daitō-ryū, since Takeda Sōkaku is reported to have made pilgrimage to Haguro and to have studied Shugendō kuji-goshinbō and other skills (possibly from Nakagawa Man’nojō). Saigō Tanomo (1830–1903) was

a *karō* (家老; senior domain retainer) of the Aizu domain who, after the domain's defeat in the Boshin War, served as a Shintō priest — *negi* (禰宜) at Nikkō Tōshōgū under his former lord Matsudaira Katamori (its *gūji*), and later *gūji* of Ryōzen Jinja. (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-h) No mainstream source today describes him as a Shugendō practitioner, and the narrative that he instructed Takeda in an art called *oshikiuchi* (御式内) is a contested tradition rather than an established transmission.

In addition, Shugendō had a strong philosophical influence on many classical Japanese martial arts. Despite that fact, martial practice was generally the purview of the bushi and *gōshi* (郷士; rural samurai). There are very few yamabushi-related martial traditions surviving in Japan. Today, people will sometimes attempt to use mountain religion as a backstop for their practice because of its poetic allure (taking refuge in the mountains) and also because there is not as much public information available in English compared to other Japanese religions such as well-known Shintō shrines or Buddhist complexes.



FIGURE 1. The Sanjin Gōsaiden (Dewa Jinja) on Mt. Haguro

In the case of Haguro Shugendō, Hagurosan Shugen Honshū (羽黒山修験本宗) is the postwar institutional continuation of Haguro Shugendō, whose head temple (honzan) is Kōtaku-ji (荒澤寺) in Tsuruoka, Yamagata Prefecture, with Shōzenin (正善院) as its administrative head temple (honbō). It was made independent in 1946 (Shōwa 21) by Shimazu Dendō, inheriting the tradition maintained at Shōzenin through the Meiji disruption. (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-g) According to the Shōzenin temple's website, the head temple of Haguro had been the Tendai Jakkō-ji (寂光寺; now part of Dewa Sanzan Jinja) until the end of the Edo period. (Hagurosan Kōtaku-ji Shōzenin, n.d.) After the Meiji shinbutsu bunri, the functions of the temple side passed to Kōtaku-ji (荒澤寺) and its administrative office Shōzenin (正善院).

I visited Kōtaku-ji Shōzenin in 2005. The attendants there were quite pleasant and happy to have visitors, but with limited time and halting university-level Japanese

it was not possible to learn anything about Shugendō in detail, despite my interest. I managed to connect later with members of the expatriate budō community in Japan who practiced Haguro Shugendō — it turns out our NYC Aikidō and Kempō instructor had no connection with Hagurosan Shugen Honshū.

Haguro Shugendō is an important cultural and philosophical aspect of Japanese culture in the Dewa area, which is near Aizu, and Mt. Haguro has been a pilgrimage destination for Aiki-jūjutsu practitioners since the time of Takeda Sōkaku, who spent time there. Takeda's grandfather may have been a shugenja, and *mikkyō* (密教; esoteric Buddhism) chanting and breathing methods are important in some lines of Daitō-ryū. Okuyama Ryūhō (奥山龍峰, born Yoshiji), founder of Hakkō-ryū and a native of Yamagata, was a Daitō-ryū student under Matsuda Toshimi and later Takeda Sōkaku; Sō Dōshin (宗道臣), founder of Nippon Shorinji Kempō, is recorded as having attended a single day of a Hakkō-ryū seminar in 1948 rather than as Okuyama's student.[Web Hiden (n.d.)](Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-f) There are pictures years later of important Aikidōka such as Shirata Rinjirō and Saitō Morihiro performing *enbu* (演武; public demonstration) in front of Hachiko's shrine.



FIGURE 2. Hachiko-jinja (蜂子神社) at Dewa Sanzan

It is reasonable then to think that other Aikidōka, like our instructor and his Japanese friend in NYC, would find inspiration there. I myself have found Dewa Sanzan to be a wonderful, mysterious, place. That does not mean that every martial artist who visits Haguro, or even goes on a brief retreat there, has formal standing in Haguro Shugendō or is a *shugenja* (修験者; Shugendō practitioner) or *yamabushi* (山伏; mountain ascetic).

The *bettō* of Haguro during the transition is said to have been a man named Kanda (官田), who became the shrine priest (*shashi*, 社司) and took the name Haguro Uzen (羽黒羽前). The first *gūji* (宮司; head priest) installed at Dewa in 1873, when Buddhism and Shintō were split and Shugendō banned, was a young Hirata-school nativist scholar named Nishikawa Sugao (西川須賀雄), who drove the radical de-

Buddhization of Haguro before leaving in 1876.[Gotō Takeshi (1999)](Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-d)

Haguro-ha Shugendō generally traces its founding to Nōjo Shōja (能除聖者), identified with Prince Hachiko (蜂子皇子; traditionally c. 542–641), son of Emperor Sushun. After his father’s assassination by Soga no Umako in 592, the prince is said to have fled north and opened Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono as sacred sites for mountain practice.(Dewa Sanzan Jinja, n.d.) This identification is better treated as a later regularization than as an early datum: the early-Edo *Hagurosan engi* does not name Hachiko, and his role as founder was foregrounded only after the Meiji shinbutsu bunri replaced the gongen with a recorded human opener.(Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-e) Hachiko is figured prominently on Mt. Haguro, where the Hachiko Jinja (蜂子神社) stands beside the Gōsaiden.

Much has been written about the Akinomine (秋の峰; autumn peak entry). It is a well-documented and important practice in Haguro Shugendō, and there are multiple retreats conducted by Buddhist-affiliated, Shintō-affiliated and independent revival groups today.

Other important founding figures in Shugendō, like En no Gyōja and Shōbō (聖宝) – Rigen Daishi (理源大師) – lived near Nara and Kyōto and are not associated with Haguro-ha Shugendō, but remained venerated by Honzan-ha and Tōzan-ha practitioners who had a presence on the three mountains during the Edo period. Ono-ryū (小野流) is the line of Shingon practice said to have been founded by Shōbō at Daigo-ji on Mt. Kasatori; it is not the family name of a line of Haguro-ha Shugendō practice in Dewa, but could plausibly have been represented as Shingon Shugendō on Mt. Yudono.

Yudonosan was administered by four Shingon temples. In the Kan’ei era these “four Shingon temples” (Dainichibō/Ryūsuiji, Chūrenji, Hondōji, and Dainichi-ji) jointly erected the hōkyōintō (宝篋印塔; a stūpa-form reliquary) on Dainichibō’s grounds.(Dainichibō, n.d.) Which of them was the lead temple is contested among their individual narratives.

The surimono’s colophon (analysed below) styles Dainichi-ji as 正別當, the standard account names Hondōji as principal, and Dainichibō styles itself 湯殿山総本寺 (head temple) and, with Chūrenji, credits Kūkai rather than Hachiko no Ōji as founder.(Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-b) So three of the four temples assert some form of primacy, and the foundation legend splits on sectarian lines.

The very notion of Dewa Sanzan as a group is itself in flux, in terms of the priority given to different mountains in the area. In the Edo period, Tendai groups headquartered on Mt. Haguro called the area Haguro Sanzan, and Shingon groups headquartered on Mt. Yudono called it Yudono Sanzan.

### Dewa Area Tengu

Hagurosan Konkōbō (羽黒山金光坊) is the tengu assigned to Haguro in the Tengu-kyō (天狗経), the Edo-period esoteric (mikkyō) invocatory text that enumerates the so-called forty-eight tengu (四十八天狗). In the standard list it sits between

Nikkōsan Tōkōbō (日光山東光坊) and Myōgisān Nikkōbō (妙義山日光坊). [Author unknown (n.d.b)] (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-c) A second, locally circulated figure is Hagurosan Sankōbō (羽黒山三光坊), described as the daitengu (大天狗; great tengu) governing the tengu who protect the three mountains and their practitioners, with an attendant (kenzoku, 眷属; familiar) named Enkōbō (円光坊), unusually classed as a “water tengu” (suitengu, 水天狗) said to guard the pilgrim boats on the Mogami River (最上川). The relationship between Konkōbō and Sankōbō is genuinely unresolved in available lore; they may be two aspects of a single figure or a true pair. There is also a folk identification of Sankōbō with Hachiko no Ōji (蜂子皇子), the legendary founder of Dewa Sanzan, holding that the founder *became* the mountain’s great tengu — though this rests on a single popular source and should be treated as devotional rather than documented. (Fushigi na Chikara 2015)

Akiba Sanjakubō (秋葉三尺坊) — the famous fire-prevention daitengu — is not a Haguro tengu, despite the near-homophony with Sankōbō. His tradition places his ascetic transformation at the Zaōdō (蔵王堂) in Echigo (越後; present Niigata), with a Shinshū/Togakushi (戸隠) birth and a later descent onto Akibasān in Tōtōmi. He appears in the same Tengu-kyō list under his own mountain. (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-a)



FIGURE 3. Tenyu-sha (天宥社) shrine on Mount Haguro (1992) dedicated to Tenyu Betto, a monk who played a crucial role in restoring Mount Haguro.

Comparatively-named tengu attached distinctly to Gassan (月山) or Yudonosan (湯殿山) are not as easily found. The Tengu-kyō (天狗經) itself is a late, apocryphal invocatory text (an Edo-period mikkyō-style kaji liturgy, not a canonical sūtra), and its transmission is correspondingly loose. The text belongs instead to the Nihon Daizōkyō (日本大藏經), the 1914–1921 compilation by the Nihon Daizōkyō Hensankai, which gathered Shugendō transmissions and minor liturgical texts that the mainstream canons omit. Within it, the relevant subcollection is the Shugendō shōsho (修験道章疏), which occupies volumes 17, 37, and 38 of the original Nihon Daizōkyō (= Shugendō shōsho 1, 2, 3). The most accessible modern form is the

Kokusho Kankōkai reprint: Shugendō shōsho in three volumes plus a separate kaidai (解題; bibliographic-commentary) volume edited by Miyake Hitoshi, published by Kokusho Kankōkai in 2000.[Nihon Daizōkyō Hensankai (2000)](Miyake Hitoshi 2001)

### The gongen of the three mountains

The honji-suijaku (本地垂迹) structure has each mountain’s kami venerated as a gongen (権現; “provisional manifestation”), understood as the local trace (suijaku) of an “original-ground” buddha (honji-butsu, 本地仏).

Dewa Sanzan Jinja’s own account frames this through Sueki Fumihiko’s typology of kami–buddha subordination and cites Togawa Anshō’s Shinpan Dewa Sanzan Shugendō no kenkyū for the interpretive claim that the practitioner experiences the deities’ efficacy as ōgen (応現), formless and omnipresent yet visible only to the believer.[Dewa Sanzan Jinja (n.d.)](Sueki Fumihiko, n.d.)(Togawa Anshō 1973)

Work by Togawa Anshō (戸川安章) — the foundational scholar of Haguro Shugendō — specifically Dewa Sanzan Shugendō no kenkyū (Kōsei Shuppansha, 1973) and its revised edition, and Dewa Sanzan to Tōhoku Shugen no kenkyū, are sources with further information.[Togawa Anshō (1973)](Togawa Anshō, n.d.) Roughly:

- Hagurosan (羽黒山) — honji Shō Kannon (聖観世音菩薩; the bodhisattva of compassion), assigned to the present (現世). The site’s deity is Ideha-no-kami, honji Shō Kannon; the institution was the Tendai temple Jakkō-ji, a branch of Rinnōji. After the Meiji separation of kami and buddhas the kami was reframed as Ukanomitama-no-Mikoto (identified with Ideha-no-kami).
- Gassan (月山) — honji Amida Nyorai (阿弥陀如来), assigned to the past and to ancestral spirits. Its honji is Amida Nyorai; the mountain was held to be where ancestral souls gather, and its bettōji was the Tendai temple Nichigatsuji at Iwanesawa. The post-Meiji kami is Tsukuyomi-no-Mikoto.
- Yudonosan (湯殿山) — honji Dainichi Nyorai (大日如来), assigned to the future / rebirth. Its honji is Dainichi Nyorai, with the sui-jaku kami Ōyamatsumi-no-Mikoto, and the goshintai is a hot, reddish-brown spring-rock — the “speak not, hear not” object — making it the okunoin (innermost sanctuary) where yamabushi sought sokushinbutsu (即身仏; living buddhahood).

Unlike the two Tendai mountains, Yudonosan’s bettōji were four Shingon temples — Hondōji, Dainichibō, Chūrenji, and Dainichi-ji — with Hondōji as the principal administrator (shō-bettō). Its enshrined kami are given as Ōyamatsumi, Ōnamuchi, and Sukunahikona.[Dewa Sanzan Jinja (n.d.)](Haguro-machi Kankō Kyōkai, n.d.)

The traversal logic binding them is the sankan-sando (三関三渡): moving through Haguro (present), Gassan (past), and Yudono (future) as a passage through three “barriers,” conceived as a rebirth pilgrimage rather than mere geography. Yudono future/rebirth–Dainichi assignment is the doctrinal seat of the sokushinbutsu tra-

dition at Dainichibō and Chūrenji — a thread that connects the gongen framework directly to material practice

Membership of the triad is not however historically stable:

- In the medieval reckoning Yudonosan was the sō-okunoin (総奥の院; overall inner sanctuary) and the “three mountains” were Gassan, Hagurosan, and Hayama — or alternatively Chōkaisan. In that older scheme the future/Yakushi position was held by Hayama or Yakushidake, with Hayama and Yakushidake assigned Yakushi Nyorai (future), while Yudono’s Dainichi was figured as transcending the three barriers altogether rather than occupying one of them. Yudonosan’s promotion into the modern triad, displacing Hayama/Chōkai, is itself a datable shift worth foregrounding. (Haguro-machi Kankō Kyōkai, n.d.)
- The gongen sit inside competing institutional claims. The Tendai-aligned mountains (Haguro, Gassan) were historically the “Haguro Sanzan,” and the Shingon side the “Yudono Sanzan,” reflected in the obsolete names Haguro-sanzan and Yudono-sanzan. Beyond the indigenous Haguro-ha — which fused Gassan ancestral-spirit belief — Tōzan-ha and Honzan-ha practitioners also operated at Dewa Sanzan, and these credited the founding to Kūkai or En no Gyōja rather than to Hachiko no Ōji; the Kūkai foundation (the shining leaf bearing the Dainichi mantra borne down the Bonjigawa) is the Shingon Yudono-ha’s account. So which founder, and by extension which honji emphasis, itself differs across sects.

### Dewa Sanzan Museum Holdings

The Dewa Sanzan History Museum (出羽三山歴史博物館), which sits in the Hagurosan precinct, contains tengu carvings and calligraphy associated with the shrine. The two scrolls below function as a matched pair — the kami-side title and the Buddhist-side invocation, both from the Tendai-aligned (Haguro) pole at Dewa.

Both works are single vertical columns of large semi-cursive characters, and both are 御筆 (gohitsu; “from the brush”) of the Tendai zasu Jōshin hosshinnō (承真法親王, Kajii-no-miya, 1787–1841). The museum cards both read 天台座主梶井宮承真法親王御筆 — “by the brush of the Tendai zasu (座主; head abbot), the Kajii-no-miya Prince-Monk Jōshin.” Jōshin (承真法親王) served repeatedly as Tendai zasu (the 218th, 220th, 222nd, and 224th incumbencies) and was a son of Arisugawa-no-miya Orihito-shinnō. His dates are 1787–1841, and he carried the childhood names Kuni-no-miya and Naga-no-miya. That places both calligraphies in the late Edo period (Bunka–Tenpō, c. 1810s–1841). [Wikipedia contributors (n.d.-i)] (Reichsarchiv, n.d.)

The reading “Jōshin” for 承真 follows the usual convention for 承- monastic names but is not furigana-confirmed here. Worth noting for provenance: the Arisugawa house was the home of the Arisugawa-ryū (有栖川流) calligraphic school, so a brush-piece by an Arisugawa-born prince-monk sits inside a recognized court-calligraphy lineage.

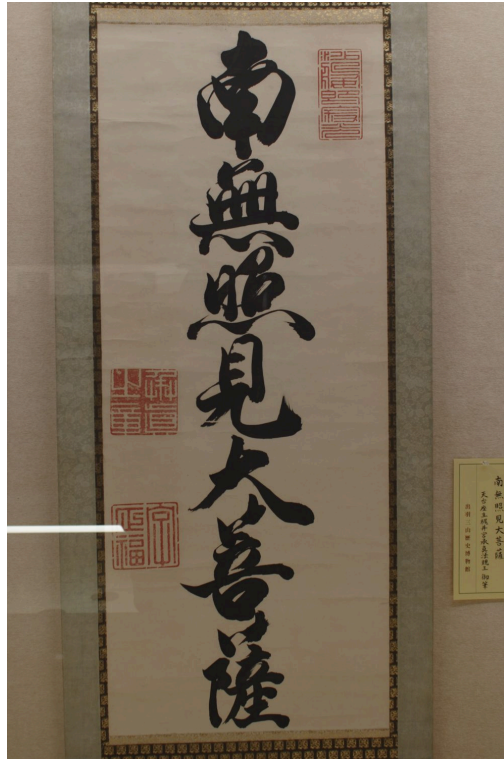


FIGURE 4. 南無照見大菩薩 (Namu Shōken Daibosatsu)

The first image reads:

南無照見大菩薩 (Namu Shōken Daibosatsu): 南無 (Namu; homage, from *namas*) / 照見 (Shōken; “illuminating insight / clear seeing,” carrying the Heart Sutra resonance of 照見五蘊皆空) / 大菩薩 (Dai-bosatsu; Great Bodhisattva). In full: “Homage to the Great Bodhisattva Shōken.” The referent of 照見大菩薩 within the Dewa Sanzan pantheon is an unidentified divine title. (Jōshin hosshinnō n.d.a)



FIGURE 5. 正一位羽黒三所大権現 (Shō-ichi-i Haguro Sansho Dai-gongen)

The second reads:

正一位羽黒三所大権現 (Shō-ichi-i Haguro Sansho Dai-gongen): 正一位 (Shō-ichi-i; Senior First Rank — the apex of the ritsuryō court-rank system, here conferred on the deity) / 羽黒 (Haguro) / 三所 (sansho; “the three places,” i.e. the three mountains’ deities together) / 大権現 (Dai-gongen; Great Avatar). In full: “Senior First Rank, the Great Gongen of the Three Places of Haguro” — the title of the combined three-mountain deity as enshrined together at Haguro (the configuration of the Sanjin Gōsaiiden). This very title, 羽黒三所大権現, was the deity venerated at the Haguro summit before the Meiji separation abolished the gongen.[Jōshin hosshinnō (n.d.b)](Wikipedia contributors, n.d.-e)

The pairing is the substantive point: one scroll gives the deity its Shinto court rank and gongen titulature, the other gives the Buddhist invocation (namu + bodhisattva) — the honji-suijaku duality rendered as two facing inscriptions, and pointedly in the hand of the Tendai head abbot, the Tendai-aligned (Haguro) pole rather than the Shingon (Yudono) one.

Next we find two Shingon-related scrolls:



FIGURE 6. 三山本地刷物 (Sanzan honji surimono; “printed icon of the honji-buddhas of the Three Mountains”)

Card: 三山本地刷物 (“printed honji-icon of the Three Mountains”) / 江戸時代 (Edo period) / 湯殿山 正別當 大日寺 (Yudonosan, Shō-bettō Dainichi-ji) / 出羽三山歴史博物館. The print shows the three honji-butsu, labeled in the image: 湯殿山 (top center, the crowned, elevated central figure = Dainichi Nyorai), 月山 (upper right, the standing buddha = Amida Nyorai), and 羽黒山 (upper left, the standing bodhisattva with lotus = Shō Kannon). The composition is itself an argument: Yudono/Dainichi is enthroned at the apex over the other two — the Shingon Yudono-ha’s hierarchy made visible, which is a discrepancy with the Hondōji-as-principal account. (Dainichi-ji n.d.)

It is a votive geju (偈頌; verse-eulogy) in kanbun praising the three honji and their salvific power. Working transcription, right-to-left, with unresolved graphs in [...]:

1 億利非遐 信力不屈 親拜三尊來迎 2 十念不微 誓心〔決〕定 必滅五逆重障  
3 内證法界 惠日不簡濁世 澤不 [...] 4 加用不測智火 〔燒盡〕惡趣業果振 5  
常〔懷〕恭敬室 聚集福壽無量之〔寶〕 6 一心〔稱名/植名号〕里面縛 所欲害  
身之族

Signature: 正別當 大日寺 (Shō-bettō Dainichi-ji), followed by a seal.

The colophon at lower left is signed 正別當 大日寺 (“Shō-bettō [principal administrator] Dainichi-ji”). The scroll’s signature and the museum card style Dainichi-ji as 正別當, whereas the standard modern reference names Hondōji as the principal of Yudonosan’s four Shingon bettō-ji. The standard account lists four Shingon temples for Yudonosan — Hondōji, Dainichibō, Chūrenji, and Dainichi-ji — with Hondōji as the principal bettō. The artifact thus records a competing precedence claim among the four temples; that tension is itself of note.

The votive verse filling the lower register contains the phrases 親拜三尊來迎 (reverently worshipping the three honored ones who come in welcome — raigō), 十念 (the ten recitations), 必滅五逆重障 (surely extinguishing the grave hindrances of the five heinous sins), 福壽無量 (boundless merit and longevity), and 一心 (single-mindedly). The register is Pure Land / esoteric salvific language praising the three honji.

The verse reads as a coherent arc from salvation to protection, which is itself informative about the print’s function:

- Columns 1–2 are the welcoming-descent and sin-extinction movement: faith’s power is unbending, so one reverently worships the raigō (來迎) of the three honored ones; the ten recitations (jūnen, 十念) are not slight, and the resolved vow-mind surely extinguishes the grave hindrances of the five heinous sins (goku jūshō, 五逆重障).
- Columns 3–4 are the wisdom movement: the inner realization of the dharma-realm (naishō hokkai, 內證法界), whose sun of grace does not discriminate against the defiled world (jokuse, 濁世), and the immeasurable fire of wisdom that burns up — 振, i.e. shaking loose — the karmic fruits of the evil destinies (akushu gōka, 惡趣業果).
- Columns 5–6 then turn protective/apotropaic: 常〔懷〕恭敬室、聚集福壽無量之〔寶〕 — “constantly cherishing the hall of reverence, gathering the treasure of immeasurable merit and longevity”, closing on a subjugation clause — 面縛 (menbaku; bound hand-and-face) and 所欲害身之族 (“those whose desire is to harm the body”). That final turn toward 調伏 (chōbuku; subjugation of malevolent forces) is characteristically esoteric, and fits a Dainichi-ji surimono whose apex deity is Dainichi.

The translation above is incomplete, and the major fragments are not found online; they are not standard phrases, so the printed collections cited below would need to be consulted directly.

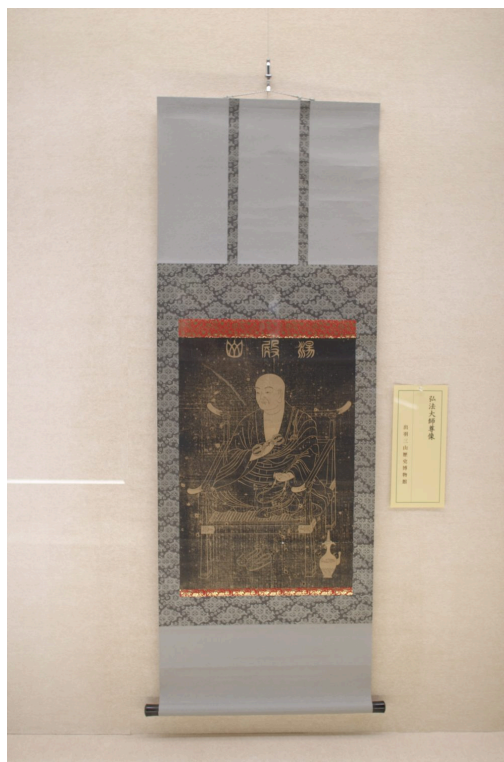


FIGURE 7. 弘法大師尊像 (Kōbō Daishi sonzō; “venerable image of Kōbō Daishi”)

Card: 弘法大師尊像 / 出羽三山歴史博物館. The header cartouche reads 湯殿 (Yudono) beside a lotus-form crest. The icon is the standard seated Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai) type, rendered in gold line on a darkened ground: seated on a chair (kyokuroku, 曲床), a five-pronged vajra (goko-sho, 五鈷杵) in the right hand and a rosary (nenju, 念珠) in the left, with a water vessel (suibyō, 水瓶) at lower right. This is the Shingon Yudono-ha’s founder-icon — the material counterpart to the Kūkai-foundation legend, set against the Hachiko-no-Ōji/Tendai-Haguro foundation. (Author unknown n.d.a)

The first two images are the Tendai/Haguro pole (the gongen title and bodhisattva invocation in a Tendai zasu’s hand) and the second two represent the Shingon/Yudono pole (the honji triad printed at Dainichi-ji; the Kūkai icon).

### 1.3. Dewa Shugendō and Kobudō

Haguro Shugendō discussed some of the features and history of the Dewa area mountain Shugendō (修験道) I encountered in 2004 and its early history. Dewa-area bujutsu (武術) were in contrast bushi-centric domain arts, and there is no well-attested surviving yamabushi (山伏) fighting tradition in the area. Shugendō connections are allegorical compared to arts like Kukishin-ryū (九鬼神流) that were based elsewhere. They instead lived at the level of revelation-narrative and ascetic

framing drawing on elements of Shugendō practice (in common knowledge during the early Edo period), rather than in specific tactical or physical-somatic content.

The experiences we see described or passed down as framing legends surrounding the divine revelation of martial practices, after a period of seclusion and study, are kami-cult centric and ascetic in nature, so immediately adjacent to Shugendō imagery but not specifically having anything to do with the combatives (if any such practices existed) of mountain-priests or ascetics of particular complexes, except in the early case of Aisu's Kage-ryū (陰流) of kenjutsu, which was formulated or revealed at the Udo shrine in Kyushu in the Muromachi period. This at the time was an independent southern nexus of Shugendō. Nen-ami Jion (念阿弥慈恩) has similar experiences at Kurama (鞍馬).

Later bushi who entered the mountains as ascetics or on pilgrimage retained whatever training they possessed when they were symbolically reborn into that new role. Regarding Dewa-area bushi, the Shōnai (庄内) domain in the Tsuruoka (鶴岡) area was the closest to Dewa Sanzan (出羽三山). Its Chidōkan (致道館) domain school taught a substantial set of martial ryū to samurai, but these were not shugenja or yamabushi arts.

### Shōnai-han Bujutsu

Onozaki Norio's *Shōnai-han no bujutsu* — compiled from the Shōnai-han domain academy Chidōkan and the Sakata/Tsuruoka archives — records a full curriculum:

- Kenjutsu: Shinkyū-ryū (新九流), Okuyama-ryū (奥山流), Mitomi-ryū (三富流), Inazuma-ryū (稲妻流), Shinshin Yagyū-ryū (心信柳生流) and Jikishinkage-ryū (直心影流)
- Iai: Tamiya-ryū (田宮流) and Kage-ryū (景流)
- Sōjutsu: Hōzōin-ryū (宝蔵院流)
- Jūjutsu: Shibukawa-ryū (渋川流), Sakamaki-ryū [坂巻流?] and Shishin-ryū (torite)
- Kyūjutsu: Heki-ryū (日置流)

In addition, Ōtsubo/Hitomi horsemanship, several gunnery lines, and Kōshū-/Naganuma-ryū military science (甲州流/長沼流軍学) were taught.

Jikishinkage-ryū was in the Shōnai han, and Shinshin Yagyū-ryū (心信柳生流) is a Yagyū Shinkage line. Note that the iai Kage-ryū here (景流) is a different school from Aisu's Kage-ryū (陰流) discussed above, despite the shared romaji. The Shōnai branch domain of Matsuyama separately held Tenshin Shōden-ryū [天真正伝流 (?)], the Enki-ryū of kenjutsu and Tamiya-ryū iai.

### Birthplace of Iai

The most striking fact is that, in the dominant tradition, the Dewa area is the cradle of iai itself. Hayashizaki Jinsuke Shigenobu (林崎甚助重信, trad. 1542–1621), regarded as the founder of iai (battōjutsu, 抜刀術), was born Asano Tamijimaru (浅野民治丸) in Hayashizaki village in Dewa, and adopted the village name “Hayashizaki” as his surname at his coming-of-age. He is said to have secluded

himself a hundred days at the Hayashizaki Myōjin (林崎明神) in Tatenoyama (楯山), Dewa province — present Murayama City, Yamagata. During that time he is said to have received the secret of the draw called the *manuki* (万字拔; manji draw) — in a dream-revelation, the dream-figure being a white-haired old man who taught the advantage of the long blade. This is the same *sanrō* (参籠; ritual seclusion) and *shintaku* (神託; oracle) structure as in Kashima-area bujutsu geneses, and it issued from a gongen (権現) deity likely of Shugendō-belief origin.

The deity was Kumano (熊野). The shrine’s own engi is explicit — Kumano Gongen was enshrined in a rock-cave on Sekijōgatake east of the village, later relocated and re-styled “Kumano Myōjin,” and revered locally as an ancestral deity.<sup>1</sup> The formal name today of the shrine is Kumano-Iai Ryō-Jinja (熊野居合両神社). The shrine was a Kumano Gongen site — a gongen deity, a rock-cave origin, and an *okuno’in* (奥の院) at Kamagasawa Daimyōjin (釜ヶ沢大明神) where Jinsuke is said to have meditated at a stone — i.e., the Kumano-Shugendō register, not “pure” Shintō. And its modern name is a fossil of the very process we discussed: under the Meiji shinbutsu-hanzen (神仏判然) edict the Iai shrine was merged into the Kumano shrine and registered in 1877 as the combined “Kumano-Iai” shrine — the gongen identity processed, the founder-cult and the Kumano kami administratively joined under a registrable name.

The Hayashizaki/Kumano Iai shrine there is the only iai shrine in Japan. The lineages descending from his Shinmusō Hayashizaki-ryū include Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū (無双直伝英信流), Tamiya-ryū, Mugai-ryū (無外流) and others, so most surviving iai traces back to a Dewa area origin. Through the Edo period this was a living regional network: swordsmen of the Shinjō (新庄) domain’s Hayashizaki Shinmusō-ryū and the Shōnai domain’s Hayashizaki Tamiya-ryū came to Hayashizaki village to worship and dedicate votive plaques at the shrine.

As with many budō, we discover competing origin narratives with iai as well. There are competing Kashima-centric accounts, and the Dewa-origin versions became received tradition largely through the Kyōhō-era writing of the *Honchō Bugei Shōden* (本朝武芸小伝).

The mythic allure of Takemikazuchi-no-kami (武甕槌神) at Kashima Jingū (鹿島神宮) became very strong over time. One Hayashizaki Musō-ryū account (attributed to Okuyama Kanzen) has Jinsuke receiving Tsukahara Bokuden’s (塚原卜伝) Hitotsu-no-tachi (一之太刀) as the highest secret of Kashima Shintō-ryū (鹿島新当流), while a Kurama-ryū (鞍馬流) densho lists him as second-generation — both contested single-line traditions, but they place the Dewa-area iai founder at the junction of the Kashima-Bokuden and Kurama threads. This may have led to the story of Bokuden and Dewa related below.

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<sup>1</sup>The shrine’s engi places the original Kumano Gongen enshrinement at Sekijōgatake in 807; I could not corroborate that date or site from independent sources, and the Murayama tourism record instead dates the *senza* to the present location to the Eishō-Shōan window (1046–1300). The 1877 registration as Kumano-Iai Ryō-Jinja is well attested; the early-foundation particulars should be sourced to the shrine engi directly or hedged.

Province-wide, the clearest Dewa thread is the iai network radiating from the Murayama shrine — swordsmen of the Shinjō domain’s Hayashizaki Shinmusō-ryū and the Shōnai domain’s Hayashizaki Tamiya-ryū came to worship and dedicate plaques there — alongside the Shōnai curriculum already noted (which included Jikishinkage-ryū and a Yagyū line). A clean Yonezawa (Uesugi) domain roster would round out the provincial picture but is not attempted here; a domain-specific bujutsu study would serve better than the aggregator sites. The cleanest test of the cliff story is whether Knutsen footnotes it: if it traces only to oral transmission, it stays in the “tradition, not record” column.

As to Hayashizaki-ryū iai’s technical content and iconography, it does not explicitly call out tengu or other mountain-religion based imagery in its kata curriculum. Documented Hayashizaki kata names are positional. The original art (written variously 神夢想林崎流 / 林崎新夢想流 / 林崎夢想流) survives in the Shinjō and Tsugaru (津軽; Hirose/Sasamori) transmissions, and its form-set is given by the Sasamori Junzō line and the Nihon Kobudō body as:

Omote Mukaemi (表向身), Migimi (右身), Hidarimi (左身), Sotomono (外物), Sotomono-yurushi (外物許), Nihō-zume / Shihō-zume (二方詰・四方詰), Goka-no-tachi (五箇之太刀), Hakka-no-tachi (八箇之太刀), Yurushi-no-hi (許之非 [possibly 許之秘]), and Senkin-no-kurai (千金之位).

The seven-form middle stratum is transmitted across all the domain lines and the names largely coincide with the early Kishū (紀州) Tamiya-ryū. The Tamiya-ryū-style positional names above are the early stratum, but ordering and counts differ by domain (Shinjō vs Tsugaru).

The esoteric element in this line is not tengu at all but the *manuki* (万字拔), the manji sword draw that Hayashizaki is said to have received in a dream-revelation from the Hayashizaki Myōjin after a hundred-day seclusion.

### Kashima Parallel Discourse

Roald Knutsen, in his book *Rediscovering Budo* (2004), relates a tale from Kashima Shintō-ryū of Tsukahara Bokuden being kidnapped after angering a group of yamabushi. He is taken away to Dewa and, tied up, held dangling over a cliff. Knutsen held menkyo-kaiden in a Hayashizaki-descended Eishin-ryū iai line and the rank of renshi 6th-dan in kendo, and in 1976 he trained in Japan with Yoshikawa Kōichirō-sensei (吉川), the renowned headmaster (sōke) of the Kashima Shintō-ryū.

Mainstream Kashima Shintō-ryū does not have a Tengu-shō component to its practice. This likely is why, in *Tengu: The Shamanic and Esoteric Origins of the Japanese Martial Arts*, the tengu images Knutsen reproduces are drawn from the wider densho corpus of Yagyū, Taisha-ryū (タイ捨流) and Kurama-ryū source material, not a single tradition (and not one he himself has studied).

Standard Bokuden and Matsumoto biographies contain no Dewa-monks cliff episode. The canonical ascetic motif in that lineage is the opposite in form — seclusion, not suspension. Matsumoto Bizen-no-kami (松本備前守) is said to have attained the secret “Hitotsu no Tachi” through *sanrō* (ritual seclusion) at Kashima

Jingū, and to have urged the same seclusion-practice on the second generation Bokuden. Bokuden in turn secluded himself at the Kashima shrine for some three years and received the divine instruction called “renew your heart and meet the matter,” from which the Shintō-ryū (新当流) took its name.

The cliff-hanging episode as oral history may be a misremembered or intentionally obscured Shugendō rite, given the Shintō-centric identities of the Kashima and Katori (香取) area arts today (despite historical influences of mikkyō 密教 and figures such as Marishiten 摩利支天; Skt. Maṛīcī).

The obvious referent regarding cliff-hanging is the *Nishi no Nozoki* (西の覗き). A new initiate is lowered head-first over a sheer cliff while the *sendatsu* (先達; senior guide) demands “Will you be filial? Will you cherish your family?” until he shouts assent. This is a “body-abandoning” (*sutemi*, 捨身) ordeal framed explicitly as *gishi-saisei* (擬死再生; simulated death and rebirth), which practitioners gloss as *zange-metsuzai* (懺悔滅罪; confession and extinction of sins).

The involuntary abduction framing itself has a direct Shugendō analogue: an Ōmine (大峰) legend in which a man who mocked the mountain is seized by a great eagle, stranded on a crag, brought to repent, and only then restored — re-enacted as the Kinpusen-ji (金峯山寺) “frog-jump” (蛙飛び) rite.

A voluntary initiation re-narrated by outsiders as a hostile ordeal is a very natural transformation over the intervening centuries. It begs the question of who these Dewa monks were that could abduct a master swordsman like Bokuden. The likely explanation is that this is allegorical.

The famous cliff-*nozoki* is held at Ōmine, not Dewa; the ordeal-and-rebirth structure is pan-Shugendō, and Haguro’s Akinomine (秋の峰) has its own austerities, but there is no specific mention of Dewa cliff-suspension rites.

Knutsen draws on the oral history of multiple traditions in his writing, as well as a wide selection of art and other primary sources. The Dewa and Kashima competing narratives of Hayashizaki-ryū make parsing the origin of these tales difficult at times.

### Gassan Sword Making

Dewa is famous as the location of the Gassan school of sword smiths. Several Gassan blades are in the museum holdings, the oldest is a tachi signed simply “Gassan” (月山, two characters), a Nanbokuchō-period work designated an Important Art Object, which matches the from the Gassan smithing school’s documented peak.

The densest link from Dewa into the warrior world is the Gassan smiths who worked at the foot of Mt. Gassan, traced their founder to Kiō-maru, flourished from Kamakura through the Muromachi period with a Nanbokuchō peak, and are marked by the distinctive *ayasugi-hada* grain, also called “Gassan-hada.” Their blades, prized for both durability and that grain, were favored by warlords; Mogami Yoshiaki is said to have presented Oda Nobunaga a Gassan-forged spear.

The same *ayasugi* grain shows up in Mutsu's Mokusa and Hōju, Echigo's Momokawa, and as far off as Satsuma's Naminohira in Kyūshū, which is attributed to *yamabushi* carrying technique and information along their networks. So the smithing rode the same Shugendō circuitry that has run through this whole conversation, tying Dewa to Kyūshū by the ascetics' own movement. And the school's fate mirrors the disarmament thread exactly: it declined sharply once the three mountains became disarmed, purely religious bodies in the Edo period, reviving only at the very end when Gassan Sadayoshi moved to Osaka and founded the Osaka Gassan line. Bashō's *Oku no Hosomichi* still records the Gassan smith hut, where the smiths purified themselves with sacred water before forging and signed their blades Gassan.

Later, the first Gassan Sadakazu (1836–1918), an Imperial Household Artist who forged the Meiji Emperor's military swords and devised the marshal's sword modeled on the Heike heirloom Kogarasu-maru, then through Sadakatsu to the second Sadakazu (1907–1995), a Living National Treasure, and on to the present Sadatoshi and Sadanobu.

### Shinbutsu Bunri

The *shinbutsu bunri* (神仏分離) of 1868 was advertised as a binary operation — unbraided kami from buddhas — and on the surface that is what it performed.

Shugendō was never solely a Buddhism–Shintō blend; it was a third stream, a syncretic matrix that also carried the continental cosmological layer of *gogyō* (五行; wǔxíng; five phases) correspondences mapped onto the *yamabushi* vestments and the *goma* (護摩) rite, *in'yō* (陰陽; yin-yang) and astral worship of figures like *Myōken* (妙見; the pole-star) and the *Hokuto* (北斗; Big Dipper) cult, talismanic magic and the *henbai* (反閤; ritual pacing) step — the *Yu* step (禹步; Yǔbù) of Daoist provenance — and the *sennin* (仙人; xiānrén; transcendent) imagery clinging to the mountain and to the *tengu*.

None of that fit either the “pure kami” box or the “Buddhism” box.

The reason the suppression was quiet is structural: Daoism never existed in Japan as an institution — it had no ordained clergy, no temples of its own — but entered as diffused elements absorbed into *Onmyōdō* (陰陽道), Shugendō, folk Shintō and *mikkyō*.

When the state dismantled the host bodies — *gongen* (権現) titles outlawed under *shinbutsu bunri*, the Shugendō sects abolished in 1872, the *Tsuchimikado* (土御門) *onmyōdō* monopoly dissolved around 1870 — the cosmological layer lost every institutional home at once and had no standalone body to defend it.

The *gongen* figures were the precise casualty: *Zaō Gongen* (蔵王権現) and the *honji-suijaku* (本地垂迹) manifestation-deities were exactly the fusion the edicts targeted, and *Myōken* shrines were re-skinned as *Ame-no-Minakanushi* (天之御中主) worship — the astral-Daoist deity overwritten by a “pure” kami.

Deemphasized rather than erased, as the material survived in folk practice and in the postwar Shugendō revival, but its institutional standing and public legitimacy were demoted by a single stroke that announced itself as something else. It was, in essence, unreified.

For the densho work this extends the prestige-vector from a China-to-Japan axis to also include a Shugendō-to-state-Shintō axis. The same Meiji impulse that scrubbed Chinese-combat pedigrees — modernizing, nationalizing, de-syncretizing — also stranded the gogyō/in'yō/gongen/astral substratum in the okuden of the bujutsu of that day.

This can be a rough dating heuristic. Shugendō or Ming (even more so Qing) elements would not be added or emphasized in Meiji; they are more likely to be muted in Meiji-era commentary on these arts, if previously present.

A stratum dense in five-phase correspondences, astral deities (Marishiten, Myōken), gongen tutelaries or henbai-like ritual movement is, like a Chinese-origin claim, a pre-Meiji marker — and a school that retains it openly past 1872, against the purifying grain, is displaying inherited material it could not easily shed (even if embarrassed from a social standpoint).

It also frames the broad arc above: a genuinely Daoist-inflected Shugendō substrate at Kage-ryū's Udo origin, thinning to the naturalized Tenjin-cult founding of late-Edo Tenjin Shin'yō-ryū (天神真楊流), then actively deemphasized in the Meiji nationalization. These are three stages of one long retreat of the syncretic-cosmological layer from the surface of related arts.

What was suppressed was less institutional Daoism (道教; Dàojiào) than the diffuse in'yō-gogyō-astral-talismanic complex that reached Japan through Onmyōdō and mikkyō and is only adjectivally Daoist. The cleaner formulation — diffused continental cosmology carried by Shugendō and Onmyōdō — sidesteps the long academic argument over whether Japan ever had “real” Daoism like the broad monastic fixtures of China.

#### 1.4. Bashō on Dewa

涼しさやほの三日月の羽黒山 *suzushisa ya / hono mikazuki no / Haguro-yama*  
 “Such coolness — a faint crescent moon over Mount Haguro.”

Bashō had climbed dressed as the ascetics do, a yūshime cord at the neck and a hōkan wrapping the head, so the 涼しさ (coolness) is at once the literal relief of mountain air against the lowland summer and the felt sanctity of the place; ほの三日月 (the faint third-night crescent) gives the thin, understated brightness suited to that purity, set against the dark mass implied by 羽黒 (“black-wing”). An editorial reading takes the three verses together as praising the pure bearing of the three mountains as they shift through morning, noon, and evening. KyoushhuMie

雲の峰幾つ崩れて月の山 *kumo no mine / ikutsu kuzurete / tsuki no yama* “How many cloud-peaks have crumbled away — the moon mountain.”

The towering summer thunderheads (雲の峰) break apart to leave the serene bulk of Gassan, “the moon mountain,” standing; the crescent of the Haguro verse and the moon-mountain here knit the two by the lunar motif.

語られぬ湯殿にぬらす袂かな katararenu / Yudono ni nurasu / tamoto kana “Of Yudono, not to be spoken — and so my sleeves are wet.”

Pilgrims were forbidden to speak of what passed at Yudono, and Bashō, ascending that solemn place, wet his sleeves with tears of awe. Sora added his own Yudono verse — Yudonosan / zeni fumu michi no / namida kana — and the set is preceded by the Minamidani verse, arigata ya / yuki o kaorasu / Minamidani.

Descending from Gassan toward Yudono, Bashō passes the smiths’ hut and writes: the smiths of this province select sacred water, purify themselves there, forge their blades, and finally cut the signature “Gassan,” and so are esteemed by the world; it is said they quench their swords in the Ryūsen spring, revering the old example of Kanshō and Bakuya, and one sees their devotion to the Way runs deep.

The reach for Ryūsen (the Longquan spring) and for Kanshō and Bakuya — the legendary Chinese smith husband and wife who presented a sword to the king of Wu — is itself notable for your purposes: even Bashō frames the Dewa smiths through a Chinese sword-legend, the same gravitational pull toward Chinese provenance we saw in the Denrinbō material, here purely as poetic homage rather than a lineage claim.

## 2. KOBUDŌ

## 2.1. Tengu, Gongen and their Sacred Mountains

Visiting sacred places has been an important component of my martial arts training over the years. In 2024, I visited the Tōdaiji complex in Nara as well as Kuramadera in Kyōto.

I became curious about the waterfall I encountered at Kuramadera, next to a place Kiichi Hōgen was said to have gone on retreat. Kiichi is revered as a possible tutor to Yoshitsune — in drama represented often by the Tengu lord Sōjōbō. I dive through a bit of Kurama area history and then turn towards an analysis, based on Japanese language sources, of the Tengu names found in the Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū Tengushō.

The essay moves in four stages: from the topography and modern theology of Mt. Kurama, through the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū’s tengu cipher and what each named tengu refers to, into the curricular envelope of which the Tengushō is part and back to Kurama by way of a Shugendō-substrate sub-shrine that completes the circle. Readers oriented toward bujutsu may find sections 2 and 3 most directly relevant; readers oriented toward Japanese mountain religion, sections 1 and 4. The argument depends on the whole, but the parts can be read independently.

**Kuramadera****Kyō Hachi-ryū**

The Kyō Hachi-ryū (京八流), “Eight Schools of the Capital,” is a semi-legendary grouping rather than a historically documented set of ryūha. According to tradition, they descend from teachings given at Kurama-dera (鞍馬寺), in the mountains north of Kyoto, in the late Heian period — roughly the late 12th century. The reputed progenitor is Kiichi Hōgen (鬼一法眼), who is said to have taught the way of the sword to eight Buddhist monks on Mt. Kurama, and the school is said to be the origins of all swordsmanship. Kiichi Hōgen is variously described as an onmyōji or a warrior-monk, and the legend is famously entangled with Minamoto no Yoshitsune’s training as Ushiwakamaru — the “tengu” of Kurama are often rationalized as Kiichi Hōgen and his disciples.

The names of the eight schools are not reliably preserved. It does not go beyond being a legendary school of swordsmanship and there are doubts as to whether it actually existed. Even Edo-period budōka regarded the Kyō ryū as largely mythic. Different sources give different lists, and several traditions retroactively claimed Kyō Hachi lineage for prestige. The schools most often named as descendants (not as the original eight, but as later lines tracing back to that root) include the Yoshioka-ryū (吉岡流), the Kurama-ryū (鞍馬流, sometimes given as Kurama-hachi-ryū), the Chūjō-ryū (中条流, also read as Nakajō-ryū) founded by Chūjō Nagahide — itself the ancestor of Tomita-ryū and ultimately Ittō-ryū. Nen-ryū and Tsutsumi Hozan-ryū are also said to be associated with the proto *ryūha* (流派; school, tradition) of Kurama — recent video interviews of Katori Shintō-ryū

Sugino dōjō senior members claim a connection between Shintō-ryū and Kiichi Hōgen as well.

Another folklore says that Yoshioka Naomoto, who first used the title of Kenpō, is the founder. Usually, the Kyō Hachi-ryū is paired with the Kantō Shichi-ryū or Kashima Shichi-ryū (関東七流), the seven *eastern* traditions associated with Kashima Jingū. These have a comparably murky pre-history but a more continuous documentary trail through Iizasa Chōisai and paired Katori and Kashima lineages.

The role of Kiichi Hōgen-ryū is itself the most prominent test case of this principle. The historically defensible position is that organized, transmissible ryūha with documented densho really begin in the 15th century with figures like Iizasa Chōisai Ienao (Katori Shintō-ryū) and Aisu Ikōsai (Kage-ryū); anything earlier, including the Kyō Hachi, is best treated as origin myth that later schools used to anchor their authority.

There is no historically documented Kiichi Hōgen-ryū. Instead, Kiichi Hōgen functions in the tradition as the legendary progenitor of the Kyō Hachi-ryū as a whole rather than as the eponymous founder of a single named line. “Hōgen” is itself an honorific title for a monk rather than a name, and the character is largely a literary one. He appears in the Gikeiki (義経記), the early-Muromachi war tale about Yoshitsune, and later in jōruri and kabuki, most famously Kiichi Hōgen Sanryaku no Maki (鬼一法眼三略巻). No densho, makimono or lineage chart of a Kiichi Hōgen-ryū with verifiable transmission survives.



FIGURE 8. Kiichi Hōgen Sanryaku no Maki

But, Kiichi Hōgen’s name does appear as a claimed source within the mythic prehistories of several later schools. The Bujinkan traditions, for instance, invoke him — in the Takagi Yōshin-ryū’s Ryuko no maki, Kiichi Hōgen is mentioned as a prominent figure whose teachings were embraced among many of the martial arts schools that came from western Japan, and a fragment attributed to him — “if it comes, meet it; if it leaves, send it away; 5 and 5 are 10, 2 and 8 are 10” — is preserved there.

Some early-Edo writers also tried to identify his style retrospectively with Chūjō-ryū on the basis of a short tachi and close-range technique, but this is speculation rather than evidence of a distinct Kiichi Hōgen-ryū existing at that time.

### Maō-no-Taki

The waterfall beside the Kiichi Hōgen-sha (鬼一法眼社) at Kurama is named Maō-no-Taki (魔王の滝), “the Demon King’s Waterfall,” after Gohō Maō-son — the kami enshrined in the small hokora on the cliff above it. It sits in an area called Gohōkyō (護法境) just past the Fumyōden cable-car station, alongside the Hōjōike pond, the Yoshikura Inari-sha and the Kiichi Hōgen-sha. Visitors often associate the waterfall with Kiichi Hōgen because the shrine’s torii is positioned facing the falls rather than the shrine building itself, but the falls’ formal name belongs to Maō-son.

The site is part of the long-established Kurama-dera approach and its sacralization is old, but the present physical structures are very recent. The Kiichi Hōgen-sha enshrines Kiichi Hōgen, who is said to have transmitted military arts to Ushiwakamaru; it was damaged by a fallen tree in the 2018 (Heisei 30) typhoon, dismantled and rebuilt in 2025 (Reiwa 7). The Maō-no-Taki, which flows beside the Kiichi Hōgen-sha, also collapsed in the 2018 typhoon and was reconstructed in 2024 (Reiwa 6). So what one sees today is essentially a 2024–2025 restoration.

The Kiichi Hōgen association in the Kurama area more broadly is older but still secondary. The 1711 (Shōtoku 1) text *Sanshū Meiseki-shi* (山州名跡志) already records a “Kiichi Hōgen-zuka” at this locale, describing it as the place where the man said to be Yoshitsune’s military-arts teacher had a mound, though the text itself notes the origin was already unverified. The visible stone monument labeled *Kiichi Hōgen no Koseki* (鬼一法眼之古跡), next to Kurama Elementary School, was erected on 10 November 1915 (Taishō 4) by the school’s staff and students. So, the association is mid-Edo at the earliest as a recognized tradition on the ground, with the current place marker being from the early 20th-century.

### Sōjōbō and Gohō Maō-son

The relationship between Sōjōbō and Gohō Maō-son is doctrinally formalized but historically layered, and most of the current synthesis is surprisingly recent. In present-day Kurama-kōkyō doctrine, Gohō Maō-son — also called Kurama-san Maō Daisōjō — is the great tengu and one body of the Sonten triad, and he holds Kurama-san Sōjōbō as a subordinate, or alternatively the two are identified as the same being. This teaching took its current form only after Kurama-kōkyō became independent from the Tendai school in 1949. So when the temple’s modern literature treats Sōjōbō as Maō-son’s lieutenant (or as a partial manifestation), that is essentially a Shōwa-era reformulation by Shigaraki Kōun and his successors.

Before that consolidation, the two figures had quite different pedigrees. Sōjōbō is the older, well-attested figure: he appears as the chief tengu of Kurama in the Muromachi-period Noh play *Kurama Tengu*, and Edo-period tengu compendia such as *Zassetsu Nōwa* (雑説囊話, 1764) by Hayashi Jiken (林自見, possibly “Shiken”) list him as the second of the Hachi Daitengu or “eight great tengu of Japan”, after Atago Tarōbō. In the classical *Hachi Tengu* lists and in the Kurama Daimaō-son Wasan preserved in the Shingon Zaike Mantokushū, “Kurama-san Sōjōbō” appears, but “Kurama-san Maō Daisōjō” does not. The compound title “Maō Daisōjō” itself

only seems to surface in print with Kita Sadakichi's 1922 (Taishō 11) ethnographic study on possession cults, so it is a Taishō-era construction.

Maō-son in his current cosmological form is even more clearly modern. The Kurama-dera explanation holds that Maō-son descended from Venus 6.5 million years ago to save the earth, landing on the iwakura where Oku-no-in Maō-den now stands. This Venus/Sanat-Kumara identification is borrowed from Theosophy (via Blavatsky and Leadbeater) and was grafted onto Kurama's older Bishamonten-centered cult by Kurama-kōkyō. That said, there are pre-modern threads that made the later fusion natural: the omaedachi statue of Maō-son kept in front of the hibutsu at the Hondō Kondō depicts him as a sennin-like figure with wings on his back, a long beard and a high nose, with a halo made of leaves — the statue in the Tahōtō has the same form — and from this it is thought that the “Kurama tengu” was originally Gohō Maō-son. So iconographically, Maō-son was already tengu-shaped well before the modern doctrine formalized the chain of command — see *Zassetsu Nōwa* (雑説囊話) by Hayashi Jiken/Shiken (林自見).

Maō-son as a religious figure — distinct from his current cosmological gloss regarding Venus — is attested at Kurama at least back to the late Muromachi period through a painting attributed to Kanō Motonobu (狩野元信, 1476–1559) and titled *Suijaku Maō Daisōjō* (垂跡魔王大僧正). The 1924 (Taishō 13) visit of Empress Teimei to Kurama-dera documents the pre-modern arrangement of the Hondō: the bettō Shigaraki Kōun records that when Empress Teimei made her royal visit on 3 December 1924, the Hondō housed the honzon Bishamonten in the center, the honji Senju Kannon Bosatsu in the east room and the *suijaku* Maō Daisōjō in the west room; the “Maō-son” painting by Kanō Hōgen referenced here is the *suijaku* Maō Daisōjō by Kanō Motonobu.

The older arrangement had Maō-son in a strictly subordinate honji-*suijaku* role: Bishamonten is the honzon (the actual focus of worship), Senju Kannon is the honji (the underlying Buddhist truth), and Maō Daisōjō is the *suijaku* (the local-manifestation form).

Maō (魔王) in Buddhist cosmology is the king of Māra — the tempter who attacked Śākyamuni at Bodh Gaya. Prefixing *gohō* (護法, “dharma-protecting”) inverts the figure: the King of Demons is converted and now serving as protector. This is the same structural pattern that produced Daikokuten (Mahākāla, originally a wrathful Śiva form), Aizen Myō-ō, the Twelve Heavenly Generals of Yakushi and many others — converted-demon protectors are a major class of Mikkyō deity. Read this way, Gohō Maō-son is simply Kurama-dera's local converted-demon figure, paired with the orthodox Bishamonten as the temple's protector. The tengu iconography slots in here because tengu in medieval Buddhism are also categorized as converted/demonic mountain spirits — the leaf-haloed, winged, beaked image of Maō-son is iconographically a high-ranking tengu of converted-demon type.

In the Kurama-kōkyō explanation, the honzon of the Hondō Kondō is the “Sonten,” a single unity of three bodies: Bishamonten in the center, Senju Kannon to the right and Gohō Maō-son to the left. Sonten is described as “the universal energy

that allows all life to live and exist.” Bishamonten is the symbol of light, the spirit of the sun; Senju Kannon is the symbol of love, the spirit of the moon-disc; and Maō-son is the symbol of power, the spirit-king of the great earth. The mantra:

“Tsuki no yō ni utsukushiku, taiyō no yō ni atatakaku, daichi no yō ni chikarazuyoku, subete wa Sonten ni te mashimasu” Beautiful as the moon, warm as the sun, strong as the earth, all is in Sonten” is recited as the basic devotional formula. Maō-den reverence likely started as a pre-Buddhist rock formation *iwakura* (磐座; sacred rock seat) veneration.

At Kuramadera, the honzon Sonten in the Hondō is a hibutsu (secret Buddha) opened only once every 60 years, in the hinoe-tora (fire-tiger) year, because Bishamonten is said to appear in the tiger month, tiger day and tiger hour; this is why the Hondō is flanked by stone tigers (komatora) instead of the usual komainu. Most recent opening: 1986. Next opening: 2046. The substitute omaedachi statues — those tengu-form Maō-son figures with the leaf halo — stand in for the hibutsu during the long closed periods, which is why their iconography is what visitors actually see today.

Sōjōbō is the legitimate medieval/early-modern chief tengu of Kurama and the figure of the Yoshitsune legends — possibly an encoding over time of the historical Kiichi Hōgen — while Maō-son is the temple’s tutelary “shadow side” of Bishamonten, whose iconography overlapped with tengu imagery.

In some folk religion, Sōjōbō’s superior is Gohō Maō-son, who is considered the “god” of tengu society, and Maō-son is said to be the night-form of Bishamonten, the protector deity of Kurama-zan. This is a folk-theological way of resolving the apparent doubling — Bishamonten as the orthodox honzon and Maō-son as the unorthodox tengu-king — into a single deity with diurnal and nocturnal aspects. It doesn’t appear in formal Kurama-kōkyō doctrine but captures the idea that the temple’s daylit, normative face is Bishamonten, and its night, mountain-ascetic, tengu face is Maō-son.

The explicit hierarchy placing Sōjōbō *under* Maō-den is likely a 20th-century sectarian articulation, and not something contemporary to the time in which martial traditions emerged venerating these figures. The orthodox-Buddhist substratum listing Gohō Maō as a converted-demon dharma-protector, structurally similar to Daikokuten or the Twelve Heavenly Generals — was present in pre-modern times, grafted onto what appears to have been an older *iwakura* cult at the Oku-no-in rock formation for which no documentation survives.

### The Tengu of Yagyū Shinkage-ryū

The Tenguishō kata-set of Kamiizumi Ise no Kami’s Shinkage-ryū is a Kage-ryū inheritance going back to Aisu Ikōsai’s late-15th-century founding revelation (see the companion essay on the Okugi); what Sekishūsai contributed in the late 16th century was the cipher labels in his Emokuroku, not the kata themselves. After this time, in Yagyū Shinkage-ryū, the eight Tenguishō (天狗抄) kata have two parallel naming layers:

I. The working names – Kasha, Akemi, Zentai, Tebiki, Ranken, Nitō (or Nigusoku), Nitō-uchimono, Futari-gakari – are the technical names actually used in transmission.

II. The tengu names appear in the picture *emokuroku* (絵目録; illustrated catalog) attached to Sekishūsai Munetoshi’s Shinkage-ryū Heihō Mokuroku no Koto, where the picture-catalog Tengushō kata are individually labeled “Kōrin-bō, Fūgan-bō, Tarō-bō, Ei’i-bō, Chira-ten, Karan-bō, Shutoku-bō, Konpira-bō” totaling eight, while the Yagyū-ryū Shinpishō Tengushō gives the names “Kasha, Akemi, Zentai, Tebiki, Ranken, Nigusoku, Uchimono, Futarigakari”.

None of the names match by pronunciation.

Old Yagyū commentary makes clear this was deliberate concealment — the tengu names served as cipher to hide (秘して; kept secret) the actual technique names. The choice of tengu names specifically — rather than, say, Buddhist deities or animal names — aligns with Aisu Kage-ryū’s own founding-vision iconography of a deity-possessed monkey at Udo Jingū, later read through the Sarutahiko bridge to medieval tengu folk-religion; as described here. Were the cipher labels of Tengu names drawn from the standard Edo-period pantheon of enshrined tengu? Partially yes, in a way that aligns with the Tengu-kyō 48 Tengu (四十八天狗) list.

The Tengu-shō kata and their placement. In Owari Yagyū Shinkage-ryū the honden runs Sangaku-en to Kuka and then Enpi, Tengu-shō, and finally Okugi.

There, Tengu-shō set is the set of eight kata: Kasha (花車), Akemi (明身), Zentai (善待), Tebiki (手引), Nitō (二刀), Nitō-uchimono (二刀打物), Ranken (乱剣), Futari-gake (二人懸). The set is explicitly “of Kage-ryū origin” (陰流由来), the last three are the Tengu-shō Oku, kept in Edo Yagyū as the jo-ha-kyū secret two-sword and multiple-opponent responses, and this is common to the Yamato, Edo and Owari Yagyū houses.

The Nigaigasa-kai line glosses the name well: tengu being “mountain ki that takes form only at times,” heihō is likewise formless yet takes shape in response to the enemy, hence “tengu-shō”; and a second derivation holds that the 勝 of 天狗勝 (“tengu victory”) was swapped for 抄 (“extract”) because only the superior techniques were culled out.

That this set sits in Yagyū but is absent from surviving relatives such as Jikishinkage-ryū – that art had those matters at the time of Ogasawara but likely to distinguish its line from other sibling rivals (e.g., Edo Yagyū) the practices faded from the art by the mid-eighteenth century stewardship of Yamada Ippūsai.

### Tengu in Other Traditions

While Tengu-shō (天狗抄; except from the Tengu) is a foundational kata set of Aisu Kage-ryū, the Tengu-gaki (天狗書) is a Kashima-area budō densho that is important in Kashima Shinryū. Tengu also figure in one early faction of jūjutsu called Kurama Yōshin-ryū.

Pairing the eight Tengushō tengu against the Edo Tengu-kyō and surviving shrines:

**Tarō-bō: Mt. Atago**

Tarō-bō (太郎坊) is Atago-yama Tarōbō, head of the Hachi Daitengu and the senior tengu of Japan in the eight tengu — Atago-yama Tarōbō of Kyoto, Hira-san Jirō-bō of Shiga, Kurama-yama Sōjōbō of Kyoto, Iizuna-san Saburō-bō of Nagano, Ōyama Hōki-bō of Kanagawa, Hikosan Buzen-bō of Fukuoka, Ōmine-san Zenki-bō of Nara and Shiramine Sagami-bō of Kagawa, with Atago-yama Tarōbō as the foremost. He is enshrined at Atago Jinja on Mt. Atago, and separately at Tarōbō-gū (Aga Jinja) on Akagami-yama in Higashi-Ōmi.



FIGURE 9. Atago Dai Gongen (attributed to Hasegawa Tohaku)

Atago Dai Gongen (the Great Avatar of Mount Atago) is the local Japanese avatar (gongen) of the Buddhist Bodhisattva Jizō (Kṣitigarbha).<sup>2</sup>

**Konpira-bō: Mt. Konpira**

Konpira-bō (金毘羅房) is the Kuro-kenzoku Konpira-bō of Konpira-san in Kagawa Prefecture — i.e., Kotohira-gū.

Konpira-bō is associated with Konpira Daigongen (金毘羅大権現), the tutelary deity of Mt. Zōzu-san (象頭山) in Sanuki Province (modern Kagawa Prefecture,

<sup>2</sup>See also Yoshitoshi's *Shinkei Sanjūrokkaisen* (新形三十六怪撰, 36 Ghosts) for a depiction of Tarōbō.

Shikoku). In the pre-Meiji honji-suijaku framework, the cultic center was Matsuo-ji Kongōin (松尾寺金光院), a Shingon temple-shrine complex; after the 1868 shinbutsu-bunri it was reorganized as Kotohira-gū (金刀比羅宮), the major shrine still standing on the mountain today. The Konpira deity was enshrined as the protective god of Kongōin Matsuo-ji on Zōzu-san; in the medieval period the name was changed to Konpira Daigongen under the influence of honji-suijaku doctrine, with Kongōin acting as bettō. In the Meiji period, when shinbutsu-konkō was prohibited, Kongōin was abolished and in the sixth month of Meiji 1 became Kotohira Jinja, then renamed Kotohira-gū in the seventh month. Post-Meiji, the formal kami is Ōmononushi-no-mikoto (大物主神), treated in State Shintō doctrine as the sui-jaku of the older Konpira deity.

The honji-suijaku genealogy goes deeper than that. “Konpira” is a transliteration of the Sanskrit Kumbhīra (कुम्भीर), originally a crocodile/makara water-deity in Indian mythology, absorbed into Buddhism as one of the Twelve Heavenly Generals (十二神將) attending Bhaiṣajyaguru (Yakushi Nyorai). Konpira Daigongen is essentially Kumbhīra grafted onto a jinushi-gami (local landowner kami) of Mt. Zōzu through the standard medieval gongen-formation pattern — a Buddhist deity localized through a shugen mountain cult.

In the Edo period, white-robed Konpira pilgrims (gyōnin) carrying tengu masks on their backs travelled the country spreading Konpira belief, and a custom emerged in which pilgrims going to Sanuki Zōzu-san Konpira Daigongen for the Konpira-mairi pilgrimage would carry a tengu mask on their back. The deity was iconographically depicted as a winged, feather-fan-bearing tengu, particularly in rain-making contexts (the Konpira cult also absorbed strong water/sea-protection and amagoi functions, partly via the Shiwaku-island sea-merchants who propagated the cult along their shipping routes).

The Konpira tengu is today counted as one of the three Sanuki tengu and called Kongō-bō; the other two are Chūjō-bō of Yakuri-ji and Sagami-bō of Shiramine-ji. So if you want the local tengu identity, it is Zōzu-san Kongō-bō (象頭山金剛坊), while in the Tengu-kyō 48-list the same figure appears under the more cosmic title Kuro-kenzoku Konpira-bō (黒眷属金比羅坊, “Black Retinue Konpira-bō”).

The Edo-period *Nihon Daitengu Banzuke* (Japan Great Tengu Ranking) places Atago-san and Kurama-san at yokozuna/ōzeki level and Shiramine Sagami-bō at komusubi, with Zōzu-san Kongō-bō, Goken-zan Chūjō-bō and Zōzu-san Shukai-bō appearing only at maegashira rank from Sanuki. That is to say, Konpira-bō in the Tengu-kyō is a real cult identity but a junior one in the Edo pantheon.

This is consistent with the Yagyū Tengushō naming pool: Sekishūsai drew from across the entire 48-list, not just the elite eight, when assigning cipher labels to the individual kata.

**Kōrin-bō: Mt. Kōya**

Kōrin-bō (高林坊) corresponds to Kōyasan Kōrin-bō of Mt. Kōya in Wakayama Prefecture, a major mountain-cult center with its own chinju-sha system (Niut-suhime Jinja, Kōya Myōjin).

Kōrin-bō differs sharply from Konpira-bō. Konpira-bō is unusual in having an actual gongen attached to him; Kōrin-bō does not. He is best read as a place-tengu label for Mt. Kōya in the Tengu-kyō 48 list rather than as a discrete cultic figure with his own honji. There is no “Kōrin Daigongen” to which he is the tengu-attendant.

There are two Buddhist axes to Kōyasan.

First, the doctrinal honzon axis: Dainichi Nyorai (大日如来), the dharmakāya buddha central to Shingon mikkyō, enshrined in the Konpon Daitō (根本大塔) and Kondō (金堂) of the Danjō Garan. Second, the founder cult — Kōbō Daishi Kūkai (弘法大師空海), believed to be in continuous nyūjō (永遠の瞑想; eternal samādhi) at Oku-no-in. Oku-no-in is the site of Kōbō Daishi’s mausoleum; Daishi entered nyūjō at the age of 62 in 835, and for 1,200 years has been believed to continue his eternal meditation in this place. Around these, the Mikkyō pantheon of Fudō Myō-ō, Aizen Myō-ō, the Eight Patriarchs, the Twelve Heavenly Generals, and so on populate the temple halls. For an esoteric mountain like Kōya, where you would normally expect a head-tengu of some substantive standing, the cult focus is so heavily on Daishi-shinkō and the dharmakāya Buddha that a tengu cult never crystallized — Kōrin-bō may have remained a more generic figure, although there are several Shintō kami associated to the area.

Second, The gongen / kami axis: the Kōya Shisho Myōjin (高野四所明神). Kōrin-bō, qua mountain-spirit, sits within the tutelary kami system of Kōya rather than the Buddhist hall system. The shrine is also called the Niu Shisho Myōjin or Amano Taisha, and is known from antiquity as the tutelary deity (chinju) of Kōyasan. From the first to the fourth hall it enshrines four pillars: Niu Myōjin, who had long been worshipped there, Kariba (Kōya) Myōjin, who was connected to the opening of Kōyasan and Kehi Myōjin and Itsukushima Myōjin, both added by 1208 (Jōgen 2):

1. Niu Myōjin / Niut-suhime Ōkami (丹生明神 / 丹生都比売大神) — first hall. The mother kami, jinushi-gami of the mountain. Cinnabar/mining associations through the historic Niu clan (丹生氏; Niū clan) before Kūkai.
2. Kariba Myōjin / Kōya Myōjin / Kōya Mikogami (狩場明神 / 高野明神 / 高野御子大神) — second hall. The son-kami of Niut-suhime; according to the tradition, when Kūkai opened Kōyasan in 816 (Kōnin 7), Kōya Mikogami manifested as a hunter accompanied by two dogs, one black and one white, who guided Kūkai to the site. The Konjaku Monogatari preserves this story. He is also known as Kōya Myōjin or Inukai Myōjin.
3. Kehi Myōjin (氣比明神) — third hall. Agricultural / grain deity, summoned from Kehi Jingū in Echizen in the Kamakura period via takusen.
4. Itsukushima Myōjin (厳島明神) — fourth hall. Sea / commerce / arts deity, summoned from Itsukushima in Aki, identified post-medieval with Benzaiten.

These four kami are the gongen-level layer of Kōyasan that a *tengu* of the mountain — Kōrin-bō, if you will — would conceptually attend on. In the medieval temple iconography they are typically rendered together as the Kōya Shisho Myōjin-zu (高野四所明神図).

Gongen and Myōjin (明神) are not synonymous — the latter is a designation from Shintō that does not have a Buddhist association. Gongen (権現, “provisional manifestation”) imply a Buddhist deity’s dharmakāya being associated with the entity as an intermediary.

Tendai-Sannō Shintō at Hiei produced Sannō Gongen and the Twenty-One Sannō; Kumano produced Kumano Sansho Gongen and Twelve Gongen; Hakusan, Hakone, Atago at certain layers and Konpira (Kotohira) all promoted their tutelary kami to gongen status. Kōyasan did not, despite operating a fully developed honji-suijaku system internally. The Shingon orthodoxy on Kōya kept the Shisho Myōjin functionally subordinate to the Buddhist hall-pantheon — Dainichi at the Daitō, Daishi at Oku-no-in — rather than promoting the kami themselves into gongen co-equality. The Shisho Myōjin’s role at the Garan is chinju (鎮守, tutelary-protector) — protecting the temple — rather than being doctrinally identified as manifestations of Buddhist deities in their own right. So a honji-butsum was assigned (varying attributions across sub-temple tradition; Jūichimen Kannon and Fudō are the commonest for Kariba, though this varies), but the kami stayed kami.

The most commonly cited pairings within Kōyasan jōō-ji (高野山定置; Kōyasan fixed placement) practice are: Niu Myōjin ↔ Dainichi Nyorai (or in some accounts Aizen Myō-ō); Kariba Myōjin ↔ Fudō Myō-ō (or Jūichimen Kannon in some kakejiku); Kehi Myōjin ↔ Yakushi Nyorai; Itsukushima Myōjin ↔ Jūichimen Kannon (and later, popularly, Benzaiten as Shintō-side counterpart).

Kariba Myōjin is the Shintō-side designation of Kōya’s tutelary hunter-kami, son of Niutsuhime, with a Buddhist honji assigned (most often Jūichimen Kannon) but never formally promoted to gongen status — unlike Konpira-bō’s associated Konpira Daigongen, which represents the maximal honji-suijaku synthesis of an imported Buddhist deity with a local mountain cult.

Konpira-san was a shugen (mountain-religion) site whose deity was iconographically a *tengu* and whose pilgrims literally wore *tengu* masks, so the *Tengu-kyō* name Konpira-bō (or Kongō-bō, the local form) maps onto a real cultic identity. Kōyasan was a Shingon orthodoxy site that, from Kūkai onward, deliberately subordinated mountain-ascetic and *tengu* lore to the formal honji-suijaku of the Shisho Myōjin and to Daishi-shinkō. The mountain did host shugen activity at the periphery (the Kōya Hijiri 高野聖, the linked Katsuragi shugen circuit), and the Konjaku Monogatari contains *tengu*-incident stories around Kōyasan; but no Kōya *tengu* got the cult-elevation Konpira did. Kōrin-bō is therefore in the catalog because every famous mountain needs an entry, not because there was a specific *tengu* shrine there for Sekishūsai to point to.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Functionally for the Yagyū cipher this didn’t matter: the label needed only to sound like a *tengu* name pulled from the pantheon.

### Chira-ten: A Visitor to Mt. Hiei

Chira-ten (智羅天) is the Hieizan-associated *tengu* of literature: in *Konjaku Monogatari*, vol. 20, story 2 — *Shintan Tengu Chira-Eiju Kono Chō ni Watarukoto* — a powerful *tengu* from China named Chira-Eiju is described as having crossed to Japan and met with the *tengu* of this country. He gets badly mauled in a power-contest with the Hiei monks; the figure is more a cautionary literary trope than an object of cult, so there is no shrine, but the Hieizan/Yokawa landscape is the implicit setting for this figure.

The *Yagyū Tengushō* is thus drawing not only on *tengu* catalogues from the early Edo period, but general literature of the time. The 智羅天 of Sekishūsai’s catalog and the 智羅永寿 (Chira-Eiju) of *Konjaku Monogatari* vol. 20, tale 2, are also the same figure as Zegai-bō (是界坊 / 是害房) and, in some manuscripts, Zenkai-bō (善界坊). In *Konjaku-shū* vol. 20, tale 2 the figure appears as “*Shintan Tengu Chira-Eiju watarukoto*,” and the same story is the source of the *Noh* play “Zegai” composed by Takeda Hōin Munemori, based on this story and on the Zegai-bō Emaki. The earliest extant complete copy of the Zegai-bō Emaki is the *Manshu-in* (Kyoto) two-scroll set, dated 1354 (Bunna 3). The reading 智羅天 in the *Yagyū* document is most plausibly a contraction or scribal shorthand for Chira[-eiju] *tengu*, with 天 doing the work of 天狗.

In the *Noh* drama Zegai cycle, Zegai-bō, a *tengu* proud of having lured all the self-conceited people of China into the *tengu*-realm, comes to Japan to expand his domain; he visits Tarō-bō, the *tengu* of Mount Atago, and tells him about his plan to obstruct the Buddha-Dharma in Japan; Tarō-bō agrees and recommends Mt. Hiei; Zegai-bō is hesitant because he fears Fudō Myō-ō, the immovable defender who fiercely guards the temple; but Tarō-bō pushes him and offers to be his guide, and the two depart together on a cloud for Mt. Hiei.

Tarō-bō (#3) and Chira-ten (#5) in the *Yagyū Tengushō* are not unrelated *tengu* names selected from the 48-list — they are paired protagonists in a single famous story — their *kata* are physically also quite similar.

The *Konjaku* version of the tale specifies the high priests of Yokawa who repulse Zegai-bō. The named figures across the textual layers include Yokei Risshi (余慶律師) of Iimuro, Jie Daishi Ryōgen (慈惠大師良源) — better known as Ganzan Daishi (元三大師) — and Jinin Wajō (慈忍和尚) of Iimuro. The defeat scenes vary by version: in some Zegai-bō is humiliated by adult priests, in others by young temple-boys (童部, *dōbu*) — which is the more comic register favored in the emaki and *Noh*.



FIGURE 10. Zegai-bō recovering at Kamogawa

In the emaki tradition, Zegai-bō is beaten very strongly by young novices and even has his wings burned; he is badly hurt, and the Japanese tengu eventually tend to him in a hot bath at Kamogawa to heal him, and after his recovery hold a large farewell party for him before he returns to China.

### Other Tengu

Fūgan-bō (風眼坊), Ei'i-bō (栄意坊), Karan-bō (火乱房) and Shutoku-bō (修徳房) do not appear in the Tengu-kyō 48 list under those exact characters, and it is not clear if there is a documented shrine for any of them.

Several look like they may be either local lesser-tengu names, deliberate fabrications for the cipher or variants whose readings have drifted — 修徳房 could conceivably be a graphic variant of Shūtoku, faintly evoking Sutoku-in, but the canonical Sutoku tengu in the Hachi Daitengu is Shiramine Sagami-bō, not 修徳. Given the picture catalog's stated purpose of concealment, it would not be surprising if Sekishūsai or his scribes invented or mangled some of the names precisely to prevent outsiders from decoding the contents.

### Order of Precedence

Of the eight Tengushō cipher-names, three (Tarō-bō, Konpira-bō, Kōrin-bō) map cleanly onto major enshrined mountain tengu, one (Chira-ten) is a literary Hieizan-area tengu without a shrine, and four appear to be obscure or possibly artificial — consistent with the catalog's explicit role as a secret-keeping device rather than a devotional pantheon. No attribute of a given tengu encodes anything about the kata it labels. The function of the substitution, per the Yagyū lineage's own commentary in *Yagyū Genshū-den no Kenkyū* (柳生巖周伝の研究) is concealment of names from outsiders reading the den sho, nothing more.

The mapping, as preserved in Sekishūsai's *Shinkage-ryū Heihō Mokuroku no Koto* picture catalog, is discussed in Akabane Tatsuo's research (*Yagyū Genshū-den no Kenkyū*). Akabane cites Kanbe Kinshichi's view that the Hōzan-ji-held catalog ascribed to Sekishūsai is itself a *e-soragoto* (絵空ごと; fictional/fantastical picture), a stylized representation rather than a literal record. So the catalog's job is to circulate the sequence and the images under names that mean nothing to an outsider; the den sho holder reads it knowing which list maps to which.

The order is not perfectly invariant across Yagyū lines. From Sekishūsai’s documents downward, the Edo Yagyū transmission via the *Yagyū-ke Komokuroku Kudensho* gives the sequence as Kasha, Akemi, Zentai, Tebiki, Ranken, Nigusoku-uchimono and Futari-kakari. In contrast, Renya’s revised *Uchitachi Mokuroku Kudensho* and Joryūsai’s *Uchitachi Mokuroku* both give Kasha, Akemi, Zentai, Tebiki, Nitō, Nitō-uchimono, Futari-kakari, Ranken as the list, placing Ranken last and Futari-kakari second-to-last.

The *Yagyū-ryū Shinpishō* gloss on the eighth Tengushō kata, titled “Tengushō #8 Konpira-bō,” is in fact a commentary on Futari-gakari — referring to 細道の二人相とて、跡先より挟まれたる時 or “being flanked front-and-rear in a narrow path”, which is a two-opponent situation — in contemporary Yagyū practice considered to be the *oku* (奥; inner, deep) kata of the set.

Sekishūsai’s original Emokuroku order (which is the only one with the tengu names attached) defines the cipher; later technical re-orderings reshuffled the kata sequence without reshuffling the cipher labels, which is partly why the correspondence looks inconsistent if you cross-reference Edo-line modern publications with Owari-line modern publications.

People occasionally try to read semantic content into pairings — e.g., Kōrin (高林, “tall grove”) as a hint at the lateral footwork of Kasha, or Karan (火乱, “fire-chaos”) as a gloss on the two-sword scramble of Nigusoku, but this is not supported by historical densho commentary. Sekishūsai’s catalog uses tengu names because tengu names were the natural pool of plausibly-meaningful-sounding but technically-empty labels for a Sengoku-era warrior with mountain-religion background; the choice of which tengu got slot #3 versus slot #6 carries no doctrinal weight.

### Some Contrasts to Shugendō Figures

We see above the mikkyō gongen associations of various Tengu, and in the case of Kōya-san, different Shintō manifestations being possible associations with Kōrin-bō.

### Zaō-gongen

In the case of Mt. Yoshino Kinpusen-ji Zaō-dō (蔵王堂), Zaō-gongen is associated to the Buddhas of the past, present and future (Shakyamuni, Kannon Bosatsu as a surrogate and the future Miroku/Maitreya). In Zaō-gongen, a single wrathful figure carries three honji simultaneously, mapped to the three times rather than to three Buddhist deities of equal ontological status. This is tied to Shugendō’s soteriological schema: when En no Gyōja prayed during his thousand-day austerity for a Buddha to appear, Shaka Nyorai, Senju Kannon and Miroku Bosatsu manifested in turn; finding their gentle forms unsuitable for a degenerate age, he prayed again, and amidst thunder there appeared the wrathful form of Zaō.

The reason a figure like Dainichi is not the honji of Zaō despite being the universal dharmakāya buddha of mikkyō is that Zaō-gongen sits outside the Shingon orthodox lineage. He is the central deity of Shugendō (修験道) — a syncretic mountain-ascetic tradition whose institutional bases are Kinpusen-ji and

the Yoshino-Ōmine-Kumano shugen network. Shugendō historically drew from both Tendai (the Honzan-ha 本山派) and Shingon (the Tōzan-ha 当山派) lineages but is doctrinally independent of either, and its honji-suijaku scheme is built around the buddhas of the three times rather than the dharmakāya buddha.

Zaō is a Japanese avatar of three buddhas and no single Indian Buddhist ancestor. Kongō-Zaō-bosatsu, “Kongō-Zaō” meaning “the king who embodies indestructible ultimate truth and governs all things,” is of indigenous Japanese origin stemming from En’s vision.

In the honji-suijaku doctrine, Zaō-gongen was identified with Emperor Ankan (Hirokuni-oshitate-kanahi-no-mikoto), so at the time of the Meiji-era shinbutsu-bunri many shrines that had enshrined Zaō-gongen rededicated themselves with Emperor Ankan as enshrined kami; Zaō-gongen was also syncretized with Ōnamuchi, Sukunabikona, Kuninotokotachi, Yamatotakeru and Kanayamabiko in Shintō contexts, so post-Meiji Zaō-gongen shrines typically dedicate to one of these five kami groups. So if you see a shrine today dedicated to Ankan-tennō or to Ōnamuchi-no-mikoto and described as a former Zaō shrine, that is the post-1868 shinbutsu-bunri reassignment of a Shugendō Zaō cult onto an Imperial-era-defensible Shintō kami. The Buddhist three-buddha honji-attribution survives at the temple-side institutions like Kinpusen-ji, while the shrine-side institutions had to find Shintō equivalents.

### Sanbō Kōjin

Yuki Jinja on Mt. Kurama maintains seven sub-shrines (massha 末社), and one of them is the Sanbō Kōjin-sha (三宝荒神社) and historically belonged to the integrated Buddhist-Shintō cult that the 1868 shinbutsu-bunri tried to disentangle. The Yuki Jinja Sanbō Kōjin (三宝荒神), the “Wrathful Deity of the Three Jewels” sub-shrine is precisely the medieval, Shugendō-substrate, Three-Jewels-protector-in-a-single-figure layer that the Sonten triad up at the Hondō is not. The two cult-objects coexist on the same mountain at different elevations and represent different historical strata: Sanbō Kōjin at the Yuki Jinja level (the older shugen / chinju-sha layer), Sonten at the Hondō (the Kurama-kōkyō reformulation) — structurally a much closer parallel to Zaō-gongen than the main Sonten triad of the upper Kuramadera complex is.

Yuki Jinja documentation describes the Sanbō Kōjin-sha as having been enshrined “since ancient times” (古くから). Given that Yuki Jinja itself was relocated to Kurama in 940 (Tenkei 3) by Suzaku Tennō’s edict as the chinju-sha for the city’s northern defense, the Sanbō Kōjin sub-shrine is plausibly part of the Heian-period Kurama cult layer, contemporary with or earlier than the formal Yuki Jinja installation. That’s structurally a thousand years older than the Sonten’s current doctrinal formulation.

Sanbō Kōjin is a converted-demon dharma-protector whose name literally announces his function: Sanbō (三宝, Three Jewels — Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) plus Kōjin (荒神, “wrathful/rough deity,” a class of converted-demon protector typically associated with fire and the hearth). The iconography is canonically three-faced, six-armed (三面六臂; three-faced six-armed), wrathful, often standing on flames

— visually very close to Zaō-gongen’s wrathful three-eyed single-faced form, but with the multiplicity moved from temporal axis to spatial-facial axis. Sanbō Kōjin is described as a three-faced, six-armed wrathful deity who proclaims “I am the kōjin who protects the Three Jewels”; the three faces are understood as Dainichi, Fudō and Monju. So here you do get Dainichi as one of the embedded honji — answering, indirectly, the question as to whether Dainichi figured into any of these triadic mountain-cult constructs: he does.

There is a legend that while En no Ozunu was praying on Mt. Kongō, a red cloud appeared in the kimon (northeast) direction, the kōjin manifested, and he built a hokora there to enshrine him. The Shugendō-setsu version adds the formal declaration: in the Shugendō tradition, while En no Gyōja was practicing on Katsuragi-san, he received audience with Sanbō Kōjin; at that time Sanbō Kōjin spoke to En no Gyōja, saying “I am a kōjin who punishes evildoers, and I take refuge in the Three Jewels,” and from this Sanbō Kōjin came to be venerated as a kōjin who upholds and protects the Three Jewels. So Sanbō Kōjin and Zaō-gongen share the same En no Gyōja → Yoshino/Katsuragi shugen origin pattern. Both are Japanese-original dharmaprotectors with no Indian Buddhist ancestor, generated by Shugendō’s specific theological problem of how to articulate a wrathful, multi-aspected, mountain-resident protector figure that doesn’t fit the imported Buddhist pantheon cleanly.

Unlike Zaō’s relatively stable Shaka-Senju-Miroku attribution, Sanbō Kōjin’s honji attributions proliferate across schools: in Nichiren-shū and Hokke-shū, based on the line in the Onkikuden “Sanbō Kōjin is the Jūrasetsunyo (Ten Rākṣasīs),” Sanbō Kōjin is sometimes identified as the same body as the Jūrasetsunyo; he is also syncretized with Fugen Bosatsu and called “Fugen Sanbō Kōjin.” The Dainichi-Fudō-Monju attribution is associated specifically with the Hikari Sanbō Kōjin lineage near Kōyasan. Other texts give yet more: the Daikōjin-kyō describes the figure as a tennyō (heavenly maiden), or identifies the kōjin as the same body as Monju Bosatsu, Fudō Myō-ō or Kangiten; these various forms came to be enshrined throughout Japan from the Edo period onward. So Sanbō Kōjin functions as a kind of theological wildcard — the figure stays constant but the embedded honji vary sub-temple by sub-temple, often three at a time but not always the same three.

With Sanbō Kōjin on Kurama, we see a cleaner Three-Jewels-in-one-figure deity on the mountain than the Sonten triad provides. The Sonten is a post-1949 cosmological re-synthesis of three heterogeneous deities along a sun-moon-earth axis. A Sanbō Kōjin hokora is an orthodox medieval sanbō-shugo embedded in a single wrathful triple-faced form, with Dainichi (or another Buddhist deity, depending on the sub-tradition) as one of the three honji. So Kurama hosts both a modern, Theosophy-inflected, cosmic-element triad (Bishamonten/Senju Kannon/Maō-son as Sonten — light/love/power, sun/moon/earth) and a medieval, Shugendō, sanbō-shugo single figure (Sanbō Kōjin as three-faced wrathful protector). These coexist on the same mountain because Kurama has been multiple things sequentially: a shugen mountain, a Tendai monastery and now Kurama-kōkyō; each layer left its deities in place, and the small Sanbō Kōjin-sha is presumably a survival of the shugen layer rather than a Kurama-kōkyō addition.



FIGURE 11. Yuki Jinja, 2024

Mt. Kurama in fact hosts an orthodox sanbō-shugo deity directly: the small Sanbō Kōjin-sha is one of the seven sub-shrines of Yuki Jinja, the chinju-sha of Kurama-dera, where Sanbō Kōjin Ōkami is enshrined as a deity of fire and the hearth in continuity with En no Gyōja's Shugendō tradition — a survival of the medieval Three-Jewels-protector cult underneath the Kurama-kōkyō Sonten triad that dominates the modern temple's doctrinal presentation.



FIGURE 12. Yuki Jinja, 2024

Yuki Jinja's main cult is fire-related (it controls the famous Kurama-no-Himatsuri / 鞍馬の火祭 on October 22nd, one of Kyoto's three great festivals). The Sanbō Kōjin-sha as hi-no-kami / kamado-no-kami (deity of fire and hearth) is integrated with that fire-cult identity. So the sub-shrine is not just generic sanbō-shugo — it is

Yuki Jinja’s fire-Sanbō Kōjin, which is a specific local development of the broader Sanbō Kōjin cult.

The Jizō statue inside the structure is consistent with the syncretic register. Jizō Bosatsu and Sanbō Kōjin are both gohō-shin (dharma-protector) figures, and in folk-religion settings the two are not infrequently paired or co-located. The Jizō statue may be a syncretic addition or a separate sub-fixtured sharing the hokora, rather than the primary cult image.

**Further reading.** Ishizuchi-san on Western Mikkyō and karunamitra.org on Shugendō in practice; 鞍馬天狗 (Japanese Wikipedia) on the Sōjōbō / Maō Daisōjō identification and Kurama-kōkyō’s 1949 split from Tendai; the 新陰流兵法 関西転心会 and 修猷館 pages for the eight Emokuroku tengu names and the eight Tengushō technical names; and 鞍馬寺 その8 on Kita Sadakichi’s 1922 article as the earliest print appearance of “Kurama-san Maō Daisōjō.”

## 2.2. Taisha-ryū, Denrinbō Raikai, Hattengu and Hikosan Shugendō

### Denrinbō Raikai

Denrinbō Raikai (伝林坊頼慶), a Ming-born martial artist from China who eventually became a senior Taisha-ryū disciple after first dueling Marume Nagayoshi’s disciple Oda Rokuemon Yūka at Nagasaki and losing, thus becoming Marume’s student. In Kan’ei 12 (1635) Denrinbō granted an inka to Nagata Morimasa, then became a Shugendō ascetic at Mt. Iwaya in Hizen’s Fujitsu district. He is credited as introducing kempo methods into Taisha-ryū.

The Hizen area was associated to Hikosan (英彦山), one of the “three great Shugendō mountains” alongside Haguro and Kumano-Ōmine, the spirit-mountain of the Hikosan Jingū. Hikosan was also a martial center, not merely devotional: as a yamabushi training ground it long emphasized martial cultivation, and at its peak is said to have held a large cadre of warrior-monks.

In the Edo period it was a monastic town until the Meiji shugendō-prohibition edict dispersed the yamabushi. Hikosan is traditionally the abode of a tengu called Hizenbō. That gives a historically plausible, well-grounded mechanism for a sword-and-mountain-religion overlap — the great Kyūshū Shugendō center genuinely trained in arms.

Hizen historians place Denrinbō at Iwaya-san among the Hatengu (八天狗) cult, and tie the Nagata family he reportedly transmitted to as a hattengu-worshipping Ureshino lineage documented through the Ryūzōji house papers, which is a genuine archival footprint rather than school tradition.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of the school itself, Taisha-ryū’s opening form Enbi carries esoteric invocations — Marishiten and the rokkon-shōjō purification formula — and the

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<sup>4</sup>The Denrinbō biography is the weakest-supported part of this article with only source that carries the narrative, itself tracing back to Marume-family documents and Taisha-ryū house tradition, not to any externally corroborated record.

school describes itself as a blend of Shinto, Buddhism, and mountain-worship. That ritual layer is observable in the transmitted kata regardless of any legend.

Nakano Narisaki's Taisha-ryū kaichū (タイ捨流解紐, 1710) is a historical description of the art by a retainer who served as Nabeshima Mitsushige's okuzukai and was a grand-pupil of Kijima Keiemon in the Hizen Taisha-ryū line, wrote the Taisha-ryū kaichū in Hōei 7 (1710), lamenting that “the source of the transmission was being lost” and setting down even the oral secrets as a plain, accessible exposition.

Contemporary Taisha-ryū is well attested online.

### Hattengu

The hattengu (八天狗) cult. “Eight tengu” is a Shugendō-rooted classification of the eight greatest tengu of Japan, each the presiding tengu of a major sacred mountain. The standard set is the tengu of Atago, Hira, Daisen, Ōmine, Kurama, Iizuna, Hikosan, and Shiramine, and the cult is closely bound up with Shugendō; the tengu function as fire- and disaster-warding guardians, immensely powerful and capable of calamity when angered. By name they are Atago Tarōbō, Hira Jirōbō, Kurama Sōjōbō, Iizuna Saburō, Ōmine Zenki-bō, Daisen Hōki-bō, Shiramine Sagami-bō, and Hikosan Buzenbō. There's an esoteric-Buddhist substrate underneath the folklore: the “eight” is thought to derive from the eight great Kongō-dōji of Ōmine, the dōji having been assimilated to tengu. Tengu in this register are essentially the apotheosized genius loci of the ascetic mountains, routinely depicted as yamabushi — which is why the cult and Shugendō are inseparable, and why a martial connection is natural: in the Noh Kurama Tengu, Hikosan's Buzenbō appears among the tengu attending Sōjōbō as they teach swordsmanship to the young Yoshitsune.

The form relevant to Denrinbō is the localized Hizen version. The Hatten Shrine on Mt. Tōsen in Shiota was revered across Hizen in the Edo period as a fire-prevention deity, with its hattengu image kept in the worship hall. Its lower shrine sits at Ureshino, and its enshrined fire-deity Hi-no-Kagutsuchi is identified with Atago's Tarōbō, the fire-tengu. So the cult Denrinbō's alias invokes — “Hikosan Hattengu Benkei Musō” — is this fire-warding eight-tengu devotion, and the Nagata family he reportedly transmitted to were among its Hizen adherents.

Buzenbō itself is the Kyūshū anchor: regarded as the head of Kyūshū's tengu and enshrined at Takasumi Shrine, where it punishes the greedy by sending sub-tengu to abduct children or set fires, while guarding the devout. Its cave-shrine is the Buzen-kutsu, the eighteenth of Hikosan's forty-nine ascetic caves, and the temple origin-record gives its honji as Dainichi Nyorai manifesting through Fudō.

### Hikosan Shugendō

Hikosan Shugendō is well documented. Beyond being one of the three great Shugendō mountains, it was opened by tradition in the early sixth century by the Northern Wei monk Zenshō and was a practice ground from En no Gyōja onward, organized around the Hikosan Sansho Gongen and the central temple Ryōzen-ji, with the surviving Hōheiden (its great lecture hall, rebuilt 1616) at its core.

Its martial dimension was explicit — as a yamabushi training ground it long stressed martial cultivation, and there is even a theory that Sasaki Kojirō of Ganryū came from the Buzen Sasaki and that Ganryū derived from Hikosan yamabushi martial art. That same militarization made it a Sengoku casualty: its lords were the Buzen Sasaki, it allied with Akizuki Tanezane, and in the tenth month of 1581 it was burned by Ōtomo Yoshimune's forces over a month of fighting, losing many cloisters and much of its strength, then declined further under Hosokawa Tadaoki's rule.

### Contrasts to Dewa Sanzan

Dewa Sanzan most certainly did field a standing warrior-monk force; if anything it was larger than Hikosan's. As a flourishing Shugendō center, Dewa Sanzan held a large cadre of warrior-monks at its peak and gave up its arms in response to Hideyoshi's sword hunt. Haguro had warrior-monks from the Kamakura period onward.

Armed clergy were the rule, not the exception, for any large medieval mountain-temple complex: Enryaku-ji's "mountain monks," Kōyasan's Kōya-shū, Kinpusen's Yoshino daishu, Negoro, the Ikkō strongholds, and others all maintained sizable forces for the same structural reasons: extensive tax-privileged estates to defend, policing rights over their domains, chronic sectarian disputes, and the absorption of local warrior-class men into the clergy. The shuto rank that formed the core of these forces was drawn largely from lesser nobility, warrior, and estate-official families, men who already had martial training.

Hikosan fits that general pattern and was not peculiar in having a militia.

At Dewa, Mogami Yoshiaki prayed at Yudono for recovery from illness, and his sister Yoshihime — wife of Date Terumune and mother of Date Masamune — prayed to Yudonosan to be granted children. So the thread to the most famous Tōhoku warrior, Masamune, runs through his mother's Yudono pilgrimage rather than through Masamune himself. Yoshiaki was the head of the Yamagata Mogami, the Ushū-tandai house that became a roughly 570,000-koku great daimyō after Sekigahara — i.e., the mountains' chief regional patron — and the patronage continued institutionally, with Mogami Yoshitoshi building a hall in 1618. Going back further, the connection to the warrior order is medieval: in the Kamakura period the complex's warrior-monks are attested petitioning the bakufu over jitō interference, recorded in the Azuma Kagami. In the Edo period the fame became less about any one warrior and more about scale — under Shōnai-han administration and bakufu prestige the pilgrimage boomed into "Ise in the west, the Oku pilgrimage in the east."

The Dewa retreat circuit is itself a death-and-rebirth structure — Haguro for the present world, Gassan for the dead and the afterlife, Yudono for rebirth, so that to complete the pilgrimage was to be "reborn." That ritual rebirth is the realization the mountains offered any pilgrim, warrior included; there isn't a recorded individual

warrior-enlightenment story similar to that of Aisu Iko at Udo.<sup>56</sup>

### **Destruction of Hikosan**

Hikosan was a combatant in the multi-power Sengoku Kyūshū wars and was destroyed in battle for it (the 1581 Ōtomo burning). In contrast Dewa's force was dissolved administratively — disarmed through Hideyoshi's sword hunt rather than annihilated — and the complex survived to be reorganized under Tendai control in the Edo period.

Hikosan's militarism got it burned while Dewa's was absorbed peacefully into the Toyotomi-Tokugawa settlement. Why this happened lies in Kyūshū's frontier politics, not in one mountain being armed and the other not. Warrior-monks were standard equipment for these complexes, and Hikosan's distinction is in the violent end its frontier alliances brought, not the presence of a militia itself.

The warrior-monk forces of both complexes were armed clergy organized as mass levies: naginata, bows, infantry numbers, fielded as a body. That is a different institution from a ryūha, which is a named lineage with a founder, a fixed curriculum of kata, transmission documents, and licensing. The ryūha system in that sense is largely a bushi-class development of the late Sengoku and Edo periods; the sōhei phenomenon predates it and runs on a different logic.

### **Shugendō-influenced Ryūha**

Neither Hikosan nor Dewa had a specific 'school' in the koryū sense — they had standing militia.

Shugendō sources bear this out by describing yamabushi practice purely as ascetic discipline — the four-seasons peak-entering, the death-and-rebirth austerities, the ten-realms training — never as a martial transmission. Where martial technique does sit in that milieu, it sits as something other than codified ryūha: bōjutsu, for instance, survived among clergy as self-defense and among tengu-and-Shugendō folk performance like lion-dances and planting rites, not as a named, licensed lineage.

The two worlds do meet — just at the level of legend and of individuals rather than institution. First, named ryūha sometimes claim the yamabushi-and-tengu milieu as an origin charter. The tengu-as-sword-teacher motif is the obvious vehicle — the Kurama Sōjōbō teaching the young Yoshitsune, with Hikosan's Buzenbō among the attending tengu — and in Hikosan's own case there is a theory that Sasaki Kojirō's Ganryū continued the martial art of the Hikosan yamabushi. But that is a ryūha said to have emerged from the milieu and been carried off by a swordsman, explicitly flagged as a theory, not the complex operating a school.

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<sup>56</sup>Bashō is the most famous individual "visit" to Dewa in the period — the 1689 Haguro-Gassan-Yudono circuit — and he was of low-ranking samurai origin, having served the Tōdō house in his youth, though he made the journey as a poet rather than a warrior.

<sup>6</sup>Dewa is primarily remembered, in addition to its mountain complex, a famous Gassan school of sword smiths. Details are easily found online, a short description can be found at the end of Haguro Shugendō article.

As a Nara example, Hōzōin-ryū sōjutsu, created by In’ei, abbot of the Hōzōin sub-temple of Kōfuku-ji. But that is the personal invention of one cleric that then spread as a bushi art, not the institutional curriculum of Kōfuku-ji’s warrior-monks, and nothing comparable is attributed to either Hikosan or Dewa.

Taisha-ryū is a bushi ryūha that acquired Shugendō coloring through individuals — a swordsman taking on a yamabushi identity and a hattengu devotion — rather than a school belonging to Hikosan. The intersection of ryūha and Shugendō martial culture is biographical or legendary, never institutional. Similarly with Aisu Iko visiting Udo shrine previously, shugendō cosmology may have played an important part in the dreams, visualisations, or visitations experienced by kenshi in their founding moments, but those retreats were not part of the formal Shugendō institutional strata.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.3. Udo Shugendō and Aisu Kage-ryū

Aisu Ikōsai Hisatada (愛洲移香齋久忠) founded Kage-ryū (陰流) after receiving a secret transmission from a deity that took the form of a spider (蜘蛛; kumo) — in some lines a monkey (猿; saru), hence Saru-tobi (猿飛) → Enpi (燕飛) — in Hyūga (日向). The earliest records frame the event as a numinous dream rather than a specific animal: the *Honchō Bugei Shōden* (本朝武芸小伝) gives only *reimu* (靈夢; numinous dream), and the animal-form tellings are later elaborations. The serious scholarship on him (Nakaseko Yoshimichi 中世古祥道) argues that Ikōsai was likely a shugenja (修験者) from the Gokasho (五ヶ所) Aisu family, and that the site of the revelation, Udo, was a yamabushi (山伏) holy ground called “the Kōya of the West” (西の高野; Nishi no Kōya), ranked beside Kumano (熊野).

The tengu/animal-spirit naming in the entire Shinkage stream — Enpi, Tengu-shō (天狗抄) — descends from a Kage-ryū origin that is itself plausibly descended from medieval Shugendō. The Hikita (疋田; Higo) branch preserves the document form: its chū-gokui (中極意; intermediate secret transmission) level is called Tengu-gaki (天狗書), comprising the kata Ranshō, Chōkyoku and Unsai teachings.

The Kage-ryū revelation site is Udo (鵜戸) in Hyūga — present-day Udo Jingū (鵜戸神宮) in Nichinan, Miyazaki. The *Gekiken Sōdan* (擊劍叢談) lineage opens “from Udo Daigongen” (鵜戸大権現). Udo’s pre-Edo Shugendō affiliation is well-attested. By tradition it was founded in 782 (延暦元年) under a monk identified as the Tendai cleric Kōkibō Kaikyū (光喜坊快久), who became the first bettō (別当; superintendent-priest) and received the imperial temple-title Udosan Daigongen Abirasan Niō Gokoku-ji (鵜戸山大権現吾平山仁王護国寺).<sup>8</sup> The shrine’s own

<sup>7</sup>In contrast, in Kumano-Ōmine there is Kukishin-ryū, an early Edo period bōjutsu tradition, which adopts an increasingly bold shugendō connection based on family history and identity. Its practice is most likely bōjutsu or *bō no te* that derived from Shintō-ryū and Araki-ryū and whose origins were embellished as part of Taishō era nationalism in the twentieth century.

<sup>8</sup>The “Tendai monk in 782” detail is internally anachronistic — the Japanese Tendai school postdates Saichō’s return from Tang China (c. 805) — so Kōkibō Kaikyū and the 782 date belong to the shrine’s own *engi* (縁起; foundation legend) rather than to independently datable record. The bettō line later ran through Ninna-ji (仁和寺) administration as a Shingi Shingon (新義真言宗) house, which is consistent with the Shingon / Ryōbu-Shintō identity described here.

history records that the sect later shifted to Shingon (真言宗). Its mountain was at one point celebrated as “the Kōya of the West” and flourished as a great center of Ryōbu Shintō (両部神道). During Aisu Ikōsai’s traditional era (c. 1452–1538), the site was a Shingon-flavored, Ryōbu-Shintō Shugendō complex. This influenced the formation of Aisu Kage-ryū symbolism.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of the Kinki binary, Tōzan-ha (当山派) was the Shingon-system line, based on Kinpusen (金峰山) with Daigo-ji Sanbō-in (醍醐寺三宝院) as its head temple, whereas the Honzan-ha (本山派) was the Tendai-system line, rooted in the Kumano Sanzan (熊野三山) with Shōgo-in (聖護院) as head temple. This is the standard Tendai-esoteric Honzan-ha versus Shingon-esoteric Tōzan-ha split. But Udo was not a direct Tōzan-ha subsidiary, as Kyushu itself was not Shōgo-in or Daigo-ji territory.<sup>10</sup>

Miyamoto Kesao’s standard typology divides Shugendō into three, not two — Tendai Honzan-ha, Shingon Tōzan-ha and the “various mountains” (諸山; shozan) regional organizations. The regional centers — Dewa Sanzan (出羽三山), Kyushu’s Hikosan (英彦山) and the Chūgoku Goryū (五流; the Kojima Goryū of the Chūgoku region) — were powerful and strongly independent.

Hikosan in particular was a Tendai-system Shugendō organization that held subordinate temples across Kyushu, resisted Honzan-ha’s attempt to absorb its branches, won in court and ultimately came under the Tendai authority of Kan’ei-ji (寛永寺), hence “the Hikosan school” of Shugendō.

In the Muromachi period Hikosan’s records claim a faith-sphere covering the whole of Kyushu. Udo sat inside that southern-Kyushu world — alongside the Kirishima (霧島) complex — not under the Kinki head temples; tellingly, the shrine’s own present-day reciprocal-festival network still pairs it with Kirishima, Kagoshima and Hikosan.

So the precise statement is: the site itself was Shingon / Ryōbu-Shintō in its temple identity, which corresponds to the Tōzan stream in the later binary, but the Shugendō actually operating there in Ikōsai’s time belonged to the independent regional category (the Hikosan-and-Kirishima Kyushu sphere), before the Honzan/Tōzan labels meant anything locally.

We do not find documentation of any formal Honzan or Tōzan affiliation for Udo, and Nakaseko’s argument is only that Ikōsai was *a* shugenja — it does not assign him a specific line. He could have visited Udo, rather than being ensconced in it.

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<sup>9</sup>Ryōbu Shintō is the Shingon-associated form of kami-Buddha syncretism (as against the Tendai Sannō 山王 form). Under Niō Gokoku-ji, Shugendō-style rites were performed through the Edo period, converting to Shintō form only after the Meiji separation.

<sup>10</sup>The Honzan/Tōzan dichotomy is a Kinki-centric organizational structure that hardened late: it was at the start of the early modern period that itinerant shugenja settled into village life and were largely organized into Honzan-ha and Tōzan-ha, a process the Tokugawa then enforced through the early-seventeenth-century Shugendō ordinance (修験道法度, 1613) compelling each practitioner to affiliate with one or the other. Ikōsai’s dates predate all of that.

Pinning him personally to Tōzan-ha would therefore be unsupported on all three grounds (anachronism, region and silence). What the evidence does support is the softer and more useful claim for the Kage-ryū origin: a Shingon-esoteric, Ryōbu-Shintō, revelation-oriented mountain milieu of exactly the register the founding legend assumes.

Two threads in Ikōsai's wider biography frame the shugenja reading. The first is a competing account of the same mobility: where Nakaseko reads him as a travelling shugenja, an older and more popular tradition — traced by Nakaseko to Yagyū Toshinaga's *Seiden Shinkage-ryū* (正伝新陰流) and broadcast by the budō historian Wataya Kiyoshi (綿谷雪) — makes him a man of the Kumano/Ise *suigun* (水軍; naval levies) and, by extension, a *wakō* (倭寇; coastal raider). That reach is what is usually invoked to explain how a Kage-ryū catalogue reached Ming hands: Qī Jìguāng (戚繼光) reproduced a fragment of the *Kage-ryū no mokuroku* (影流之目錄) in his *Jìxiào Xīnshū* (紀效新書), later carried into the *Wúbèizhì* (武備志).

The two readings are not exclusive — a younger son could be both a yamabushi and a man of the sea — but they pull the biography in different directions, and the *wakō* version is the one that travelled furthest in the popular literature.

The maritime record also gives Ikōsai concrete occasion to have been in Hyūga, independent of any revelation: the Aisu ships joined the Bunmei-era *kenminsen* (遣明船; Ming-tribute trade ships), and the 1483 voyage that carried Hisatada toward Beijing put in at Hyūga before crossing via Níngbō (寧波). Whatever drew him to the Udo cave, he had reason to pass that coast.<sup>11</sup>

Marishiten (摩利支天; Skt. Marīcī) figures in Shinkage-ryū iconography, usually depicted in the preamble to the Yagyū Tengu-shō emokuroku (絵目錄; illustrated transmission scroll). It belongs to the warrior-Mikkyō (密教; esoteric Buddhism) register: a personification of mirage and light who, being unseeable and unharmable, became the deity of invisibility (隱形; ongyō) and victory, carried as a helmet amulet by warriors. The tengu in this case are intermediaries for the deva — or, in the specific case of Aisu Ikōsai, a spider or monkey and its shadow.

The Marishiten link to Ikōsai is concrete: the Hirasawa family preserved a *Marishiten shisha-sho* (摩利支天使者書; “writ of the messenger of Marishiten”) attributed to his own hand, an esoteric text of travel-protection and divination of exactly the Mikkyō register the Shugendō reading predicts.

#### 2.4. Okugi no Tachi

Examining some evidence for the genesis of upper-level Shinkage-ryū teachings based on information available about Aisu Ikōsai's founding vision of Sarutahiko, Kamiizumi's early training in Kashima and the arrangement of Shinkage-ryū kata over time.

<sup>11</sup>The China-travel motif then recurs downstream in the same Shinkage descent: several generations later Ogasawara Genshinsai (小笠原源信齋) is said to have made his own *nittō* (入唐; journey to Ming China), reprising the pattern.

### The Six Ōgi no Tachi

The Shinkage-ryū tengu-name cipher is specific to the eight Tengushō (天狗抄), and stops there. The six Ōgi no Tachi / Okugi no Tachi (奥義之太刀) that follow, which are kata said to have been developed by Yagyū Sekishūsai, appear in the Emokuroku under their own technical names with no tengu substitution:

1. Tensai-ransai 添截乱截 (or Soissai-ransai, depending on lineage reading)
2. Munito-ken 無二劍
3. Katsujin-ken 活人劍
4. Kōjō 向上 (also written 高上 in older mokuroku)
5. Gokui 極意
6. Shinmyō-ken 神妙劍

They are called Soto-tachi (外太刀) in Munenori’s Shinkage-ryū Heihō no Sho (新陰流兵法之書). Early listings, such as those of Yagyū Munenori’s Edo Yagyū Shinkage-ryū, keep Tensai-ransai as two kata separate from the later five.

The Emokuroku doesn’t illustrate all six Ōgi no Tachi equally. In the picture-catalog, from the first Sangaku kata “Ittō Ryōdan” through the Kuka no tachi, the eight Tengushō and Katsujin-tō, the kata are recorded with pictures and detailed text; “Kōjō, Gokui and Shinmyō-ken” have no pictures, only the technical text; and “Hakka Hisshō” and the Nijūshichi-kajō Saiai are listed by name only. So the catalog operates with a graduated concealment scheme.

The Sangaku and Kuka have full pictures and untranslated names — these are the foundation curriculum, no protection required. The Tengushō have pictures and the tengu-name cipher — visually revealed, lexically concealed. The first three Ōgi (Soissai-ransai, Munito-ken, Katsujin-ken) have pictures and their plain names — by this point the practitioner is far enough in that suijaku-style cover is unnecessary. The last three Ōgi (Kōjō, Gokui, Shinmyō-ken) have names but no pictures — the inverse protection mode, where the concept is named but the technique is withheld from the page entirely. Then Hakka Hisshō and the Nijūshichi-kajō Saiai appear as bare titles, with neither picture nor description, signaling oral-only transmission.<sup>12</sup>

### Sources and Protection

The semantic content of the Ōgi names — muni “no-two,” gokui “innermost meaning,” shinmyō “divinely-mysterious,” katsujin “life-giving” — is itself doctrinal-philosophical rather than technique-descriptive or religious-descriptive (it does not use Tengu names as substitutions for kata names, and embraces Zen imagery instead), so the names themselves already function as a kind of natural obfuscation. Even told the word Shinmyō-ken, an outsider learns nothing about how an associated kata (if Shinmyō-ken is even a kata) is performed. Sekishūsai’s catalog uses tengu labels precisely where the kata-names would have leaked technical content (Kasha, Tebiki, Nigusoku — fairly descriptive of what is being done), and abandons the device once the kata-names become abstract enough to be self-protecting.

<sup>12</sup>Kōjō and Shinmyō-ken are found in parallel Jikishinkage-ryū mokuroku.

The three-generation development of the Shinkage-ryū curriculum then maps neatly: Aisu Ikōsai contributed Empi and the proto-Tengushō from the Kage-ryū founding revelation; Kamiizumi Nobutsuna formalized the curriculum with Sangaku En and Kuka and the marobashi (転; rolling/tumbling [technique]) principle as the unifying theory; Sekishūsai composed the Okugi no Tachi as Zen-philosophical crystallizations of Kamiizumi's principle during Yagyū Sekishūsai's later life. The Tengushō cipher labels in Sekishūsai's Emokuroku belong to this same late-period work — both the cipher and the Okugi composition are late Sekishūsai contributions, and they share the underlying intellectual concern with how a finite catalog of kata can faithfully transmit an infinite principle. The cipher hides specific technical content from outsiders; the Okugi names hide general technical content behind Zen-philosophical abstractions. Both are protection devices, but at different layers of the curriculum and with different protection mechanisms.

The Tengushō set and the Empi set are a Kage-ryū inheritance, not a Yagyū innovation, and may have been the capstone of what was inherited from Kamiizumi, along with the marobashi principle.

The Shūyūkan (Kuroda-han Yagyū Shinkage-ryū) lineage records this directly: the Aisu Kage-ryū secret techniques transmitted by Yagyū Ie-nobu include the Empi of the famous Eimokuroku that Kamiizumi Nobutsuna issued to Yagyū Munetoshi in 1566 (Eiroku 9), the Empi-oku set including Shishi Funjin and Yamagasumi and the Tengushō Tachi-kazu Kamae Hachi, which is of Kage-ryū origin (陰流由来; Kage-ryū origin/lineage). So the Tengushō name and the eight-kata structure predate Sekishūsai by a generation — he inherited the set wholesale from Kamiizumi, who inherited it from Aisu's son Koshichirō. What Sekishūsai contributed was the cipher labels in the Emokuroku, not the set itself — instead he developed the Okugi.

### Updating Scholarship

Before the older Aisu Kage-no-ryū Mokuroku was discovered in the Heisei era, consensus was that Kamiizumi had developed Empi-no-tachi. This no longer is supported by documentary evidence.

The Kakuyomu Kage-ryū article on the Tokyo National Museum mokuroku is most explicit on the chronology: even before the Tokyo National Museum mokuroku became known, in Yagyū-line Shinkage-ryū it has been said that Empi and Tengushō are Kage-ryū techniques; this has now been corroborated by historical materials. The Kage-ryū Wikipedia article gives the standard transmission claim: in Shinkage-ryū the “Empi” that is learned first is transmitted as being the “Saruhi” of Kage-ryū. Matsushita Kenrin (松下見林) in his 1688 *Ishō Nihon-den* partially introduced the Kage-ryū mokuroku recorded in the *Wubeizhi*; the catalog includes the tachi-names “Saruhi,” “Sarukai,” “Yamakage,” etc.

The Empi-research Blog (cf. [empiken.blogspot.com](http://empiken.blogspot.com)) is the most thorough single source on this question and reaches the same conclusion: Empi in Shinkage-ryū follows the opening of Aisu Kage-no-ryū, and was transmitted in the various Shinkage-ryū branches under the same tachi names and catalog as those of the founder Kamiizumi Nobutsuna. The blogger's comparison tables of the surviving

Eimokuroku across multiple branches — Owari Yagyū, Hikita-shin Yagyū (Higo), Tai-sha-ryū (Marume Kurando) and the Western/Maketa lines — show the same six-to-eight tachi names with only minor ordering and orthographic variation, traceable to a common Kage-ryū source.

The Yagyū Genchō (柳生嚴長) framing in Seiden Shinkage-ryū (正伝新陰流) holds Aisu Hisatada himself (rather than his son Koshichirō) as Kamiizumi’s teacher and emphasizes Kamiizumi’s editorial transformation of the Kage material. Post-Heisei, the direct Aisu Kage-no-ryū Mokuroku settled the question by showing eight-of-the-kata names already in place in Aisu’s own documents.

It is, however, the case that specific form of those kata as practiced in Shinkage-ryū may have differed substantially from the Aisu original. There is genuine scholarly debate about who transmitted the Kage-ryū to Kamiizumi, even though there is no debate about the prior existence of Empi-as-Saruhi. Kamiizumi’s teacher in the Kage-ryū is contested: there are two views, one that he learned from Aisu Hisatada (Ikōsai) directly, and one that he learned from Hisatada’s son Genkōsai Koshichirō (愛洲宗通・小七郎), founder of Saruhi-Kage-ryū (猿飛陰流).

Shimokawa Ushio in his 1925 *Kendō no Hattatsu* adopts the Koshichirō view. The Hirasawa family record (descendants of Hisatada) contains no record of Kage-ryū transmission to Nobutsuna. Hikita Bungorō (疋田 文五郎; 1537–1605) had certificates that consistently provide the transmission chain as Aisu Hisatada to Aisu Koshichirō to Kamiizumi and Hikita, supporting the Koshichirō view. Yagyū Genchō’s *Seiden Shinkage-ryū* defends the Hisatada-direct view, with Imamura Yoshio agreeing in *Zusetsu Nihon Kengōshi*.

The naming of the empi kata set varies across the Shinkage-ryū descendant lines in revealing ways. The Kamiizumi-period rename from Aisu’s 猿飛 (Saruhi) to 燕飛 (Empi) was not uniformly received across his students. Sekishūsai’s 1566 *Eimokuroku* adopts 燕飛 (swallow-flight), but Hikita’s *Saruhi-no-Mokuroku* preserves the older 猿飛 (monkey-flight), as does the Aisu Kage-no-ryū lineage in the Tokyo National Museum holding.

The Okuyama-Ogasawara line that becomes Jikishinkage-ryū develops a third reading, according to Sakai Toshinobu (酒井利信) at Tsukuba University: 圓飛 (circular-flight), which reads the kata-set conceptually in terms of the *marobashi* (転) principle rather than zoologically.

This variation suggests the swallow rename may be Yagyū-line-specific rather than a uniform Kamiizumi reform, with the kata-set surviving across multiple transmission lines under different framings of what kind of flight is being depicted.

### Founding Visions

The founding vision of Aisu was not a *tengu*. This is the part of the standard narrative most often misreported in English-language sources. Aisu Ikōsai retreated to the cave at Udo Jingū (鵜戸神宮) in Hyūga (modern Miyazaki), and the deity who appeared to him in vision was — depending on the source — either a *saru* (猿; monkey) or a *kumo* (蜘蛛; spider), not a *tengu*. The Udo Jingū Wikipedia entry

preserves the canonical version: on the dawn of the fulfillment-day of his vow, he attained a new sword-method by facing a shadow crossing in front of him; that shadow was of a monkey upon which a deity had alighted to make him realize the deepest secrets. The Shūyūkan version gives the spider variant: Aisu Ikōsai Hisatada crossed to Hyūga and was given the secret transmission by a deity transformed into a spider (蜘蛛に化身した神; god incarnated as spider). Both versions agree on the structural point: the deity manifested as a *kage* (影; shadowing) crossing the path, which is the etymology of Kage-ryū (陰流, “Shadow School”) itself.

The “tengu” naming of Tengushō is therefore likely secondary to Aisu.

The bridge is most plausibly through Sarutahiko (猿田彦) no Mikoto, the long-nosed monkey-deity of Japanese mythology who is also a guide-figure (Ninigi’s escort during the tenson kōrin) and who in medieval folk-religion is one of the standard identifications of tengu — the iconographic high-nose tengu image draws heavily on Sarutahiko’s takanose (高鼻; high nose) attribute. Sarutahiko is one of the seven Ō-kami of Japan and is a figure symbolizing misogi, strength and guidance. His jeweled spear illuminates the earth and sky.



FIGURE 13. Sarutahiko Ō-kami

So it could be that the founding-vision of a monkey’s shadow becomes sarugami (monkey-deity) and then Sarutahiko (long-nosed monkey-tengu) and then tengu more generally. By the time the set had a stable name, it was Tengushō — but the

original mythic encounter was with a shadow monkey-form. The Tengushō name might also have been applied to the set later than its first transmission, perhaps by Kamiizumi himself, by which point the monkey-original had drifted into a tengu-frame in popular religious imagination.

The pre-Heisei understanding of Aisu Kage-ryū as essentially a reconstruction from Chinese sources (the Bubishi materials) genuinely shaped what people thought Kage-ryū looked like. The Tokyo National Museum Aisu Kage-no-ryū Mokuroku changed this in the early Heisei period and is still being absorbed into the secondary literature.

The Tengushō set is a Kage-ryū inheritance predating Sekishūsai’s Yagyū-line refinements; the name traces back to Aisu Ikōsai’s founding vision in the cave at Udo Jingū, though the vision itself was canonically of a deity-possessed monkey or spider, not a tengu — the tengu naming likely entered later in the concealment strategy associated to Sekishūsai’s makimono and are likely not related to the kata themselves or specific Tengu one might contact or summon as part of a Tengushō practice attempting to recreate the vision or inspiration of Aisu.

### **Kata Arrangements**

As noted above, the Shūyūkan transmission places both Empi and the Tengushō within Aisu’s Kage-ryū inheritance, tracing them to the Udo Iwaya revelation. The set Shinkage-ryū calls Empi (燕飛, “swallow flying”) was originally called Saruhi (猿飛, “monkey flying”) in Aisu’s Kage-ryū. The Bubishi-recorded “Kage-ryū Mokuroku” contains tachi-names including Saruhi (猿飛) and Sarukai (猿回) as opposed to the later Empi and Enkai naming used in later Yagyū Shinkage-ryū.

Empi-oku (Shishi Funjin or “lion’s frenzy” and Yamagasumi or “mountain mist”) are also listed in the Bubishi but not explicitly written in later Yagyū makimono — a blank space is left where they would be written, part of the concealment efforts associated to upper-level teachings. These two kata in modern practice involve techniques practiced against *ryōto* (dual sword), several other counters against *ryōto* are also found in Tengushō.

The rename from Saruhi to Empi was Kamiizumi’s editorial decision when constructing Shinkage-ryū — a deliberate distancing from the monkey-vision origin in favor of a more abstract image (swallow flight). This homage may be due to Kamiizumi’s time training with teachers who were influenced by the teachings of Iisaza Choisai of Shintō-ryū — shinmyō-ken and tsubame-gaeshi (swallow reversal) are important upper-level teachings of that art, which may be encoded in Kamiizumi’s synthesis.

### **Shinmyō-ken**

The official Kashima city documentation traces the entire Kashima martial tradition to a single divine revelation: Kuninazu Mahito built an altar at the Takamagahara within Kashima Jingū, offered fervent daily prayer, and is said to have received the principle of “Shinmyō-ken no Kurai” (神妙劍の位) — the law of the deity Takemikazuchi’s divine sword Futsu-no-Mitama-no-Tsurugi — and this

is said to be the origin of Japanese martial arts. The teaching was transmitted in the Yoshikawa family as “Kashima no Tachi,” developing through “Kashima Jōko-ryū” and “Kashima Chūko-ryū” successively.

Kibejiro similarly states that offering fervent prayer he received divine oracle, and was granted the Shinmyō-ken no Kurai which is the law of Takemikazuchi’s divine sword Futsu-no-Mitama; thereafter this was called “Kashima no Tachi” and was transmitted centrally through the Urabe-Yoshikawa family of the daigyōji headship.

Shinmyō-ken is not just a concept at Kashima — it is the originating concept of the entire Kashima martial lineage, the direct divine transmission from the war-god Takemikazuchi. Any swordsman emerging from that lineage would have Shinmyō-ken as a central, weighted term. Sekishūsai naming the supreme Okugi kata Shinmyō-ken is therefore extremely unlikely to be coincidence: it is the highest possible terminological homage to the Kashima foundation, applied to the highest kata of the Shinkage-ryū curriculum. The Kashima tradition’s other foundational concept beyond Shinmyō-ken is the Hitotsu no Tachi (一の太刀, “One Sword”), which Bokuden transmitted to Kamiizumi according to some sources, and some teachers today relate to the concept of tsubame-gaeshi (燕返し, swallow-return).

The standard tradition lists Kamiizumi as one of Iizasa Chōisai’s “Four Heavenly Kings” (四天王) disciples, alongside Matsumoto Bizen-no-kami, Tsukahara Tosa-no-kami and Morooka Ippa. But Iizasa Chōisai died in 1488 and Kamiizumi was born around 1508 — they could not have actually trained together. The realistic transmission path is likely via Matsumoto Bizen-no-kami and then to Kamiizumi — as claimed in Jikishinkage-ryū lineage.

From the rekishijin:

From an early age, seeking to learn military arts which he had been interested in since childhood, Nobutsuna travelled to Kashima and studied sword and spear under Matsumoto Bizen-no-kami Masanobu. Matsumoto Bizen was also Tsukahara Bokuden’s teacher. After Matsumoto Bizen, Nobutsuna learned the “Kage stream” from Aisu Ikōsai’s son Koshichirō, who was living in Hitachi.

Given Kamiizumi was steeped in Kashima-Katori teachings, his rename of Aisu’s Saruhi (猿飛) to Empi (燕飛) carries additional weight. The swallow is a Kashima-region motif — birds appear throughout the Kashima/Katori iconographic and naming pool — and the swift, low, reversal-capable flight of the swallow expresses something quite different from the high, leaping monkey-vision of Aisu’s revelation. Kamiizumi’s rename can be read as the first stage of re-grounding Aisu’s mountain-cave shadow-swordsmanship into the more strategically systematic eastern tradition. The choice of bird-imagery (swallow rather than, say, eagle or crane) over the monkey-imagery is then doing real synthesizing work: keeping the flight concept (which Aisu’s Saruhi already carried) while exchanging the founding-revelation iconography (mountain monkey) for an iconography more at home in the Kashima-Katori-influenced curriculum Kamiizumi was building.

There remains, however, a tension in primary sources. The Shūyūkan attributes the Tengushō set to Aisu's transmission unambiguously, and the Yagyū commentary tradition supports this. But the Bubishi mokuroku (the Ming Chinese copy of an early Kage-ryū document) lists Saruhi, Sarukai, Yamakage and other monkey-and-shadow-themed names — but does not list the Tengushō kata names (Kasha, Akemi, Zentai, etc.) The eight Tengushō kata names we know today are first reliably attested in late-Sengoku Yagyū documents.

Kuka, in contrast to Empi, is Kamiizumi's contribution, added when he reorganized the curriculum into the Shinkage-ryū structure. Kuka is said to contain teachings that counter the inner teachings of three contemporary ryūha: Shintō-ryū, Nen-ryū and Chūjō-ryū. The 1566 Eimokuroku transmitted to Sekishūsai contains his self-description: "In antiquity there were ryū. In the middle period there were Nen-ryū, Shintō-ryū and Kage-ryū. Beyond these are too many to count. I exhausted the deep sources of various ryū, and from Kage-ryū in particular extracted a separate marvel, naming it Shinkage-ryū." Kamiizumi identifies Nen-ryū, Shintō-ryū and Kage-ryū — the Hyōhō Sandai Genryū — as the traditions he engaged with before composing Shinkage-ryū.

Sangakuen also is an explanatory set developed by Kamiizumi that helps prepare a student for the later practice of Empi, and is said to counter the five basic teachings (itsutsu-no-tachi) of Shintō-ryū. The Sangakuen-en no Tachi in Owari Yagyū consists of five kata: Ittō Ryōdan, Zantei Settetsu, Hankai Hankō, Usen Saten and Chōtan Ichimi. The five-kata structure mirroring Shintō-ryū's Itsutsu-no-Tachi (五ツノ太刀)

### Concluding Remarks

We see in the case of Kamiizumi, a reframing of Aisu's monkey-inspired imagery from Sarutahiko towards swallow-based imagery more closely associated with Kashima. We then later see an abstraction of kata names in the Okugi developed by Sekishūsai to lean heavily on abstract Zen imagery — however, the culminating Okugi of shinmyō-ken circles back to the high-level teachings of Kashima as a source.

Kamiizumi's Eimokuroku declares his curriculum the synthesis of three traditions — Nen-ryū, Shintō-ryū and Kage-ryū — and his documented training chain shows engagement at depth with each: directly from Matsumoto Bizen-no-kami Masanobu (Iizasa Chōisai's senior student) for the Shintō-ryū inner teachings including Shinmyō-ken, and from Aisu Koshichirō (Aisu Ikōsai's son) for the Kage stream. His own contributions to the Shinkage-ryū curriculum — Sangaku-en no Tachi (the five preparatory kata) and Kuka no Tachi (the nine principal kata) — are structurally organized as counter-curricula to the Shintō, Nen and Chūjō traditions, with the Sangaku's five-kata structure paralleling Shintō-ryū's Itsutsu-no-Tachi. The Aisu inheritance (Empi, Tengushō) was preserved and refined rather than countered; the new kata were the strategic offensive material composed to defeat contemporary rivals.

In parallel development to Edo period Yagyū Shinkage-ryū, Yamada Heizaemon Ippusai and Naganuma Shirōzaemon Kunisato (長沼四郎左衛門国郷) of Jikishinkage-ryū lineage also put emphasis on Takemikazuchi and Kashima through the addition of the prefix Kashima-shinden to their art's name.

### Further reading.

On Aisu Ikōsai and the founding of Kage-ryū, 歴史人 (the Udo retreat and Ming-voyage chronology) and the 陰流 article (the Bubishi-preserved Kage-ryū mokuroku). On Kamiizumi and the founding of Shinkage-ryū, the 新陰流 article preserves the Eimokuroku self-attestation. For the kata catalogues, 肥後・新陰流の形 and 「足田新陰流」と「柳生新陰流」 give line-by-line Higo / Owari / Hikita comparisons.

### 2.5. Examining Shinkage-ryū Densho in Kyushu

Kuka Densho from Historical Records Section, Manuscript Library, Kyushu University

#### Kuroda-han Shinkage-ryū Densho

The Shūyūkan (修猷館) of Kuroda Han Shinkage-ryū (黒田藩傳柳生新陰流兵法) provided in 2025 a complete set of seven Shinkage-ryū densho from 1766 to Kyushu University Library. The Shūyūkan is a martial arts school that teaches Kuroda Han (Kuroda Province) Yagyū Shinkage-ryū Heihō and Hikita Kage-ryū from the famed swordsman Kamiizumino Kami Fujiwara no Nobutsuna, and Niten Ichi-ryū of Miyamoto Musashi Harunobu.

NOTE: *The owner of the original materials is Historical Records Section, Manuscript Library, Kyushu University.* The materials are available for public access and download.

We turn towards an analysis of the densho, with an eye on capturing detail that relates back to Kashima Shinden Jikishinkage-ryū, as these densho are written within 2 years of the Naganuma Kunisato mokuroku at Waseda University.

#### Sōjō (添状)

Seven densho scrolls transmitted in Meiwa 3 (1766), 5th month, from the Fukuokahan Shinkage-ryū instructor Miyake Saemon Einori (三宅三右衛門栄範, d. 1774) to the karō Kuroda Genzaemon Takatsune (黒田源左衛門隆庸, 1744–1800). The scrolls include color-illustrated mokuroku. The eighth item is an Ansei 6 (1859) accompanying letter from Miyake Tasaemon Eigon (三宅太三右衛門栄権) to Kuroda Yamato Kazumi (黒田大和一美, 1830–1897), explaining that the seven scrolls, which had been returned to the Miyake family after the original transmission, were being re-delivered to the Minaki Kuroda house (三奈木黒田家; Sanaki-Kuroda family house) upon a new transmission.

The scrolls use the school name 新影流 (Shinkage-ryū), with the character 影 (kage; shadow/reflection) rather than 陰 (in/kage; yin). Image order was arranged by catalogers based on Yagyū Yoshinaga's Seiden Shinkage-ryū (島津書房, 1989) and

Imamura Yoshio's Shiryō Yagyū Shinkage-ryū (人物往来社, 1967), as the original scroll order was not specified.

### Ansei: Transmittal

The lineage is consistent across all scrolls in the collection:

1. Kamiizumi Musashi-no-kami Fujiwara Nobutsuna (上泉武藏守 藤原信綱)
2. Yagyū Tajima-no-kami Taira Muneyoshi (柳生但馬守 平宗嚴)
3. Yagyū Matsuemon-no-jō (柳生松右衛門尉)
4. Arichi Kuranosuke Ienobu (有地内藏允 家信)
5. Arichi Heiemon-no-jō Fujiwara Mitsuzane (有地平右衛門尉 藤原光真)
6. Arichi Shirōemon-no-jō Fujiwara Narinobu (有地四郎右衛門尉 藤原就信)
7. Miyake Genhachirō Shigenari (三宅源八郎 重業)
8. Miyake Saemon Einori (三宅三右衛門 栄範) — the transmitter

The Arichi family (有地; Arichi family) were the initial Shinkage-ryū recipients in the Kuroda domain, with the Miyake family (三宅; Miyake family) succeeding them as domain instructors. The lineage runs entirely within the Yagyū mainline: Kamiizumi → Yagyū → Arichi → Miyake.

The mokuroku (興儀之目録; ceremonial procedures catalog) were originally transmitted (御傳授中有之; transmitted/included in transmission) and that from this point forward (自今以後; henceforth/from now forward) the transmission is formalized. It references the 目録数卷 (“several scrolls of mokuroku”) and the 七卷 (“seven scrolls”) — matching the seven densho in the collection.

The letter explains that the seven mokuroku scrolls had been originally transmitted from Miyake Einori to Kuroda Takatsune, were later returned to the Miyake family, and are now re-delivered to the Minaki Kuroda house. The letter references the 七卷 (seven scrolls) as a unified set and includes language about exclusive practice of the school (為流専用; exclusively for the school) and prohibition on unauthorized transmission. Higher-level teachings are to be shared with only “one person in the realm” (一國一人).

The colophon dates reads 安政六未 (Ansei 6, Year of the Sheep, 1859), signed by 栄権 (Eigon) with vermilion seal, addressed with 状如件 (“as stated above”), and 三宅三右衛門 (Miyake Saemon) appears as the formal signatory.

Dated Ansei 6, 12th month (1859), an accompanying letter from Miyake Eigon to Kuroda Yamato, certifying the transmission.

The seven densho are a complete Yagyū Shinkage-ryū transmission set:

1. Enpi (燕飛) — the foundational kata
2. Sangaku Entachi-bun (三学円太刀分) — analysis of the Three Learnings Round Sword
3. Sangaku (三学) — Three Learnings
4. Kuka (九箇) — Nine Pieces
5. Tengushō (天狗抄) — the Tengu Writings

6. Setsuai Gokai (截合五箇位) — Five Positions of Engagement
7. Soto-mono Taryū (外物他流) — External Matters / Other Schools

Below we examine several that are relevant to our cross-lineage analysis of the composition of 18th century Jikishinkage-ryū.

### Empi

The Enpi (燕飛) scroll is stunning, with color illustrations exceptional for a 1766 document. It contains introductory philosophical preamble discussing the relationship between martial arts and Buddhist wisdom, with references to the Seven Buddhas (七佛), Sanskrit and Chinese *bonkan* (梵漢; Sanskrit-Chinese traditions), Mañjuśrī (文殊; Skt. Mañjuśrī), Prajñā (般若; Skt. Prajñā), *chie* (智慧; wisdom) and Arhats (羅漢). The text positions the art within a Buddhist framework and discusses the concept of ken-tai (懸待; suspension and waiting).

This is followed by color illustrations of the kata, each labeled, showing paired figures (shidachi in blue/grey, uchidachi in yellow/green):

1. Enpi (燕飛; “Swallow Flight”)
2. Enkai (猿廻; “Monkey Turning”)
3. Yamakage (山陰; “Mountain Shadow”)
4. Tsukikage (月影; “Moon Shadow”)
5. Uranami (浦波; “Shore Waves”)
6. Ukifune (浮舟; “Floating Boat”)
7. Shishi Funjin (獅子奮迅; “Lion’s Fierce Rush”)
8. Yamagasumi (山霞; “Mountain Mist”)

This maintains the early Sarutahiko inspired monkey imagery in its choice of kanji for the second kata instead of 燕 (swallow). The last two kata are the Empi Oku — in other densho arrangements they sometimes are omitted.

The scroll concludes with homage to Nichirin Marishiten (日輪摩利支天; “Sun Disc of Mārīcī Deva”), a lineage chart (as above) and colophon. This is the standard Yagyū Shinkage-ryū Enpi set. The final section invoking Marishiten (摩利支天; Skt. Mārīcī) — the Buddhist deity of light and invisibility, patron of warriors — is worth noting. It closes the set with an explicitly devotional frame.

The illustrations themselves show specific moments within each kata — sword positions, body angles and spatial relationships are clearly rendered, making these potentially useful as technical references.

### Jiki Parallels

The Enpi set has no direct equivalent in the Jikishinkage-ryū curriculum — this is part of the “middle layer” that Jikishinkage-ryū does not transmit, having substituted the Tō no Kata (韜之形) tactical forms instead. However, several points of connection exist:

- The Buddhist preamble’s emphasis on Prajñā and the relationship between martial technique and spiritual wisdom parallels the philosophical frame-

work of the Jikishinkage-ryū Gokui section, particularly Nenshi (念思; “Thought and Contemplation”) and Furyū no Katsu (不立之勝; “Victory of Non-Reliance”), which reference Buddhist concepts of munen musō (無念無想; no-thought, no-conception).

- The concept of ken-tai (懸待; suspension and waiting) appears in the Jikishinkage-ryū gokui as Ken Tai Yū (権躰勇; “Authority, Body, Valor”), where the ancient writing is explicitly noted as 懸待遊 (Ken-Tai-Yū; Suspension, Waiting, Play). The Jikishinkage-ryū mokuroku acknowledges this older orthography.
- The Nichirin Marishiten (日輪摩利支天) invokes the Buddhist warrior deity Mārīcī (Skt. Mārīcī), connecting to the broader spiritual dimension shared by both traditions. Mārīcī as patron deity of warriors provides religious context for concepts like Shinmyōken. In contrast, Jikishinkage-ryū densho typically are adorned with *bonji* (梵字; Siddham characters) representing the celestial guardian Fudō or the A-Un philosophical concept at the same time (circa 1768 and onward).

### Sangaku Entachi-bun

The Sangaku Entachi-bun (三學圓太刀分; “Three Learnings, Round Sword Division”) is the master index for the entire curriculum. First, core kata (entachi) are listed:

1. Ittō Ryōdan (一刀兩段; “One Sword, Two Halves”)
2. Zantei Settetsu (斬釘截鐵; “Cutting Nails, Breaking Iron”)
3. Hankai Hankō (半開半向; “Half Open, Half Facing”)
4. Usen Saten (右旋左轉; “Right Rotation, Left Turning”)
5. Chōtan Ichimi (長短一味; “Long and Short are One Flavor”)

Three of these — Ittō Ryōdan, Usen Saten (= Uten Saten) and Chōtan Ichimi — are identical to Jikishinkage-ryū Hōjō kata names. That’s three out of four Hōjō sharing names directly with the Yagyū Entachi curriculum.

Only Hassō Happa (八相發破; Hōjō #1, spring) has no direct equivalent in this list, replaced by Zantei Settetsu and Hankai Hankō. This three-of-four correspondence strongly suggests the Hōjō were inherited from the common Shinkage-ryū of Kamiizumi and represent the same foundational training layer.

### Kuka

Then the full curriculum is listed, including the individual kata in Kuka (九箇; nine places):

1. 必勝 (Hisshō; “Certain Victory”)
2. 逆風 (Gyakufū; “Reverse Wind”)
3. 十太刀 (Jū-tachi; “Ten Swords”)
4. 和卜 (Waboku)
5. 腰卜 (Koshiboku)
6. 小詰 (Kozume; “Small Entrapment”)

7. 大詰 (Ōzume; “Great Entrapment”)
8. 八重垣 (Yaegaki; “Eight-Layered Fence”)
9. 村雲 (Murakumo; “Gathering Clouds”)

Hisshō (必勝; “Certain Victory”) appears in the Jikishinkage-ryū gokui section under Ikki-tō (一氣當), where 必勝也 (hisshō nari; “this is Certain Victory”) is the culminating declaration.

### Tengushō

Tengushō (天狗抄) is listed in summary, not providing kata names but simply the summary description Tachi-kazu yattsu (太刀数八ツ; “sword count: eight”) denoting eight kata for the set.

### Hikita Kage-ryū Okugi

Next we see listed six teachings that are similar to other Yagyū examples:

1. 滅載乱截 (Metsusai Ransetsu; “Extinguishing Chaos, Cutting Disorder”)
2. 無二劍 (Muni-ken; “Peerless Sword”)
3. 路人劍 (Rojin-ken; “Sword of the Wayfarer”)
4. 高上 (Kōjō; “Highest Level”)
5. 極意 (Gokui; “Deepest Secret”)
6. 神妙劍 (Shinmyōken; “Mysterious Sword of the Mind”)

Notice, *katsujinken* (活人劍; life-giving sword) is replaced with Rojin-ken in this list. Shinmyōken appears here as the pinnacle of the Yagyū curriculum — the same term, same kanji (though 劍 rather than 劍), same position at the apex. Shinmyōken is the first gokui of Jikishinkage-ryū and notes it as a teaching shared across the Kashima-area traditions. This scroll places Shinmyōken in a similar stature as the culmination of the Okugi.

Both traditions place Shinmyōken at the summit, both use Hisshō (必勝) as a key concept, and three of four Hōjō (Entachi) kata share identical names. This is strong evidence for common Shinkage-ryū inheritance. Kōjō (高上) as a designation corresponds to Kōjō Gokui (口上極意) in the Jikishinkage-ryū mokuroku — the “beyond words” oral teachings. The character differs (高上 “highest” vs. 口上 “oral/spoken”) but the functional position is the same: the layer of teaching that transcends written transmission.

Gokui (極意) is similarly shared as a designation for the innermost teachings, which is standard in many ryūha. The Sangaku Entachi-bun reveals a three-tier architecture:

1. foundational kata (Entachi)
2. middle-level sets (Kuka, Tengushō, Setsuai, etc.)
3. philosophical apex (Gokui, Shinmyōken)

Jikishinkage-ryū shares the first and third tiers but substitutes its own middle layer (Tō no Kata and the Koto/Katsu progression). This suggests Jikishinkage-ryū may be understood as a reformulation that preserved the Kage-ryū foundation and

philosophical summit while replacing the middle tactical curriculum — possibly influenced by Ogasawara Genshinzai’s (小笠原源信齋長治) documented trip to Ming China.

### Tengushō

The preamble establishes the Tengushō as the highest-level transmission document. Key phrases include: 不可傳之一國一人之 (“This must not be transmitted to more than one person in the realm”) and 書也口傳多 (“This is written, but the oral transmissions are many”).



FIGURE 14. Tengushō Densho from Historical Records Section, Manuscript Library, Kyushu University

Keeping with this, the kata are not named, but simply enumerated. Also absent are the descriptive Tengu names introduced in the Edo line of practice.

The catalog lists the Soto-mono Taryū (外物他流) as a separate scroll specifically for “other school” material, but if Hikita content had already been integrated into the core transmission sets — including the Tengushō — it might not appear separately in the Soto-mono scroll at all.

The close-quarters/grappling techniques in the Soto-mono would then represent only the Hikita material that couldn’t be absorbed into existing Yagyū kata structures, while Hikita sword techniques compatible with the Tengushō framework were folded directly into the set as four additional positions.

Typically, there are eight kata in Tengushō practice, including a hidden *oku* (奥; inner, deep) kata called *ninin-gakari* (二人掛かり; two-attacker practice), for nine total. Here we see twelve tengu depicted and numbered — there are three known Tengushō kata from Hikita Kage-ryū, using the suffix -shō (書; excerpt) instead of 抄, which then make twelve (including the *oku* kata). Their names are:

1. Ranshō (乱勝)

2. Chōgoku (釣極)
3. Unsetsu (雲截)

The Kuroda-han Miyake transmission appears to have followed a consistent documentary principle of listing everything — oku and Hikita material alike — rather than maintaining the secrecy conventions that other domain transmissions observed. This makes sense in context: these scrolls were being transmitted to a karō, a chief retainer of the domain. The Miyake family may have chosen completeness over concealment precisely because the scrolls were going to the highest level of domain authority.

### Depictions

Following the preamble is a set of twelve illustrated positions with Tengu. Each of the twelve positions shows a tengu figure with:

- A position number (第一 through 第十二)
- Grey sword-trajectory lines indicating cutting paths
- Level notations: 上 (jō, upper), 中 (chū, middle), 下 (ge, lower) with associated numbers

The numbers after each level appear to indicate the count of cuts directed at that level. The grey lines drawn around each figure correspond to these counts, showing the angle and direction of each cut.

A clause follows the illustrations: 血判可有相傳之節 (“A blood oath [keppan] must be made at the time of transmission”), preceded by a seven-day purification requirement — this practice of having a separate keppan at a high-level of initiation is still maintained by contemporary *ryūha* (流派; school, tradition) influenced by Shinkage-ryū.

### Setsuai Gokai

The Setsuai Gokai (截合五箇位; “Five Positions of Engagement”) scroll is important for our work on Jikishinkage-ryū. The five positions are numbered 第一 through 第五, each followed by descriptive text in cursive text.

### Preface

The Jo (序; “preface”) lists several topics, some of which we see in contemporary Jikishinkage-ryū denso:

1. 上段 三ツ (Jōdan, mittsu; “Upper level, three [techniques]”)
2. 中段 三ツ (Chūdan, mittsu; “Middle level, three”)
3. 下段 三ツ (Gedan, mittsu; “Lower level, three”)
4. 破 (Ha; “Break/Destroy”)
5. 弁合結太刀 三ツ (Combination binding sword, three)
6. 刀棒 (Tōbō; “Sword and staff”)
7. 折甲 二ツ (Sekkō/Orikabuto, futatsu; “Breaking armor, two”)
8. 上段... 左右 — Directional variants
9. 目付之大事 (Metsuke no Daiji; “Important Matter of the Gaze”)

10. 遠山 (Enzan; “Far Mountain”)
11. 二畳 (Nijō; “Two tatami”)
12. 色付 (Irotsuki; “Color Sensing”)
13. 伍陰微妙方三寸之事 — Complex entry, possibly “Matter of the Five Shadows, Subtle, Ally’s Three Sun”
14. 三調子...事 (Sanchōshi no Koto; “Matter of Three Rhythms”)

### Philosophical Content

1. 真表之事 (Shin-omote no Koto; “Matter of True Surface”)
2. 待曲事 (Taikyoku no Koto; “Matter of Waiting/Curving”)
3. 小太刀一尺六寸 (Kodachi issaku rokusun; “Short sword, one shaku six sun [~48cm]”) — with associated oral transmission notes
4. 集字手利劍大事 (Shūji Shuriken Daiji; “Important Matter of Collected Characters, Shuriken”)
5. 陰兵閑者... — Reference to hidden/shadow soldiers
6. 手裏見 (Shurimi; “Seeing the Hidden Hand”)
7. 心遍萬境 (Shin-hen Bankyō; “The Mind Pervades All Realms”)
8. 實就曲随流... — “True accomplishment following the flow”
9. 姓名... (Seimei/Shōmyō)
10. 一國一人傳授之 (Ikkoku Ichinin Denju; “Transmission to one person in the realm”)
11. 極意也 (Gokui nari; “This is the deepest secret”)

Metsuke no Daiji (目付之大事) and Enzan (遠山) align with Metsuke no Katsu in Jikishinkage-ryū mokuroku, which discuss Enzan no Metsuke as a concept. Here it appears in the Yagyū Setsuai curriculum as a formal teaching item, confirming the shared conceptual framework between the two traditions.

The Jikishinkage-ryū treatment of the gaze as “mirror of the mind” and the Yagyū treatment as a formal *daiji* (important matter) may represent parallel developments from a common source (i.e. Kamiizumi).

Irotsuki (色付; “Color Sensing”) is similar to the discussion of *iro* (色; sensing the opponent’s intention) in the Jikishinkage-ryū Metsuke no Katsu as “sensing the opponent’s intention.” Here it appears as a named teaching within the Setsuai framework.

Sanchōshi (三調子; “Three Rhythms”) — this could be the Yagyū equivalent of Tome Sandan (留三段), where three levels of rhythm and distance are used to control the opponent. If Karukome is correct that Tome Sandan was a Naganuma addition, the Sanchōshi entry here might represent the earlier Shinkage-ryū source that Naganuma then adapted.

Ha (破; “Break”) may relate to the Jikishinkage-ryū concept of Hatetsu (破鉄; “Breaking Iron”).

Shin-hen Bankyō (心遍萬境; “The Mind Pervades All Realms”) resonates with the Jikishinkage-ryū concept of Sōtai no Zu (惣躰之圖; “Matter of the Whole Body”),

where the teaching is to perceive the totality of the opponent rather than fixating on individual parts.

### **Soto-mono Taryū**

The Soto-mono Taryū (外物他流; “External Matters, Other Schools”) is a catalogue of techniques from outside the main Yagyū Shinkage-ryū curriculum — techniques from other schools or “external matters” that were incorporated into the Kuroda-han practice.

This is an extensive list, which contains several items of relevance to the comparison of Jikishinkage-ryū with other lines of Shinkage-ryū:

Kiri-otoshi (切落) appears as the first entry. In the Jikishinkage-ryū mokuroku, Kiri Otoshi no Katsu (切落之克; “Victory of Cutting Down”) is the fourteenth Katsu and one of the entries Karukome identified as a Naganuma Kunisato addition. Its placement in the Yagyū “Other Schools” section raises the question of whether this concept was recognized as originating outside the Yagyū mainline — possibly representing a shared Kage-ryū teaching that the Yagyū classified as “external” and that Naganuma later incorporated into the Jikishinkage-ryū Katsu progression.

Hitotachi (一太刀; “One Sword”) relates to the Jikishinkage-ryū teaching of Hitotsu no Tachi (一ノ太刀; “First or Singular Sword”), discussed in the Shinmyōken gokui section as one of the highest-level teachings associated with Kashima no Tachi (鹿島之太刀) and Katori no Ken (香取之劔).

Mu-ikken (無一劔; “No-Sword”) connects to the broader Shinkage-ryū tradition of mutō-dori (無刀取; sword-taking without a sword), which has conceptual parallels in the Jikishinkage-ryū teaching of abandoning attachment to technique in Furyū no Katsu (不立之勝).

Ichimonji (一文字; “Horizontal Line”) parallels Yoko Ichimonji no Katsu (横一文字之克; “Victory of the Horizontal Line”) in the Jikishinkage-ryū Katsu. Its placement in the “Other Schools” section suggests this may have been recognized as a technique shared across other Shinkage-ryū lineages.

### **Summary**

The Kuroda-han Shinkage-ryū scrolls reveal a three-tier curriculum architecture. Its foundation of Sangaku Entachi core kata corresponds to Jikishinkage-ryū Hōjō (法定). Three of four kata names are identical (Ittō Ryōdan, Usen/Uten Saten, Chōtan Ichimi). This is the shared Shinkage-ryū physical inheritance.

The middle layer of Enpi, Tengushō and Kuka have no direct equivalent in Jikishinkage-ryū. This middle tier seems to have been replaced by the Tō no Kata (韜之形) tactical forms and the Koto/Katsu (事/克) analytical progression in Jikishinkage-ryū. This tactical middle layer may reflect Ogasawara Genshinzai’s (小笠原源信齋長治) documented Ming-dynasty training.

Specific Katsu entries (Sōjaku, Tome Sandan, Kiri Otoshi, Ginmi) were later additions by Naganuma Kunisato (長沼国郷) according to Karukome’s research.

The philosophical apex of Shinmyōken, Gokui, Kōjō, Hisshō are *shared between both traditions*. Shinmyōken sits at the pinnacle of both curricula. Kōjō functions identically as the layer of oral/unspeakable teaching beyond written transmission. Hisshō (Certain Victory) appears in both as a key concept. The Gokui designation is shared directly.

Despite the different organizational structures, specific concepts cross over: Metsuke/Enzan (gaze of the Far Mountain), Iro/Irotsuki (reading the opponent’s “color”), Sanchōshi/Tome Sandan (three rhythms/three levels), Kiri-otoshi, Ichimonji, Ken-Tai-Yū/Ken-Tai. These suggest a common conceptual vocabulary inherited from Kamiizumi, even when the curriculum structures diverge.

## 2.6. Kumano Sanzan and Kukishin-ryū

Kukishin-ryū is said to have been developed in Kumano Sanzan, but its history is wrapped up in well-researched forgery. There is a Taishō ultranationalist-spiritualist thread similar to others I have looked at. In this case, Deguchi Onisaburō of Ōmoto-kyo drew heavily on an apocryphal Kuki document, while the specific martial revival ran through Kuki Takaharu, descendant of the former Ayabedomain Kuki lords. Kuki founded the Kōdō Sen’yō-kai (Imperial-Way Promotion Society) in 1921 and set up a budō section to spread what he called Kukishinden-ryū.

Kuki-family transmission presents itself as the martial art of the yamabushi of Nakatomi Shintō and Kumano Shugendō, founded by Kuki Yakushimaru Takazane, born a son of the Kumano Bettō house and a thirty-sixth-generation descendant of Fujiwara no Kamatari, who was granted the Kuki surname for rescuing Emperor Go-Daigo during the Nanbokuchō wars and wove the school from his house’s martial art, kami-法 secret transmission, and esoteric-Buddhist mikkyō. The signature move — cutting the kuji and defending himself with the broken naginata shaft after its blade was struck off in 1336 — and its okuden forms are explicitly said to carry on the old mountain worship.

A related line even folds in the Kuramadera complex, fusing the Kuki naval heihō with the Tenshin Hyōhō transmitted at Kurama since Kiichi Hōgen. This is a common pattern of establishing pedigree.

In at least one line the bōjutsu’s technical roots are traced more prosaically not to mountains but to other warrior schools — Shintō-ryū long-sword and Araki-ryū. The Kuki family itself acknowledges this Ōkuni transmission as one of its recognized lines, noting that the twenty-fifth sōke learned the Ōkuni-den Kukishin-ryū and that the Edo transmission was not the only orthodoxy.

So, while inspired by Shugendō, Kukishin is an early Edo-period bōjutsu art attributed to Ōkuni Kihei Shigenobu and related to a line of Yōshin-ryū that became Hontai Yōshin-ryū. But it draws heavily on Shugendō in its own origin making and identity.

There has been a great deal of academic study, establishing its source documents as twentieth century forgeries.

The Kuki family's ancient claims rest on the same textual corpus as the Kuki monjo — the Kukami monjo, one of the koshi-koden, a forgery asserting the legitimacy of an ancient Izumo dynasty, supposedly recorded in kami-yo script by the Kuki ancestor Ame-no-Koyane and rendered into kanji by Fujiwara no Fuhito.

Academia is uniform here: the koshi-koden are treated wholesale as forgeries with no source value, and the corpus including the Kuki document is regarded as recently created. The connection to the ryūha is not loose — the “Amatsu Tatara secret text” is part of the Kuki-document group, and the Kukishin jūjutsu system is itself said to be recorded in the thirty-four-scroll Amatsu Tatara compilation, so the martial densho and the forged ancient history share the same textual frame.

It is true, however, that the Kuki family is from Kumano, a Shugendō heartland. Sakamoto (in his work that won the 2007 Japan Society for the Study of Mountain Religion prize) establishes that the Kumano bettō house is solid, well-documented history, but his subject is the bettō organization and its political lineage, not a martial line, so it corroborates the setting of the Yakushimaru Takazane claim without corroborating the claim itself.

The unsupported step is from family to yamabushi ryūha. Shugendō complexes held militia but produced no codified ryūha, so a Kumano-yamabushi derivation functions as prestige attachment rather than institutional descent. Here the charter happens to rest on a forged document corpus and a Taishō nationalist revival.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>This tradition insists the 鬼 in Kuki be written with a special glyph lacking the top stroke and read “Kukami” rather than “Kuki.” That variant-graph move to mark a more archaic, sacral reading is likely a prestige-borrowing device.

## 3. DOCTRINE AND CONTEMPLATION

## 3.1. Before Heaven and Earth

There in an interesting verse said to be by Fu Dashi (傅大士) — also known as Shanhui Dashi (善慧大士) or Fu Xi (傅翁), the lay Buddhist figure of the Liang dynasty (497–569). It is a four-line gāthā:

有物先天地 \ 無形本寂寥 \ 能為萬象主 \ 不逐四時凋

yǒu wù xiān tiāndì \ wúxíng běn jìliáo \ néng wéi wànxiàng zhǔ \ bù zhú  
sìshí diāo

there is a thing prior to Heaven and Earth \ formless, originally Still and Void  
\ it can be master of the myriad images \ it does not wither with the four  
seasons

It appears as the second of the Song er shou (頌二首; sòng èr shǒu; “Two Gāthās”) in the Shanhui Dashi yulu (善慧大士語錄; Shànhuì Dàshì yǔlù; “Recorded Sayings of the Great Being Shanhui”). It is also widely quoted in later Chan compendia and commentaries.

Although the verse is transmitted as a Chan gāthā on the dharmakāya / true nature, it deliberately echoes Daodejing ch. 25: 有物混成，先天地生。寂兮寥兮，獨立而不改...可以為天地母 (“there is a thing formed in chaos, born before Heaven and Earth; silent and void, standing alone and unchanging... it can be mother of all under Heaven”). That shared “先天地” (xiān tiāndì; prior to Heaven and Earth).

The verse sits at the Buddhist–Daoist seam and to me seems evocative of the concept of wújí (無極; the limitless). It is found in the preface of a Shinkage-ryū densho I encountered in my research.

The line 無形本寂寥 (wúxíng běn jìliáo) maps directly onto the core Yagyū teaching of the mukei no kurai (無形の位; the “formless position”), and the tradition’s deep Zen entanglement (Takuan’s Fudōchi Shinmyōroku [不動智神妙錄] addressed to Yagyū Munenori) makes a Fu Dashi (傅大士) Chan gāthā an unsurprising choice.

## 3.2. The Mind Pervades All Realms (心遍萬境)

心遍萬境 (*Shin-hen Bankyō*; xīn biàn wàn jìng; “the mind pervades all realms”), is a *gokui* (極意; inner teaching) recorded in an early Kyūshū Shinkage-ryū densho.

The exact four-graph string 心遍萬境 is **not** attested in the transmitted Chinese Buddhist canon, nor in searchable Japanese Buddhist or Edo-period printed corpora. It is internally attested only in the densho under study.

It is most economically read as a recasting of the ubiquitous Chan gāthā *Shin zui bankyō ten* (心隨萬境轉; xīn suí wàn jìng zhuǎn; “the mind turns following the myriad realms”) attributed to Manura (摩拏羅), substituting 遍 (“pervade”) for the passive 隨..轉 (“be turned by”), and drawing conceptually on Huayan mind-only doctrine (三界唯心 / 一切唯心造) without quoting any single sutra.

**Method.** Full-text search / `grep` using AI (Opus 4.8) across (a) the transmitted Chinese canon; (b) the open web index; (c) modern Japanese printed corpora; (d) Edo-period *kotenseki* full text. Controls were run in each interface; a target null is reported only where controls fired.

### Findings

- **CBETA, whole canon (~240 million CJK characters), controls fired.** 心遍萬境 = 0. Controls: 心隨萬境轉 = 136 occ / 100 works; 萬境 = 1210 / 535; 心遍 = 761 / 362; 遍一切境 = 30 / 23; 心遍一切處 = 39 / 20. The nearest canonical idioms use 一切 where the densho uses 萬. → **hard null.**
- **Avatamsaka (華嚴經) attribution — claimed and rejected.** A web/AI explainer sourced the phrase to the *Kegon-kyō*; 心遍萬境 is absent from T278/T279/T293 (all within the CBETA scan). The genuine Huayan mind-only doctrine is worded 三界唯心 (十地品) and 一切唯心造 (覺林菩薩偈, 八十華嚴 卷 19; Taishō vol. 10, 102a) — neither is this string. → refuted; conceptual pedigree only.
- **Open web index (Google-backed), three exact-phrase probes** (plain, OR-variant, Zen/bugei context). 0 exact hits; only 心隨萬境轉 surfaces. → soft, index-limited.
- **SAT2018.** Not independently re-run: shares the Taishō base text with CBETA-T, so it is not an independent witness for this query.
- **NDL Ngram Viewer (modern printed books/magazines).** Blank; subject to an LFU frequency floor that can suppress near-hapax n-grams, so weaker than absence.
- **NDL 次世代デジタルライブラリー (Edo woodblock kotenseki).** 心遍萬境 and 心遍万境 both blank; subject to kuzushiji-OCR error → soft null, needs image confirmation.
- **NDL Digital Collections (broad full-text).** 心遍 returns hits; 心遍萬 and 遍萬境 both return none, forcing the 4-gram to 0 by substring monotonicity; the 萬 leg independently confirmed present (e.g. in 武術名家傳, 1902). → **hard null.**
- **Hanazono IRIZ Denshi Daruma / Zenseki. NOT YET SEARCHED** — no public search interface located; curated Edo Rinzai/Ōbaku transcription with no OCR discount; the single corpus most able to overturn the null.
- **Takuan Sōhō corpus (沢庵和尚全集) — NOT YET SEARCHED.** NDL-digitized (pid 1218309 ff.) but released only via 図書館・個人送信 (no open view; 個人送信 excludes overseas residents); its clean movable-type text is nonetheless indexed by NDL full-text search, so the phrase check is runnable there. Prime Edo Zen/bugei candidate alongside IRIZ (*Fudōchi shinmyōroku, Taiaki*).

**Residual limitation.** Genuinely vernacular Japanese bugei/Zen *manuscript material* (the *Fudōchi shinmyōroku* register, Yagyū *Heihō* kadensho, *Shinkage-ryū densho*) is not comprehensively searchable, so the affirmative “Japanese coinage”

reading cannot be proven the same \*way; only the canonical/print null half is established.

### Manura gāthā — first occurrence and context

The verse is the transmission gāthā (*fugeju* 付偈) of Manura (摩拏羅), the 22nd Indian patriarch, spoken to his successor Heikḷanna (鶴勒那). In the corpus its earliest extant occurrence is the *Zutang ji* (祖堂集; *Sodōshū*, 952; CBETA B25n0144), whose Manura chapter opens with “具如寶林傳也” (“as fully given in the *Baolin zhuan*”), crediting the now largely-lost *Baolin zhuan* (寶林傳, 801) as its source. (靜筠二禪師 (Jing and Yun, comp.) 952 AD)

The most-diffused version is the *Jingde chuandeng lu* (景德傳燈錄, 1004; T2076); across the corpus the gāthā recurs in ~90 works (lamp records, *Dahui yulu* T1998A, *Biyan lu* T2003, and much of the Zokuzōkyō / Jiaxing Chan literature). (道原 (Daoyuan) 1004)

**Text (earliest witnesses agree):** 心隨萬境轉／轉處實能幽／隨流認得性／無喜復無憂 — the earliest reading is 無喜復無憂 (*fù*), not the later-circulating 無喜亦無憂 (*yì*).

### Narrative frame:

Manura entrusts Heikḷanna with the *shōbōgenzō* (正法眼藏; treasury of the true dharma eye) — “guard it, let it not be cut off” — and speaks the verse; the *Jingde chuandeng lu* recension ties it to liberating a flock of cranes (鶴眾, former disciples reborn in avian form), after which Manura enters final quiescence.

The verse is therefore a *transmission* teaching on the mind-object relation: the mind is carried through the myriad realms (境), yet one who recognises [self-]nature within the flux is beyond joy and sorrow — the passive “turned by” polarity that the densho phrase 心遍萬境 inverts. In the *Xu chuandeng lu* (續傳燈錄, T2077) a Song-court speaker even cites the verse and misattributes it to the third patriarch’s *Xinxin ming* (信心銘) — evidence it circulated detached from its Manura source.

### Contrast to the Avatamsaka (華嚴經)

The *Avatamsaka-sūtra* (大方廣佛華嚴經; *Daihōkō butsu Kegon-kyō*; “Flower-Ornament Sutra”) is a large composite Mahāyāna scripture assembled in Central Asia by c. the 4th century from originally independent texts. Three Chinese recensions are standard: the 60-fascicle (T278, trans. Buddhahadra, 418–420), the 80-fascicle (T279, trans. Śikṣānanda, 695–699), and the 40-fascicle (T293, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* alone).

Its cosmology centres on Vairocana (毘盧遮那) and the mutual interpenetration of all phenomena — *ichi-soku-issai* (一即一切; “one is all”) and *hokkai engi* (法界緣起; dharmadhātu dependent-arising). Its two oldest and most influential chapters are the *Jūji-hon* (十地品; Daśabhūmika, the ten bodhisattva grounds, source of 三界唯心 “the three realms are mind-only”) and the *Nyū-hokkai-hon* (入法界品; Gaṇḍavyūha, the pilgrim Sudhana / 善財童子 visiting fifty-three teachers).

It is the doctrinal basis of the Huayan (華嚴宗) / Kegon school (historically at Tōdai-ji). The mind-only line 一切唯心造 — belongs to the *Yuishin-ge* (唯心偈) of the *Kakurin Bosatsu ge* (覺林菩薩偈), 80-fascicle, fasc. 19 (Taishō vol. 10, 102a) but the phrase 心遍萬境 does not occur in it. (實叉難陀 (Śikṣānanda, trans.) 699 AD)

### Corpora consulted (with result and independence limits)

#### Edo-period primary corpus (open test)

#### Source under investigation

#### Corpus access (downloads)

- **CBETA XML P5** — full canon, all collections (Taishō, Zokuzōkyō, Jiaxing, Bubian, etc.); the corpus searched in this dossier. Repo: <https://github.com/cbeta-org/xml-p5> · tarball (~530 MB): <https://codeload.github.com/cbeta-org/xml-p5/tar.gz/refs/heads/master>
- **DILA CBETA-txt** — Taishō only, plain text. Repo: <https://github.com/DILA-edu/CBETA-txt> · tarball (~325 MB): <https://codeload.github.com/DILA-edu/CBETA-txt/tar.gz/refs/heads/master>
- **CBETA text-analysis data / download hub**: [https://cbdata.dila.edu.tw/static\\_pages/download\\_fulltext](https://cbdata.dila.edu.tw/static_pages/download_fulltext)
- **CBETA offline reader (CBReader) and site**: <https://www.cbeta.org>
- **SAT Daizōkyō** (online search; Taishō): <https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/>
- **NDL Ngram datasets** (PDM ngram dumps): <https://github.com/ndl-lab/ndlngramdata>
- **NDL classical-OCR text datasets**: [https://lab.ndl.go.jp/data\\_set/ocr/](https://lab.ndl.go.jp/data_set/ocr/)

#### Conventions

- Tier in keywords: **primary** = classical text / archival document; **secondary** = modern reference, database, or scholarship.
- **reliability** = one-sentence provenance/evidentiary note stating independence limits.
- **archive / shelfmark / access** on primary entries only.

### 3.3. A-Un, Gogyō, Godai and Beyond

#### Shunkashūtō

Shunkashūtō (春夏秋冬; Four Seasons) is an organizing principle used in Jikishinkage-ryū. Its curriculum is structured to follow the natural cycle of the year: beginning with the growth and blossoming of Spring, moving into the intense activity of Summer, maturing into precise control of Autumn and resolving into the unified silence of Winter. The mid-17th century assignment is as follows:

1. Spring (Wood): Hassō Happa, Ittō Ryōdan, Uten Saten, Chōtan Ichimi
2. Summer (Fire): Ryūbi, Menkage
3. Autumn (Metal): Teppa, Matsukaze, Hayafune, Kokushaku
4. Winter (Water): Enren

From as early as 1800 onward, Hōjō is considered to encompass all the seasons (and is the phase of earth, emphasizing the changes between seasons). Tō no Kata is then performed with spring kiai, Kodachi with summer kiai, Habiki with autumn kiai and Marubashi with the silent kiai of winter. Earth is then associated with the transitional phases between seasons — an evolution from the earlier Sangaku-en practice of Kamiizumi Ise no Kami, where there are five explicit kata that could map in a purely cyclical manner, with harvest time (the peak of summer) being its own season of the earth phase, interposed between fire (producing earth-link ash and charcoal from wood) and metal (originating in the earth).

### Godai and Gogyō

Shunkashūtō encodes both Yin-Yang and Gogyō (五行; “five phase” or wǔxíng) structures. The character 行 means to go, to move, to act, and the five phases (gyō) are dynamic states of transformation (wood gives rise to fire, fire to earth, etc., in cyclical generation and overcoming). They aren’t material substances but instead modes of process. Each is associated to a season.

In contrast, the Godai (五大) or mahābhūta (“great elements”) are the foundational constituent realities of physical existence in Indian Buddhist cosmology: pṛthvī, ap, tejas, vāyu, ākāśa. They are conceived as substantial — irreducible constituents of matter and perception. They are distinct from the Western Aristotelian elements.

In Mikkyō, rokudai (六大; six great elements) adds shiki (識; vijñāna or consciousness) distinct from shin (心; “mind”): this is Kūkai’s signature framework in Shingon — the six great elements as the substance of the Dharmakāya. The shichidai (七大; seven great elements) scheme — from the Śūraṅgama Sūtra and inherited into Tendai and some Mikkyō analysis — adds ken (見; perception/seeing) as the seventh element.

This is somewhat in contrast to Vajrayāna-influenced arrangements, which may include the concept of prabhāsvara (Skt., clear light or luminosity; Tib. ‘od gsal), or in Sino-Japanese kōmyō (光明; light/radiance). This appears in Tantric layered cosmologies (notably Kālacakra and Dzogchen in Tibetan systems), where the elements have progressively subtler manifestations, with clear light as the most refined. Clear-light is not part of standard Shingon or Tendai doctrine.

### A-Un Kokyū

How does Hōjō practice relate to Godai theory?

Niō-dachi (仁王立; lit. “Deva king standing posture”) is a characteristic ritual posture inspired by the paired temple guardians, who are two Deva kings, and relates to balancing yin and yang in the body as expressed through the practice of a-un kokyū (阿吽・呼吸; (a-hūṃ in Sanskrit) breathing) — paired open and sealed breaths in mirror of the Niō guardians.



FIGURE 15. Niō guardian at Arasawa-ji in Haguro-machi

The guardians are depicted in pairs. Both figures are viewed in Esoteric Buddhism as manifestations of Shūkongōshin (執金剛神) also known as Vajrapāni (वज्रपाणि), the vajra thunderbolt-wielding Bodhisattva who symbolizes the Buddha's power. Nārāyaṇa (那羅延金剛; Naraen Kongō) or Un-gyō (吽形) stands on the left, with his mouth closed, symbolizing death and completion making the sound of the last Devanagari character HUM(ह्रूं). He is the Buddha's warrior attendant, the Yaksha Deity (夜叉神), and wields Indra's lightning bolt vajra as a weapon.<sup>14</sup>

Originally in India, Nārāyaṇa was a singular figure, but in China, a mirror figure named Guhyapati (密迹金剛; Misshaku Kongō; "Lord of Secrets") or A-gyō (阿形) in Japanese was introduced. They both typically stand outside temple gates, the figures as a pair being known as in China as Heng and Ha (哼哈二將), Guhyapati is positioned on the right with his mouth open, symbolizing birth and beginning making the sound of the Devanagari character AH (अः).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Vajrapani was venerated at the historical Shaolin Temple from the eighth century, his thunderbolt eventually becoming the monk's staff. He also is associated with the Greek deity Zeus and the hero Heracles in the Greco-Buddhism of the 3rd and 4th centuries.

<sup>15</sup>The mantra om̐ āḥ hūm̐ (ॐ अः ह्रूं) is an important three syllable mantra representing the enlightened body, speech and mind of the Buddha.

A-un kokyū (阿吽呼吸; harmonized breathing rhythm), the characteristic breathing style of Jikishinkage-ryū is named in homage to these guardians and their symbolism of life and death, yin and yang, initiation and completion.



FIGURE 16. Niō guardian at Arasawa-ji in Haguro-machi

Physical adoption of postures modeled after the Niō guardians may be due to an import of ideas from the Niō Zen Buddhism of Suzuki Shōsan (鈴木正三; 1579–1655), an early Edo period samurai who studied in the Ōtōkan (應燈關) lineage of Rinzaï Zen at Myōshin-ji (妙心寺; also called Shōbōzan 正法山) in Kyoto, and independently claimed attainment of a form of Zen self-actualization called Mushi-dokugo (無師独悟; “independent realization without a master”). This is one potential source for the Niō-dachi practice imagery in Jikishinkage-ryū kenjutsu as Suzuki popularized the idea of imitating the postures of the Niō guardians and using their form as an object of meditation. This may be the early Edo period influence upon what later became organized as the four-part Hōjō practice we see today, as characteristic a-un kokyū and niō-dachi are not found in other approaches to Shinkage-ryū that diverged from one another around that time.



FIGURE 17. Shingon taizōkai (Womb Realm Mandala)

But, underneath the apparent surface of the Niō duality, Vajrapani is an important figure in esoteric Buddhism, symbolizing the Buddha's power. Vajrapani is depicted as part of the inner retinue of protective deities in the central wisdom hall portion of the Womb Mandala (pictured above), representing the *dharmakāya* ("truth body") of the Buddha, which has been likened to the space of emptiness in which all is dissolved.

If the dual aspect of the Niō can be thought of evocative of yin-yang complementarity, then the figure of Vajrapani might also be symbolic of the Tàijí concept in Daoist cosmology — infinite potential — *dharmakāya* might be akin to the Daoist concept of Wuji. In Buddhism, the *dharmakāya* itself does not change into a supreme ultimate (such as in Wuji to Tàijí in Daoist cosmology), but does manifest the *nirmanakāya* (physical bodies) and *sambhogakāya* (bliss bodies) of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. I find that parallel worth noting.

#### 3.4. Goshinhō shidai: self-protection methods

護身法次第 We look at the 1675 Goshinhō Shidai, a Mikkyō (esoteric Buddhist) self-protection ritual manual dated Enpō 3 (1675) by Masatake or Yokoi:

正武 Masatake [横井 Yokoi?] (recipient/transmitter); seal of Dai-Ajari Hōin 大阿闍梨法印. Goshinhō shidai 護身法次第 [Order of self-protection methods].

Manuscript scroll, Enpō 3 (1675), 12th month [kinoto-u year]. 18.1 × 840.0 cm; ink annotations; insect damage; scroll mounting; appended catalog of contents (附: 目録之次第). Call no. ケ 05 01033. Waseda University Library Kotenseki Sōgō Database, Tokyo.

The Yokoi 1675 Goshinhō Shidai, classified by Waseda University Library under “ancient military affairs” (軍事—古代兵事), is preserved in the same archival cluster (call no. ke05 01033) as the Jikishinkage-ryū transmission scrolls ke05 01032 0001–0003.

Its author 正武 is likely Natori Masatake:

名取三十郎正澄 (later 正武), pen-name 藤一水子正武. The 国史大辞典 gives his name precisely as “名取三十郎正武 (初め正澄).” He was a military *gungakusha* (軍学者; military strategist/scholar) of the Kishū domain who served as military-science instructor to the Kishū Tokugawa lord Yorinobu, founded the Shin-Kusunoki / Natori school (新楠流・名取流; Shin-Kusunoki school, Natori school), and authored the Shōninki — one of Japan’s three great transmission texts related to ninjutsu. His grave was rediscovered in 2012 at Eun-ji in Wakayama. He built his system by joining his family’s Kōshū-ryū military science to the Kusunoki line, and besides the Shōninki he left many other military-science works — a weapons compendium (建囊 説略), the 兵家常談 and others.

The 1675 Goshinhō contains protective rituals used by warriors of the time period, so I examine it in some detail below. This document would be contemporary with the time of Takahashi Danjō Shigeharu (6th-generation, Jikishinsai) and Yamada Mitsunori (7th-generation, Ippūsai) period of Jikishinkage-ryū transmission and thus from the cultural milieu in which that formalization was happening.

The seal 大阿闍梨法印 (Dai-Ajari Hōin):

- 大阿闍梨 (Dai-Ajari) — “Great Ācārya,” from Sanskrit ācārya. This is the highest rank for a Buddhist master qualified to transmit esoteric (mikkyō) teachings. The title is used in Tendai (天台宗) and Shingon (真言宗) Buddhism, and also in Shugendō (修験道), which integrates esoteric Buddhist transmission with mountain asceticism.
- 法印 (Hōin) — “Dharma-Seal,” the highest of three formal Buddhist ranks (above 法眼 Hōgen and 法橋 Hokkyō).

Dai-Ajari Hōin identifies the seal-holder as a fully-ranked esoteric Buddhist master with authority to perform transmission rites. This is the title of either Yokoi Masatake’s master (the figure from whom he received the transmission), or possibly Yokoi’s own posthumous Buddhist title if he himself was an ordained ācārya. The structure of the colophon — Yokoi’s name below, master’s title-and-seal above — suggests the former: this is Yokoi receiving from a Dai-Ajari Hōin in 1675.

**護身法次第 (Goshinhō Shidai)**

This document is titled “Order of Self-Protection Methods” and begins with a series of Mikkyō (esoteric Buddhist) protection rituals, each with a Sanskrit mantra transliterated in Chinese characters and a procedural rubric:

1. 三業淨 (sangō-jō) — Purification of the Three Karmas: 唵婆縛婆縛梳馱薩縛達摩 (Om svabhāva-śuddha sarva-dharma)
2. 佛部三昧耶 (Butsu-bu sanmaya) — Buddha-Family Samaya
3. 蓮華部三昧耶 (Renge-bu sanmaya) — Lotus-Family Samaya
4. 金剛部三昧耶 (Kongō-bu sanmaya) — Vajra-Family Samaya
5. 被甲護身 (hikō goshin) — “Donning Armor for Self-Protection”

The opening sequence is the canonical *goshu goshin* (五種護身, Five Protections) sequence used in Tendai and Shingon *kaji* (加持; empowerment ritual/esoteric prayer) rituals. This part of the document is not school-specific; any Mikkyō master would transmit this. Its presence simply confirms the document is from authentic esoteric Buddhist transmission, not a popular or syncretic adaptation.

### 九字不事 (Kuji Fuji)

The famous Nine-Character Mantra, each character paired with its prescribed mudrā (hand seal): Character Reading Mudrā

1. 臨 Rin 普賢三昧耶印 (Fugen Samaya-in)
2. 兵 Pyō / Hyō 金剛輪印 (Kongōrin-in)
3. 鬪 Tō 内獅子印 (Naishishi-in)
4. 者 Sha 外獅子印 (Geshishi-in)
5. 皆 Kai 外縛印 (Gebaku-in)
6. 陳 Jin 内縛印 (Naibaku-in)
7. 烈 Retsu 智拳印 (Chiken-in)
8. 在 Zai 日輪印 (Nichirin-in)
9. 前 Zen 宝瓶印 (Hōbyō-in)

This is the kuji-in practice originally derived from the Daoist *Baopuzi* but incorporated into Japanese Mikkyō and Shugendō, widely used as a pre-combat protective ritual.

Chiken-in is distinctively Vajra-realm mandala-based. This particular mudrā assignment is the Shugendō standard set as transmitted through Tendai-affiliated Shugendō lineages (particularly the Honzan-ha 本山派 centered on Shōgo-in 聖護院 in Kyoto). Chiken-in is the central mudrā of Mahāvairocana in the Vajra-realm mandala (金剛界曼荼羅; Diamond Realm mandala), the Tendai-favored mandala interpretation.

Shingon-affiliated Tōzan-ha 当山派 Shugendō tradition uses slightly different mudrā assignments (particularly for 鬪 and 陳). This places Yokoi’s transmission most plausibly in the Tendai-affiliated Shugendō (Honzan-ha) tradition, though Tendai proper (without a Shugendō overlay) is also possible.

### 十字大事 (Jūji daiji)

Next follows 十字大事 (Jūji daiji) — “The Ten Characters Great Matter” — an extension giving ten additional characters for use in specific dangerous situations: Character Application context (paraphrased from text)

1. 天 Ten When facing high officials or great men of rank
2. 龍 Ryū When crossing bridges or rivers
3. 虎 Ko When traveling through deep mountains, wilderness, far-field
4. 王 Ō When facing bows, soldiers, mountain bandits, sea pirates
5. 命 Mei When traveling at night
6. 鬼 Ki In crowds, when troubled by thoughts in someone’s presence
7. 勝 Shō Regarding tea, sake, poisoned foods
8. 庵 On When buying or selling
9. 大 Dai At places of water, boats, water-related danger
10. 水 Sui For swallowing things, water-related circumstances

This Jūji extension is the more idiomatically Japanese piece of the document — the Nine-Character core is Sino-Japanese standard Mikkyō, but the Ten Character list with situational applications is a school-specific elaboration.<sup>16</sup>

The Nine Characters are pan-Japanese esoteric Buddhist; thousands of documents transmit them. The Ten Character extension with practical situational applications is far rarer, and its specific content here is highly suggestive:

- Travel-protection emphasis (crossing rivers, deep mountains, night travel) — this is the practical world of an itinerant practitioner. Yamabushi (mountain-ascetic Shugendō practitioners) and shugenja (their lay associates) were exactly this kind of itinerant figure, moving between mountain pilgrimage sites and lay communities.
- Combat/danger emphasis (王 for soldiers and bandits) — this fits both Shugendō practitioners (who needed protection in remote areas) and martial practitioners (who needed it in combat).
- Commerce protection (庵 for buying/selling) — Shugendō practitioners often served as itinerant ritual specialists for lay communities, including merchants, and the Jūji daiji with commerce protections is the kind of practical kuji-yōhō (九字用法, “applied uses of the kuji”) that Shugendō transmission collected.
- Disease protection (the 瘧/疫病 mention) — Shugendō practitioners served as kitōshi (祈祷師, prayer-specialists) for plague mitigation and healing rituals; this fits.
- Status-related protection (天 for high officials, 大 for entering great residences) — relevant to both warrior-class practitioners and Shugendō figures who served warrior patrons.

The composite picture is of a practical protection-ritual handbook designed for someone who moves through a range of mundane situations carrying spiritual risk

<sup>16</sup>A possible 11th entry near 大/水 mentions 瘧病 (gyaku-byō, intermittent fever/malaria) and 疫病 (eki-byō, epidemic disease) — this may either be a separate entry or part of the explanation for one of the existing characters (most likely linked to 勝 or 水).

— i.e., either a Shugendō practitioner in his pastoral role or, equally plausibly, a lay practitioner who received this transmission as a personal protection set for his own life situations. Yokoi Masatake's name without a Buddhist title (he is just Yokoi Masatake, not Yokoi Masatake Hōin or similar) suggests he was a lay recipient, who received the Goshinhō from a Dai-Ajari Hōin master as a personal protection transmission. Given his established history as a teacher of strategy and special methods of ninjutsu, this seems plausible.

### Historical Context

In December 1675, some relevant cultural-historical conditions:

1. Tokugawa Ietsuna's reign (4th shogun, r. 1651–1680). The bakufu had stabilized; samurai families were transitioning from active warriors to administrative officials, but the cultural memory and practice of martial-spiritual integration was still very alive.
2. Shugendō was at a peak of institutional power in this period, with both Honzan-ha (Tendai-affiliated, Shōgo-in) and Tōzan-ha (Shingon-affiliated, Daigo-ji Sanbō-in) operating substantial networks. The Edo bakufu had regulated Shugendō with the Shugendō Hatto of 1613, formalizing the two-school structure, but the practice itself remained widespread.
3. Samurai patronage of mikkyō and Shugendō transmission was standard. Many samurai families had ongoing relationships with specific temples or Shugendō lineages for protective ritual purposes. A samurai receiving a Goshinhō transmission in 1675 from a Dai-Ajari Hōin master would be entirely normal.
4. Yokoi (横井) is a recognizable samurai surname, including notable lines in Owari and Mikawa provinces (the Yokoi of the Hosokawa-Owari household later produced Yokoi Shōnan, the famous late-Edo political theorist). Yokoi was not a ninja — he was a high-level samurai military science instructor.

Masatake was a samurai, a military scientist of the Kishū domain who served as military-science *gungaku-shinan'yaku* (軍学指南役; military arts instructor role) to the Kishū daimyō Tokugawa Yorinobu, having studied under Kusunoki Masatatsu and others and founded the Shin-Kusunoki / Natori school. His was a hereditary retainer house: his father Yajiemon Masatoyo entered the Kishū domain in Tokugawa Yorinobu's service, and the Natori line descended from Natori Yoichinojō Masatoshi, a retainer of the Takeda house of Kai (Kōshū) — Sanjūrō himself learned the ancestral Kōshū-ryū military methods and the Kusunoki gungaku and served Yorinobu as a domain retainer. The 国史大辞典 likewise identifies him plainly as a Kishū-domain military scientist. So: a career bushi, a domain *hanishi* (藩士; feudal domain retainer) in a military-science specialization. Although he wrote the Shōninki, he was a samurai gungaku scholar, not a ninja.

The document is signed:

延寶三年卯曆十二月吉日 横井正武 大河閣斂法印 [seal]

Enpō 3 [1675], Year of the Rabbit, 12th month, auspicious day. Yokoi Masatake (横井正武). [Seal of] Daikaku-an Rēnpō-in” (or similar — the seal characters 大河閣斂法印 may also be read 大河閣・斂法印 or as part of a longer formal Buddhist title)

### Comparing against Shingon Kuji

Comparing against another Kuji document from 1812:

本間百里(写), 文化 9[1812]honmahyakuri(sha) 7.5×135.9-17.5×30.1cm(外寸 17.5×200.4cm)本間叢書奥書:水嶋卜也ほか一部朱書欠落あり卷子装印記:源百里印,百里,伯爵本間百里旧蔵九字大事. 十字秘曲. 護身法大事. 護身法

This document is from the Honma Sōsho (本間叢書), the Honma family collection from Sakata in Dewa Province (modern Yamagata), formerly owned by Count Honma Hyakuri (伯爵本間百里旧蔵).

The document is dated Bunka 9 (1812), late mid-spring (around March of 1812). Copyist is Honma Hyakuri (本間百里) with seals 源百里印 and 百里. The transmission chain visible in the colophon includes Mizushima Bokuya (水嶋卜也), Itō Jin’emon (伊藤甚右衛門) and several individuals using the Yuki-character (幸氏, 幸堯, 幸督, 辛督) as a family-marker — these appear to be members of a samurai house whose dōji-character (shared given-name component) is 幸. Final endpoints Matsuoka Seisuke (松岡清助) and Honma Yoichi/Hyakuri (本間與一/本間百里).

It has four titled sections:

1. 九字大事 (Kuji Daiji) — Great Matter of the Nine Characters
2. 十字秘曲 (Jūji Hikyoku) — Secret Composition of the Ten Characters
3. 護身法大事 (Goshinhō Daiji) — Great Matter of the Self-Protection Method
4. 護身法 (Goshinhō) — Self-Protection Method

Both documents share the same broad ritual architecture, but have significant differences.

The Yokoi 1675 document for Rin lists 普賢三昧耶印 (Fugen Samaya), whereas the 1812 document lists 小劔印 (Shōken-in, “Small Sword”). In the 3rd and 4th places of the kuji, the inner and outer lion depictions are swapped. This is true for different kuji transmissions — they are from different lineages.

The Honma includes a second column for each character giving its associated deity:

1. 臨 多聞天 (Tamonten / Vaiśravaṇa)
2. 兵 持國天 (Jikokuten / Dhṛtarāṣṭra)
3. 鬪 增長天 (Zōchōten / Virūdhaka)
4. 者 廣目天 (Kōmokuten / Virūpākṣa)
5. 皆 降三世 (Gōzanze / Trailokyavijaya)
6. 陳 軍荼利 (Gundari / Kuṇḍalī)

7. 烈 金剛夜叉 (Kongōyasha / Vajrayakṣa)
8. 在 大威德 (Daiitoku / Yamāntaka)
9. 前 不動明王 (Fudō Myōō / Acalanātha)

This is the canonical Four Heavenly Kings + Five Wisdom Kings (四天王 + 五大明王) deity-pairing system — a standard Shingon arrangement also found in Tendai. The first four characters get the four heavenly kings (the protectors of the four directions); the last five get the five wisdom kings (the wrathful manifestations who subdue obstacles).

The Jūji content is substantively different:

- Yokoi 1675 (十字大事): 天龍虎王命鬼勝唵大水 — primarily samurai-life situations: facing officials, crossing rivers, mountains, soldiers/bandits, night travel, crowds, poisoned food, commerce, great houses, drinking.
- Honma 1812 (十字秘曲): 行虎善神佛散心破勝一光 — primarily religious-practice situations: road prayers, mountain paths, shrine visits, Buddha images, when enemies come, night travel, facing the enemy, boat-boarding

Only 虎 (Ko, mountain paths) and 勝 (Shō, victory/combat) appear in both lists. The rest of the character set differs entirely. These are not variants of the same Jūji tradition — they are parallel ten-character extensions developed independently within different transmission lines.

The titles themselves are distinct: 大事 (“Great Matter”) for the Yokoi vs. 秘曲 (“Secret Composition/Tune”) for the Honma. The “Secret Composition” framing in the Honma suggests a more liturgical conception (something to be recited as a ritual sequence); the “Great Matter” framing in the Yokoi suggests a more doctrinal conception (something to be understood and applied).

The Honma 1812 is designed to be teachable from the scroll itself — a practitioner with no prior instruction could approximate the mudrās from the diagrams. The Yokoi 1675 requires prior instruction — the text descriptions alone (内獅子印, 外縛印, etc.) presume the reader already knows what these mudrās look like. The Yokoi is a mnemonic transmission for someone already trained; the Honma is closer to an instructional manual.

The Honma colophon names a chain of human transmitters: Mizushima Bokuya → Itō Jin’emon → multiple Yuki-named figures → Matsuoka → Honma. This is traceable lineage. The Yokoi document gives only the seal-title of the Dai-Ajari Hōin master (whose personal identity is not stated) and Yokoi Masatake’s signature. This is anonymous master + named recipient.

The Honma format is consistent with how non-clerical bujutsu transmission lines documented their inheritance — by listing named human teachers. The Yokoi format is consistent with how clerical Mikkyō transmission documented inheritance — by an authoritative master-seal whose specific identity was secondary to the institutional authority. The Honma document, which has the explicit Four Heavenly Kings + Five Wisdom Kings pairing that is most strongly associated with formal

Shingon transmission and uses the opposite 闘/者 *mudrā* configuration from the Yokoi.

### End Notes

Interestingly, Takeda Sōkaku is recorded as having trained in the Shugendō kuji-goshinbō. Takeda Tokimune’s posthumous manuscript “Takeda Sōkaku Ichidaiki,” published in the magazine *Gekkan Hiden* in February 2010, claimed Sōkaku trained in Shingon esoteric Buddhism and Shugendō — specifically the kuji-goshinbō, *kiai-jutsu*, Yijing studies and folk healing. Ikezuki Ei in 2012 claimed his teacher was Nakagawa Man’nojō, described in Tokimune’s papers as a diviner who conveyed Shingon and Shugendō material to Sōkaku.

This material included the kuji-goshinbō, a five-phase health method, *inyō gōki hō* (陰陽合気法; “yin-yang aiki method” — likely the same as *aiki inyō ho*), *kiai-jutsu* and *jintsūriki-hō* (“supernatural-power method”). The latter, *jintsūriki* (神通力; “method of divine power”) refers to the *ṛddhi* (Buddhist supernatural faculties) grouped under the *abhijñā* (神通 or 六神通, six higher knowledges). 神通力法 is the discipline for attaining or wielding those powers. It sits naturally beside the traditional account’s claims that at Ryōzen Shrine Sōkaku mastered 遠知力 (*enchiriki*, far-knowing/clairvoyance) and 心眼力 (*shingenriki*, mind’s-eye): those are 神通力 of exactly this class, and 神通力法 names the method behind them.

Ikezuki’s book regards Takeda Sōkaku as the founder of *Daitō-ryū*. Sōkaku practicing kuji-goshinbō places him in the common Meiji-era esoteric milieu; it is not evidence of a unique ancient transmission.

### 3.5. Comparing Patanjali’s 8 Limbs with Buddha’s Noble 8-fold path

In addition to martial arts, I have practiced yoga for many years, first as an adjunct to my training (as well as climbing and running), and then as an end into itself. I attended teacher training at Midtown Yoga in Baltimore in 2006 and then taught in Maryland, before moving to Seattle. I also have maintained an interest in Buddhism and Taoism. I attended the Kalachakra for World Peace in 2011 and last year I began additional training in the union of Yoga and Tantric Buddhism offered through Tibet House US.

While yoga is commonly meant to be joined to (“yoked”) or associated with something, that association takes on different meaning depending on what one is associated to. In early Pali canon and Abhidharma writings, four types of negative associations were common that were considered by Asanga to be at odds with obtaining a purified state. They were: *Hamayoga*, *Bhavayoga*, *Drstiyoga* and *Avidyayoga*.

P. Gohkale’s analysis in *The Yogasūtra of Patañjali: A new introduction to the Buddhist roots of the yoga system* contrasts the negative usage above with the positive connotation yoga has in the Upanishads and early Brahminical literature, where *yogi* had the meaning of being a spiritual practitioner (one who yokes themselves). Asanga’s discussion of the fall from yoga (*yogabramsa*) enumerates different separations from the yogic path, either by rebirth (where one is incapable of

practicing yoga) or before or after attainment. This highlights the need for stricture or guidance on the path. Vasubandhu classifies the mind as potentially in afflicted/affected (klesha) or wholesome (kusala) states. Some contrasting mental states include concentrated vs. scattered, balanced vs. agitated, peaceful vs. disturbed, energetic vs. slothful, etc. We would like to cultivate the former and guard against the latter. (Pradeep P. Gokhale 2020)

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the ultimate goal is the development of discriminating wisdom (Viveka) in order to develop self-actualization and liberation through the dialectic contrast of the eternal (Atman) versus the temporal (Anatman). Here the path is reminiscent of the famous quote of the pavamāna abhyāroha from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (Patrick Olivelle 1998) (1.3.28):

Lead me from the unreal to the real.

The seventh brahma of the third chapter discusses the notion of the self as interconnected with all existence; the ninth then the notion of neti or equivalence. The Yoga sutras fit into this larger context, devoting attention to positive observances (niyamas) and restraints/restrictions (yamas) as part of its eight-fold ethical system for how one should relate to the world while on the path. These help guide the practitioner towards union with positive associations, potentially including Brahman (if entering the path of yoga from a theistic perspective) and Ishvara/Atman (from an individual perspective). The other six limbs of Patanjali are further tools to help develop the practitioner's discriminative awareness and include asana (posture), pranayama (breath practice), pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (absorption).

Asana and pranayama develop the outermost layers or sheathes (kosha) of the body mind processes – from anamayakosha (physical body) primarily in asana to pranamayakosha in pranayama – and serve as a fabric or weave on which additional practices are supported, in a mutually dependent manner.

Dharana (concentration) bears strong similarities to the Buddhist practice of Shamata, where a one-pointed concentration is developed first through a practice of calm abiding meditation with external support (such as a statue or mandala depiction or candle flame), internal support (such as the visualization of such statue or mandala), or without support (such as focusing on the breath, or in advanced teachings black and white drops that move up or down the susumna or central channel). This limb and the Buddhist Shamata practice is associated with the manomayakosha (mental body of thoughts, emotions and perceptions).

Dhyana (meditation) bears strong similarities to the Buddhist practice of Vipassana, which is an active analytical meditation that in Mahayana traditions is utilized as a technology or inner science for a variety of purposes. This limb and the Buddhist Vipassana practice is associated with Vijnanamayakosha (the intellect, intuition and wisdom).

One important practice in Mahayana is exploring the nature of the sense of self as being dependent on external support (dependent arising) versus existing independently and immutable compared to cyclic existence. This at first appears in contrast to the idea of discovering the atman (self/soul) in aspiration to connect with Ishvara, which in Advaita Vedanta is manifested in the form of Brahman. However, there is a strong parallel in Varjayana where one, through a process of dissolution and then post-meditative equipoise, develops insight into, on the subtle and super-subtle levels, the soul drop which is carried between liminal states (Bardo) and forms the continuity of karmic existence, albeit changing over time (in contrast to the immutable atman). Buddhist practices such as the exchange of self and other (tonglen) are used to help cultivate the altruistic motivation bodhicitta (the desire to end other being's suffering), as well as seeing everyone as one's mother in one of our infinite lives.

Samadhi (absorption or enlightenment) is the eighth limb of Patanjali's system of yoga, where the self is in union with the divine, and then discriminating awareness or wisdom (viveka; विवेक) allows the yogi to distinguish between the real (satya) and the unreal (asatya), the permanent from the impermanent and the true from false sense of self. In non-dual Advaita Vedanta, viveka helps the yogi understand the true nature of the world. The concept of viveka is often paired with vairagya (detachment).

In Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold Path (आर्याष्टाङ्गमार्ग) consists of right view or understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and samadhi; and is represented by the wheel of dharma. Right view includes acceptance of karma and karmic rebirth (which Vedic, Vedanta and Yogic traditions share with Buddhism) and the importance of the Four Noble Truths. Right thought or resolve concerns positive motivation and aspiration for practice. Right speech relates to satya (truthfulness). Right action correlates very strongly to the Yamas of Patanjali. For example, we can relate right action both to ahimsa (non-violence) and asteya (non-stealing) in the exoteric sense of avoiding causing immediate harm. In Mahayana, for example, vegetarianism is seen as a form of compassion for the animal world. When dealing with esoteric practices, we can point to extensive literature in the Tibetan tradition by Tsongkhapa on ethics in the practice of Tantra. Also here the yama (restraint) of Brahmacharya or moderation in the sexual domain. Right livelihood is not in direct correspondence to the yamas and niyamas, and I wonder if this might subtly point to the tantric nature of Patanjali's system, beyond immediate cause and effect, but ahimsa, asteya and brahmacharya do relate to different types of livelihood. Right effort correlates well with asana, pranayama and pratyahara. In the Pali canon the notion of indriya-samvara (guarding the sense doors) and the development of wholesome states (sapta bodhyanga) including mindfulness, dharmrapravicya, energy (virya), joy (priti), relaxation, concentration (samādhi) and equanimity (upekshā).

In the Mahayana tradition, the pāramita (perfections) include similar positive qualities to be cultivated, including generosity (dāna), virtue (sila), energy (viriya), patience (ksanti), honesty (sacca), determination (adhitthāna), loving-kindness (mettā), equanimity (upekkā), bala (power/strength), jnana (knowing)

and their source prajnapāramitra (the perfection of wisdom). Vīryapāramitā and Balapāramitā relate well to the physical body-mind processes/limbs in yoga. While initially asana and pranayama are cultivated to enable the adherent (yogi or yogini) to practice mental cultivations such as dharana and dyana, they themselves in a non-dual manner have an esoteric interpretation as cultivating tapas (heat, purification) in the body like the Atiyoga of Tummo. Similarly, the practice of yoga nidra seems (to my uninitiated perspective at least) to relate to the dream yoga of Naropa.

Where the Eight Limbs of Patanjali diverge, at first analysis, from Buddhist thought can be summarized by examining the Three Principal Aspects of the Path (to enlightenment) from the Tibetan tradition: renunciation, bodhicitta and wisdom realizing emptiness. This summary of the path stems from the inspiration of Shantideva, whose revealed teachings post-date Patanjali. Thus, the Yoga Sutras do not mention explicitly the cultivation of bodhicitta or conduct an examination of emptiness (shunyata). However, the nirbija samadhi (nirvikalpa samadhi, “samadhi without seed”) is samadhi without external support of an object. In nirvikalpa samadhi, the consciousness is filled with truth as to our true nature. One becomes filled with truth (ṛtambharā) (Swami Veda Bharati 2001) (1.47–48).

At the nirvikalpa stage of samadhi, spiritual light awakens (adhyātma prasāda) seemingly of its own accord, which to me feels evocative of some descriptions in Vajrayana practices such as Mahamudra (Dakpo Tashi Namgyal 2006) or Shingon practices such as the Ajikan meditation drawn from the Mahāvairocana-sūtra [Rolf W. Giebel (2005)](Ronald S. Green 2017)

These are but some similarities that provide a common ground for establishing a Buddhist practice of Yoga in the current day.

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