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The Absence of the Private: The *Jion-e* and Public Ritual in Pre-Modern Japan¹

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Kōfukuji (興福寺), one of pre-modern Japan's main monastic complexes and center of the *Hossō* school (法相) located in present-day Nara, was home to a wide variety of rituals, the most famous ones being undoubtedly the Vimalakīrti Assembly or *Yuima-e* (維摩会) and the *Jion-e* (慈恩会). For centuries these rituals had an enormous religious, political, and social impact on society, showing that Nara and Heian period Buddhism was *not* confined to the internal sphere of the temple. While the monastic elite and representatives of the court were present at the ritual, the temple and its surroundings attracted crowds of monks and commoners during the days of the ritual.

Documents and visual representations show us that these rituals took place in a specific delineated space (in case of the *Yuima-e* the lecture hall), included a selected audience, were held during a specific timeframe, featured specific ritual positions, included restricted forms of communication, and featured a preparation period demanding rigorous doctrinal study.² In addition, these rituals' official audience consisted of the most powerful, witnesses of "the symbolic connection between acts of ritual and ruling."³

Fujiwara no Munetada's (藤原宗忠, 1062–1141) diary *Chūyūki* (中右記) and the *Yuima-e*'s importance for promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs (*Sōgō*, 僧綱) clearly illustrate the significance this ritual held for over a millennium. While the once prestigious *Yuima-e* was discontinued in the late Edo period, the *Jion-e* is still held to this day, alternating between Kōfukuji and Yakushiji (薬師寺). Although its scale and format have been adapted significantly over the centuries, today's *Jion-e* is still one of the main events of the remaining Nara temples. However, these two rituals were once part of a complex web of internal (*dera no uchi*, 寺の内) and external national rituals (*kokkateki hōe*,

国家的法会) and were of great importance to advance institutionally, both inside and outside the temple. Within practitioners' ritual space, their doctrinal preparation, and the institutional framework they were part of, Buddhism and state met.⁴

For this reason, these rituals are ideal examples to understand the pre-modern Japanese state and analyze the complex position of the temples occupied within it. Indeed, an analysis of Buddhism and state often seems to imply a certain division between the two and assumes the existence of two opposing spheres. Based on an examination of the several levels of rituals and their relation to certain governmental offices, I would argue that such a distinction cannot easily be made and that ritual performance and institutional progress at both the temple and the court were thoroughly intertwined. This article discusses two sets of ritual interconnectedness that are of importance to understand how the temple's internal and external spheres were thoroughly connected.

First, I will analyze the relationship between the *Yuima-e* and the temple's main internal ritual, the *Jion-e*. I will draw a comparison between these two events and analyze the sequence of ritual appointments alternating between both rituals. Second, I will briefly discuss the position of the *Yuima-e* within the Three Southern Assemblies (*nankyō san'e*, 南京三会) and explain how the *Yuima-e* functioned as a connection between Kōfukuji's internal institutional and ritual organization on the one hand and the state on the other.

These two issues are in fact intrinsically connected with the question regarding the negotiation of power through ritual. Catherine Bell noted the importance of several possible approaches to analyze the ways in which forms of domination and power are constructed by ritual strategies. It seems the analysis of the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* within the framework of the state is especially relevant to the following two perspectives mentioned by Bell.⁵ First, monks who aspired to participate in these rituals were from the outset of their monastic training completely dominated by study and preparation relevant to ritual advancement. This aspect is illustrated by Hayashi Fumiko's research on Kamakura period ritual performance and doctrinal participation or Hiraoka Jōkai's work on the monk Sōshō (宗性, 1202–1278) of Tōdaiji (東大寺).⁶ As will be made clear below, especially the position of the candidate at these rituals illustrates this point well. Second, while the participant is dominated by the ritual's detailed format, language, and

prescriptions, the monk's "negotiated participation" empowers him and allows for considerable influence over others through religious and institutional advancement. The analysis of the *Yuima-e* and *Jion-e* candidate or lecturer then becomes a case-study of the participant's *social body*, a micro-network of constantly shifting power relations.⁷ Prior to my analysis I have to note that in my approach neither the ritual nor the participants' *social body* are interpreted as mere reflections of society. Rather, I would argue that the ritual site and its participants are the "changing soil" of constant changes and tensions that constitute the formation of power relations.⁸ The debates between participants of these rituals, the relation between the candidate and the lecturer, are then contacts between social bodies out of which the conditions arise for a specific kind of power. As will become clear at the end of my analysis, this power will consist of shared sovereignty, a whole of constantly shifting power relations between the temples and the court. Morally and legally sanctioned in the ritual sphere, this power was legitimized and authority was created.

THE YUIMA-E AND THE JION-E

Several eighth and ninth century sources such as the Fujiwara history *Tōshi kaden* (藤氏家伝) commissioned by Fujiwara no Nakamaro (藤原仲麻呂, 706–764) or the slightly later *Origin Chronicle of Kōfukuji* (*Kōfukuji engi*, 興福寺縁起) written by Fujiwara no Yoshiyo (藤原良世, 823–900) mention that the *Yuima-e* was founded by Fujiwara no Kamatari (藤原鎌足, 614–669), the patriarch of the Fujiwara clan and one of the main figures of the Taika reforms of 645. These sources mention how this ritual supposedly goes back to the recitation of the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* (*Yuimakyō*, 維摩經) by a nun from Silla following an illness of Kamatari in 669, the year he passed away. Even if this event took place, it means that the ritual consisted of a recitation and not a debate (*rongi*, 論議), and thus it was essentially different from the *Yuima-e* as it was held from the Nara period (710–794) onwards. After Kamatari's death, the ritual was first discontinued and later revived by his son Fujiwara no Fuhito (藤原不比等, 659–720). Fuhito has been described as the one who moved Kōfukuji's alleged predecessor Umayasaka-dera (厩坂寺) to its location in the capital Heijōkyō (平城京) where it was renamed "Kōfukuji."⁹ However, it remains unclear whether the construction of the temple started prior to or was completed in 710. In addition, much doubt remains about the temple's size and the sequence

of its construction through the early Nara period.¹⁰ Several temple histories such as the *Kōfukuji ryūki* (興福寺流記) or the *Hōjiki* (宝字記) indicate how the temple was expanded throughout the eighth century, which might explain why the *Yuima-e* was only fixed at Kōfukuji after the Nara period when the temple had grown into a larger complex.¹¹

After Fuhito's death, the *Yuima-e* was not held again until it was sponsored by Imperial Consort Kōmyō (光明皇太后, 701–760) in 733, when the ritual seems to have already had a seven-day format.¹² This unstable period ended in 757 after Nakamaro issued an edict that provided tax land as the permanent financial basis for the *Yuima-e* to remember the “meritorious deeds” of his great-grandfather Kamatari.¹³ Interestingly Kōfukuji received its first abbot, Jikun (慈訓, ?–777), in the same year, supported once again by Nakamaro.¹⁴ It seems two points are of interest here.

First, the development of the *Yuima-e* and its identification with Kōfukuji appears to coincide with the growing internal institutionalization of the temple as exemplified by the creation of the position of abbot in 757. This is further supported by the expansion of the temple during the same period. For example, the central part of Kōfukuji and the five-storied pagoda appear to have been built or completed after Fuhito's death (720) and not during his lifetime as often assumed. Many other buildings such as the Southern Octagonal Hall (*nan'en dō*, 南円堂) were completed even later, by the beginning of the ninth century.¹⁵

Second, it seems that it was mainly Nakamaro, and not Kamatari or Fuhito, who developed the temple and its main ritual. The aforementioned *Tōshi kaden* and the 757 edict, both issued by Nakamaro, established Kamatari as a virtuous patriarch and Buddhist saint, thus providing the ritual with solid legitimacy.¹⁶ The reason why Nakamaro saw it necessary to do so might be found in his conflict with Tachibana no Moroe (橘諸兄, 684–757) and his son Naramaro (橘奈良麻呂, 721–757) that reached its boiling point in 755. Initially, Nakamaro was the most important statesman through the support of his aunt, Imperial Consort Kōmyō, but eventually he was executed in 764 after his failed uprising against Empress Kōken (孝謙天皇). The details of the conflict cannot be discussed here, but important to us is that Nakamaro's involvement in the appointment of the first Kōfukuji abbot, the allocations of tax land to the *Yuima-e*, and the creation of Kamatari as a Buddhist saint were of pivotal importance to strengthen his position within this factional strife at court. In addition, the connection

between his person and the promotion of the *Yuima-e* also reinforces the view that the development of the ritual did indeed parallel larger political developments.

Thus, from the outset the *Yuima-e* was of interest to the main figures involved in the formulation of the *Ritsuryō* (律令) state and the construction of *Heijōkyō* (710). A clear indicator of the importance of the ritual vis-à-vis the expansion of the monastic complex and the larger socio-political developments might be the increase of the official audience present at the *Yuima-e*. In the latter half of the ninth century the number of audience members gradually increased, for example from nine to fourteen in 876, until it reached forty in the tenth century.¹⁷ These forty monks included members of the Ministry of Monastic Affairs and were seated in four rows of ten in the western side of the ritual space, facing the central image of worship and the debates that took place in front of it. Paul Groner interpreted the audience's increase as an indicator of the *Yuima-e*'s growing public character.¹⁸ Basically, this refers to *Kōfukuji*'s original status of "clan temple" (*ujidera*, 氏寺) of the Fujiwara and how it gradually became an official temple. However, while I do agree that the larger audience, and in fact also the number of the candidates included in it, indicates the temple's increasing importance, I would suggest that from its outset both *Kōfukuji* and the *Yuima-e* already had a thoroughly public character and were closely intertwined with the court. I believe that the following two factors exemplify well my approach. First, I would question the evolution from the "private" *Umayasaka-dera* to an increasingly "public" *Kōfukuji*, as the very existence of *Kōfukuji*'s predecessors is in fact hard to prove. The sources that describe the move to *Heijōkyō* are from the following century and it seems that Fujiwara no Nakamaro might be responsible for "recreating" the temple's early history. The references to *Kōfukuji* as "*Yamashina-dera*" (山階寺) found in eighth and ninth century documents were in fact meant to provide the temple with a long history and legitimacy. This process is in fact comparable to *Gangōji*'s (元興寺) high status as descendant of the illustrious *Asuka-dera* (飛鳥寺). I would argue that *Kōfukuji*'s true origins are found in its construction as one whole with the new capital, *Heijōkyō*, and therefore held a public significance just like its patrons the Fujiwara. Second, from the outset the ritual and the temple's internal organization were clearly connected with the court, showing that the temple could not possibly be seen as separated from the court, and certainly

not as displaying a high degree of independence. The creation of the abbot mentioned above illustrates this well. On the one hand one could argue that an abbot provided the temple with its own central sphere of authority, but this view loses sight of the fact that the abbot was in fact appointed by the Head of the Fujiwara (*chōja*, 長者) and not through an internal process at the temple. At first, the involvement of the Head of the Fujiwara might reinforce the view of Kōfukuji as a “private” *ujidera*, but one should realize that the significance and importance of the Fujiwara at court defined polity on a macro-level, rendering the temple and its main ritual central to the state, and not a private entity.

While the origins of the *Yuima-e* go back to the early phase of the Japanese state and in fact predate Kōfukuji, the *Jion-e* is of a later date. According to the documents assembled by the monk Jisson (尋尊, 1430–1508) in the fifteenth century, the *Daijōin jisssha zōjiki* (大乘院寺社雜事記), the *Jion-e* was started in 951 under the abbotship of Kūshō (空晴) and held on the third day of the eleventh month, the commemorative day of the Hossō patriarch Kūjī (632–682).¹⁹ The *Jisson goki* (尋尊御記), a source describing the rituals and institutional organization of Kōfukuji likewise compiled in the Muromachi period (1336–1573), mentions that the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* were part of a whole of twelve rituals (*jū ni hōe*, 十二法会).²⁰ It is important to realize that these twelve events were not organized in separation from each other but that participation in these rituals was organized in such a manner that all these twelve rituals were closely connected. It is exactly this interconnectedness that will become apparent in our analysis of the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e*.

As noted above, the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* are ideal examples of rituals based on doctrinal introspection, clearly distinguishable from events based on sūtra recitations. Uejima Susumu and Horiike Shunpō have pointed out that the creation of debate rituals, the emergence of certain ritual positions and the development of training curricula at major temples such as Kōfukuji in the latter half of the eighth century might be the consequence of the changing involvement of the court in the temples’ matters.²¹ Based on research by Sonoda Kōyū, Uejima describes how the training of monks and the nature of doctrinal introspection fundamentally changed from the beginning to the end of the eighth century, resulting in a more firm and independent notion of “school” (*shū*) in the first half of the ninth century.²² This shift is illustrated by the evolution from rituals based on sūtra recitation to rituals

based on debate. Another example is the name change from the position of National Master, *kokushi* (国師), to National Lecturer, *oku kōji* (国講師), two positions connected with the Ministry of Monastic Affairs discussed below. This internal doctrinal and ritual development led to the formation of more distinct schools and rising doctrinal identity. This increasing focus on one's own school and the development of internal training curricula might then be connected with the later privatization process that would occur during the eleventh century, the start of Kuroda Toshio's *kenmon taisei* (権門体制) and *kenmitsu taisei* (顕密体制) system. Kuroda described a form of shared rule between three "privatized" blocs or "gates of power" (*kenmon*): the court nobles, the warrior aristocracy, and the temples and shrines. The doctrinal foundation of what he considered "Japan's medieval ideology" consisted of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism (*kenmitsu*), a synthesis allegedly found in the interpretation of rituals and the formulation of certain lineages in which monks occupied high positions at both exoteric and esoteric temples.²³ While Kuroda's model has been widely used, certain aspects of it have also been much debated. Perhaps the most relevant problem regarding exoteric-esoteric Buddhism avoided by Kuroda is the very notion of these two categories. As raised by Lucia Dolce, the extent to which the opposition between exoteric and esoteric teachings was an absolute given during ritual is a crucial one to understand the process of "esoterization," and medieval thinkers themselves produced "an ambiguous discourse of compatibility and differentiation."²⁴ The *Yuima-e*, for example, focuses on an exoteric scripture but also involves the usage of esoteric ritual implements. It remains unclear exactly what constituted the relation between both categories and whether or not we can identify a "synthesis" of both, rather than an exchange between two categories of equal status. While Kuroda identifies exoteric-esoteric Buddhism as some kind of ideological foundation, he does avoid its analysis and definition.

The development of a specific ritual format based on debate and the emphasis on certain doctrinal matters thus paralleled important institutional changes symptomatic of the shifting relationship between the temples and the court. It seems that the site where Kuroda's *kenmon* and *kenmitsu taisei* met was exactly the ritual sphere. Prior analysis of the formation of exoteric-esoteric lineage, ritual appointments, and doctrinal preparation has shown that from the mid-Heian period the lecturer or the candidate institutionally belonged to both exoteric and

esoteric institutions while doctrinally being prepared in both exoteric and esoteric teachings. In this sense, the social body of the ritual's main participants is illustrative of Kuroda's *kenmon* and *kenmitsu* model.

The main participants in the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* consisted of the lecturer (*kōji*, 講師), the candidate (*rissha*, 豎者), the judge (*tandai*, 探題), and the members of the official audience (*chōshu*, 聴宗). The emperor was represented by an imperial emissary (*chokushi*, 勅使) who was present during the entire ritual. The actual format of both rituals was quite similar and involved several debate sessions. The *Yuima-e* theoretically started on the tenth day of the tenth month and lasted seven days, while the *Jion-e* was held on the commemorative day of the Hossō patriarch, the third day of the eleventh month. The basic schedule of the *Yuima-e* consisted of morning and evening sessions involving lecture-debate sessions (*kōmon rongi*, 講問論議) from the first to the sixth day, while the candidate-debates took place from the first till the fifth evening. From the latter half of the Heian period, additional alternating debates were held afterward at the imperial emissary's residence (*chokushi bō*, 勅使房番論議) for the first six days as well.²⁵

While the lecturer and the candidate were the main positions, many monks of high and low ranks moved in between the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e*, showing a specific dynamic and hierarchy among Kōfukuji's rituals. Interestingly, this hierarchy transcended the temple itself and connected internal temple positions with external participation in state rituals and progression to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. We will now look at some selected examples of the lecturer, the candidate and the position of the Head of the Five Masters (*bechi-e goshi*, 別会五師) in the audience to demonstrate the entanglement between the internal and the external sphere of the temple and conclude that internal ritual positions such as the *Jion-e*'s were indeed thoroughly connected with external state rituals as exemplified by the *Yuima-e*.²⁶

THE LECTURER

The lecturer was the central figure of the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* and in case of the former one of the most desired ritual positions of the pre-modern period. The earliest mentions of a *Yuima-e* lecturer in fact precede the construction of Kōfukuji and Heijōkyō and refer to the Sanron monk Fukuryō (福亮, ?-?) from Silla and Chihō (知寶, ?-?), who took up the role in 658 and 706, respectively.²⁷ However, it is not clear to what Fukuryō's lectureship exactly refers. To start with, the early

date suggests that he lectured right after the *Yuima-e*'s "mythical" start in which the nun Kōmyō recited the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* and cured Kamatari. If this did indeed take place then it happened at Yamashinadera. Kōfukuji's alleged precursor of which we have in fact no proof it ever existed. In addition, the gap between Fukuryō and Chihō is considerable, the latter performing the role at the moment the construction of Kōfukuji and Heijōkyō had been decided. While no final conclusion regarding the actual start of the *Yuima-e* lectureship can be reached here, I would suggest that it is more likely that Chihō's case represents the actual origins of the *Yuima-e* lecturer.

However, even in Chihō's time the *Yuima-e* was not yet carried out on a regular basis and Kōfukuji wouldn't become the permanent site for the *Yuima-e* through imperial decree until 801.²⁸ It is not clear how many times the *Yuima-e* was performed in its early history, but no more than seven mentions of Nara-period lecturers remain. Therefore, it is likely that the ritual was performed irregularly and that the position of lecturer had not yet fully matured or was at least significantly different from the mid-Heian understanding of the position.

The appointment of *Yuima-e* lecturer was a highly desired one and the profile of the monks fulfilling this role underwent several changes throughout the ritual's history. The eighth to eleventh century entries of the *San'e jō ichi ki* (三会定一記), undoubtedly the main source to analyze the position of the lecturer, reveal two large developments. First, we can notice a sharp decline in the average age of the lecturer. As several other positions such as the *Yuima-e* candidateship were prerequisites to become lecturer we can assume that the same age change also occurred in case of the *Yuima-e* candidate and in extension also the *Jion-e* positions. This internal ritual change seems to have coincided with the aristocratization of the Kōfukuji clergy. Perhaps the biggest indicator of this rise of the aristocracy within the temple's walls is the establishment of the *monzeki* (門跡) or "noble cloisters" within the temple hierarchy, separate entities within Kōfukuji where monks of high nobility lived. These developed into powerful groups that led to increasing competition within the temple and in a sense transferred factional strife from the court to the temple. Ichijōin (一乗院), the first Kōfukuji *monzeki*, was established in 978 by Jōshō (定昭, 906–983), son of Fujiwara no Moromasa (藤原師尹, 920–969). This cloister became increasingly powerful and would later, with the *monzeki* Daijōin, effectively turn the head temple into a tripartite organization.²⁹ The

increasing presence of these noble monks affected the rituals, as they moved up far more quickly than commoners, resulting in younger (and more inexperienced) lecturers and candidates. This process was not limited to Kōfukuji, as exemplified by Shōren'in's (青蓮院) foundation around 1130 at Enryakuji (延暦寺), the center of the Tendai school.

Second, while monks' affiliations were rather diverse in the eighth century, this changed quickly to just two, Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji. Originally, the positions of the lecturer and the candidate were theoretically accessible to all learned monks (*gakuzō*, 学僧) of the Six Nara Schools.³⁰ In 802, the court issued an edict saying that monks of the Six Schools had to be equally invited to the *Misai-e* and the *Yuima-e*, but from the latter half of the tenth century lectureship in these rituals was de facto limited to Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji, or Hossō and Sanron.³¹

The importance and prestige of the lecturer increased dramatically in 834, when lectureship in the *Yuima-e* now enabled a monk to be appointed lecturer of the *Misai-e* (御齋会) and the *Saishō-e* (最勝会), respectively. These "three lectureships" then became the prerequisite to advance to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, showing how these high ritual positions were directly related to institutional advancement. However, as the significance of the *Yuima-e* as state ritual clearly transcended Kōfukuji to start with, this does not seem surprising. Therefore, we have to analyze the link between the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* to trace the interconnectedness between the temple's internal sphere and the state. In order to do so we have to reconsider the position of the candidate, and I would argue that in order to understand the dynamic between internal and external rituals on the one hand and the relation between the several temple complexes on the other, the candidate is of greater use than the position of the lecturer.

THE CANDIDATE

The creation of the position of candidate (*ryūgi* or *rissha*) in debate rituals shows how the format of rituals was influenced by the changing socio-political context. While the position of lecturer was present from the beginning, the role of candidates at the *Yuima-e* and other *hōe* was a gradual development starting from the latter half of the eighth century until the widespread organization of these positions from 876 at all major temples and their rituals.³² The position was first organized at Kōfukuji and was open to monks of all the Six Schools, but from the latter half of the eleventh century only Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji

monks held this position. Not just the affiliation but also the number of candidates at the *Yuima-e* changed over time. In 876 nine monks were chosen to be candidate, a number that went up to ten by 885.³³

The candidates had to go through specific examinations during the ritual, and their pass (*toku*, 得) or fail (*bi*, 未) was announced by an examiner (*seigisha*, 正義者) during the ritual.³⁴ Important to understand its role in the dynamic process that took place between rituals is that the candidates appeared in a large number of rituals and the requirement to be admitted to the position of candidate in a “higher” ranked ritual depended on one’s performance as candidate in a “lower” ritual.

Appointed by the Head of the Fujiwara (*chōja*, 長者) and the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, the *Jion-e* or *Yuima-e* candidate basically was a younger monk who went through a period of rigorous study and had fulfilled the role of candidate satisfactorily at another lower-ranked internal *Kōfukuji* ritual. As mentioned above, this illustrates well the specific preparation period relevant to ritual progression noted by Catherine Bell. To become a candidate at the *Yuima-e*, a monk had to have completed three stages of candidateship referred to as *sangai gyō manzoku* (三階業満足): examination at the *Hōkō-e* (方広会), the *Hokke-e* (法華会), and finally the *Jion-e*. This rule is mentioned in Fujiwara no Munetada’s *Chūyūki*.³⁵ Monks who had finished these three candidateships would be indicated as those who “fulfilled the three requirements” (*san toku gyō*, 三得業), which allowed them to become a *Yuima-e* candidate. However, between having fulfilled these three “internal” requirements and progression to the *Yuima-e*, participation in several other rituals was required. Interestingly, monks who had completed their rituals track were first promoted to be *dai ku mokudai* (大供目代), a high bureaucratic position that was part of the Five Masters discussed below, and then progressed to be a candidate at the *Yuima-e*. In other words, on the one hand internal ritual participation and bureaucratic promotion were closely connected, and on the other this progression led to participation in the external *Yuima-e* and promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs.

THE HEAD OF THE FIVE MASTERS

The title *bechi-e goshi* refers to the highest of five monks, one of them being the *dai ku mokudai* mentioned above, who functioned in between the abbot and the three highest positions of the temple or *sango* (三綱). These five masters were appointed by the abbot and took

care of the temple's internal management and the organization of rituals. However, their position allowed them to proceed to participation in the earlier mentioned candidate-debates, connecting their involvement in Kōfukuji's internal rituals and management with participation in the higher ranked, external *Yuima-e*. Through an analysis of his movements from his seating position in the *Jion-e*'s audience and participation in the actual ritual till his lower participation in the *Yuima-e*, it is clear that their position represents an ideal example to unravel the connection between the temple's internal hierarchy and ritual participation.

First, let's take a look the seating within the *Jion-e* audience. The first difference between the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* audience is that the number of participants was larger and not fixed in case of the former, while the *Yuima-e* audience was fixed at forty during the Heian period. When referring to the "seating position" of the monks, I have to point out that in fact I am referring to the position and order of monks' names mentioned on attendance confirmation documents called *kaishō* (廻請). Prior to the rituals, these documents were circulated and signed by the monks to confirm their participation and place within the debates and/or the audience.

It suffices to provide a few examples to demonstrate how hierarchy functioned on a basic level. The twelfth-century monk Keini (慶仁) participated six times in the *Jion-e* audience. The first time, in 1189, he received the fifteenth place, and moved up through seniority every year till he reached the third place in 1199. The same can be said for Benkan (弁寛), who held the nineteenth place in 1189 and moved up every year till he reached the eleventh place in 1196.³⁶ What confirms the importance of the ranking in the audience is that their ranking also determines their place as candidate if a member appeared in both groups. This is exemplified by the example of the monks Ryōshun (良俊) and Jōko (乗弘), who participated in the *Jion-e* of 1261. Ryōshun was ranked fifteenth in the audience and second place of the candidates. Jōko was ranked lower in the audience, nineteenth, and was therefore placed below Ryōshun in the sixth position. The fulfilment of the position of candidate in the *Jion-e* theoretically allowed a monk to proceed to the candidate-debates of the *Yuima-e*, showing the link between the *bechi-e goshi*, candidacy in the *Jion-e*, and the possibility of participation in the *Yuima-e*. This framework shows a specific internal process on the

one hand, but a thorough connection with the “external” state ritual and institutional advancement on the other.

While duties of the five masters concerned all sorts of internal matters related to preparation for rituals, they eventually could be selected for participation in the *Yuima-e* debates (*kengaku ryūgi*, 研学豎義) as *kengaku rissha* (研学豎者). In other words, the position of head of the five masters can therefore be interpreted as a step towards participation in the *Yuima-e*. In order for the head to be selected to participate in the *Yuima-e* in this manner, he also had to have acted as candidate in three “internal” *Kōfukuji* rituals, being the *Hōkō-e*, the *Hokke-e*, and finally the *Jion-e*.³⁷ This requirement was called the “completion of the task of the three stages” or *sangai gyō manzoku*, a rule that remained unchanged till the Muromachi period.³⁸ After having completed the position of *rissha* at the *Yuima-e*, the monk could once again attain the position of examiner or *seigisha* at the *Jion-e* (see fig. 1). The ritual track of Zengei (善芸) illustrates well this internal process. First, let’s take a look at his position in the audience. He was a member of the five masters from 1266 and his hierarchic progression is shown by his seating in the *Hokke-e*: he moved up from thirty-six to twelve between 1265 and 1278. Roughly during the same period, his seating in the *Jion-e* moved up from forty-seven in 1268 to three in 1289, showing that the progress made in the subordinate *Hokke-e* paralleled his rise in the *Jion-e*. While the link between the *Hokke-e* and the *Jion-e* shows “internal” advancement, the connection between the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* shows on its turn the simultaneous “external” progress. After having been in the *Hokke-e* and *Jion-e* audience and having acted at the candidate-debates at both the *Hokke-e* and the *Jion-e*, Zengei proceeded to participation in the *Yuima-e* candidate-debates in 1273.³⁹ After this date, he was able to move up to the higher position of examiner in both the *Hokke-e* and the *Jion-e* in 1275 to 1276, showing the entanglement between these internal and external positions. Unfortunately, Zengei was not of noble descent, which by this time had become necessary to proceed to *Yuima-e* and membership in the Ministry of Monastic Affairs.⁴⁰ However, the following case shows a noble monk, exemplifying how a monk proceeded all the way to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs.

Jisshin (実信, 1198–1256) was of noble descent and entered *Kōfukuji* at age eleven.⁴¹ First, let’s take a look at his positions of candidate. In 1209 he acted as candidate of the *Hōkō-e* and moved on to the *Hokke-e* in 1211 to finally act as *Jion-e* candidate in 1214. By this time he had

fulfilled the “completion of the task of the three stages.” This enabled him to proceed to the *Yuima-e kengaku ryūgi* in 1215 and finally the ritual’s highest position of lecturer in 1219, followed by the *Misai-e* and finally the *Saishō-e* in 1220. Having fulfilled all requirements, he entered the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, where he attained the highest rank of *dai sōjō* (大僧正) (*Dai nihon shiryō*, Kōgen 1 [1256].10.17).

THE YUIMA-E AND THE THREE SOUTHERN ASSEMBLIES

The *Yuima-e*, the *Misai-e*, and the *Saishō-e* were referred to as the Three Southern Assemblies. From the middle of the Heian period they stood in contrast to the so-called Three Northern Rituals (*hokkyō san’e*, 北京三会), consisting of the Great Mahāyāna Assembly (*daijō-e*, 大乘会) at Hosshōji, the Lotus Assembly (*hokke-e*, 法華会), and the Golden Light Assembly (*saishō-e*, 最勝会). Both provided a route to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, with the Three Southern Rituals for Nara monks and the Three Northern Rituals for monks of the Tendai school. Here, we will focus on the Southern Assemblies of which the *Yuima-e* was of pivotal importance.

Standing at the center of the *ritsuryō* state, the Ministry of Monastic Affairs was an office overseeing the Buddhist temples and their communities. It was founded in 624 under Empress Suiko (推古天皇, 554–628) and de facto functioned as the link between the state and the temples. This ministry consisted of high ranking monks who were selected by the Buddhist community and thus functioned as both government officials and members of the Buddhist community. The creation of this ministry does not coincide with the foundation of any of the Three Rituals, and the formation of the connection between the ministry and these rituals has to be seen as a gradual process that took place in the ninth century.

In 834, an imperial decree stipulated that the lecturer of the *Yuima-e* would lecture “in the palace,” referring to the *Missai-e*, and the *Saishō-e*. Thus, the order of the Three Rituals or *san’e* was theoretically established.⁴² By 855 we see the emergence of two categories called the Three Stages (*sangai*) and the Five Stages (*gokai*), two sets of requirements that explain well the interconnectedness between several levels of internal and external rituals.⁴³ The Three Stages referred to two forms of examination and the *Yuima-e* candidateship, and in case of the Five Stages two extra lecturing positions were added. All five requirements involved some kind of examination and lectureship,

symptomatic of the growing emphasis on doctrinal introspection occurring from the second half of the eighth century.

Monks who had fulfilled the Three Stages could become National Reader (*sho koku dokushi*, 諸国読師) while those who had finished the Five Stages could advance to National Lecturer (*sho koku kōji*, 諸国講師).⁴⁴ The earliest mention of a lecturer (*kōji*) dates from 702, though it was referred to as *koku shi* (国師) till 795. Both positions were subordinate to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, and monks who went further than the Five Stages and became lecturers at the Three Assemblies were then eligible to be promoted to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. Among the Five Stages we should make a distinction between the two examinations and two lectureships a monk could complete at all Fifteen Great Temples and the Official Temples (*jōgaku ji*, 定額寺) on the one hand and the candidateship at the *Yuima-e* on the other. The latter could only be performed at select temples and rituals such as the Lotus Sūtra Assembly (Hokke-kyō-e) at Daianji (大安寺) or Kōfukuji's *Yuima-e*.⁴⁵ In other words, four requirements could be fulfilled at a broad range of temples, narrowing down to a few on the level on the candidate and eventually the lectureship at only three main rituals resulting in promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. From high to low and connecting internal with external positions, the temple and its rituals were thus part of one large ritual and institutional network where all ritual positions were connected with one another.

All these requirements referred to specific functions within rituals, and having fulfilled one function enabled a monk to proceed to another, thus creating an entire ritual "route" that connected internal temple functions with external institutional advancement.⁴⁶

The main positions within the Ministry of Monastic Affairs were the *sōjō* (僧正) and the *daisōzu*. Of importance to us is the position of master of decorum (*igi shi*, 威儀師) who assisted the ministry's highest post *and* also performed an important role at state rituals such as the *Yuima-e*.⁴⁷ The importance of this member of the ministry is well illustrated by his position between the abbot and the Imperial Emissary at the *Yuima-e* as described in the *Proceedings of the Yuima-e* (*Yuima-shidai*, 維摩会次第).

As noted above, the importance and prestige of the lecturer increased dramatically in 834, when lectureship in the *Yuima-e* would enable a monk to be appointed lecturer of the *Misai-e* and the *Saishō-e*, respectively. These "three lectureships" then became the prerequisite

to advance to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, showing how these high ritual positions were directly related to institutional advancement. The examples of Kōfukuji monks Zōri (増利) and Kyōga (経賀) illustrate well this process. Zōri was appointed *Yuima-e* candidate in 891 and lecturer at the same ritual in the tenth month of 903. He then functioned as lecturer in the *Misai-e* about two months later and the *Saishō-e* in the first month of 904. This enabled him to enter the Ministry of Monastic Affairs in 906.⁴⁸ He moved up steadily within the ministry and finally attained the highest rank of *Dai sōzu* in 925.⁴⁹ Kyōga followed the same track. He became *Yuima-e* candidate in 904 and lecturer in 920, followed by the lectureships of the *Misai-e* and the *Saishō-e*. He entered the ministry in 931 and attained the high rank of *Shō sōzu* (小僧都) in 931.⁵⁰

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE JION-E AND THE YUIMA-E

The analysis of Kōfukuji's two main rituals reveals how the temple's internal organization functioned and how monks moved up within and between certain rituals. However, the apparent inseparability of these rituals implicitly addresses a far larger subject. I would argue that the relation between internal and external rituals can be of great importance to better understand the relation between the private and the public spheres in pre-modern Japan, a question I believe to be of pivotal importance to define "the state" in the period under consideration.

The Japanese historian Ihara Kesao discussed Toshio Kuroda's *kenmon* theory from the point of view of the concepts *kokusei* (国政) and *kasei* (家政), defining *kokusei* as the polity on a macro level that developed out of the *ritsuryō* state and *kasei* as the polity on a micro level that operates within particular *kenmon*.⁵¹ Both *kokusei* and *kasei* are then analyzed to determine what in fact constituted "public power."⁵² Ihara mentions two characteristics of the pre-modern private and public spheres that are important to our comparison between the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e*. First, he considers the pre-modern private and public as two spheres lacking an antithetical separation, coexisting in each other. Second, while arguing that *kasei* is that which internally regulates a *kenmon*, he states that it is impossible to separate *kasei* from the larger (*kokusei*) framework. In other words, Ihara maintains that the pre-modern private and public are distinct categories, but at the

same time it is implied that one cannot separate the private from the overarching public.

This inseparability of *kokusei* and *kasei* as understood by Ihara seems to be supported by Uejima's analysis of the relation between Buddhism and the state. While Uejima does not make use of an elaborate theoretical framework and in fact seems to use two opposing blocs of Buddhism vs. state throughout his analysis, he does in the end stress the undeniable connection between the internal and external rituals and institutional developments, thus indirectly supporting Ihara. In regards to national rituals (*kokkateki hōe*) during the eleventh century, Uejima states that the position of the candidate in internal rituals was intrinsically connected with advancement towards the Three Southern Assemblies and promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. He adds that similar constructs existed at the large temples such as Yakushiji and Onjōji and that one should not regard the *kenmon* as separate from the state.⁵³ A similar position has been taken in Western scholarship by Mikael Adolphson. He does not make use of Ihara's discussion on the relation between *kokusei* and *kasei* but argues for a form of "shared sovereignty" that seems to be similar to what Ihara addresses on a more theoretical level. Shared sovereignty means that instead of separated blocs, we are dealing with a group of several actors who together constituted, as Adolphson frames it, the "*kenmon* state."⁵⁴ My analysis of the interconnection between an internal and an external ritual seems to confirm this. On the one hand, a monk's education and participation in an internal ritual reinforced the temple's specific doctrinal identity. However, on the other hand, the institutional connection between the position of the candidate and the lecturer in case of the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* confirms the inseparability of the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e*. The *Jion-e* can then be reinterpreted as part of the private sphere of the temple (*kasei*) with its distinct characteristics, but inseparable from the public sphere of the *Yuima-e*, the *Misai-e*, and the *Saishō-e* (*kokusei*).

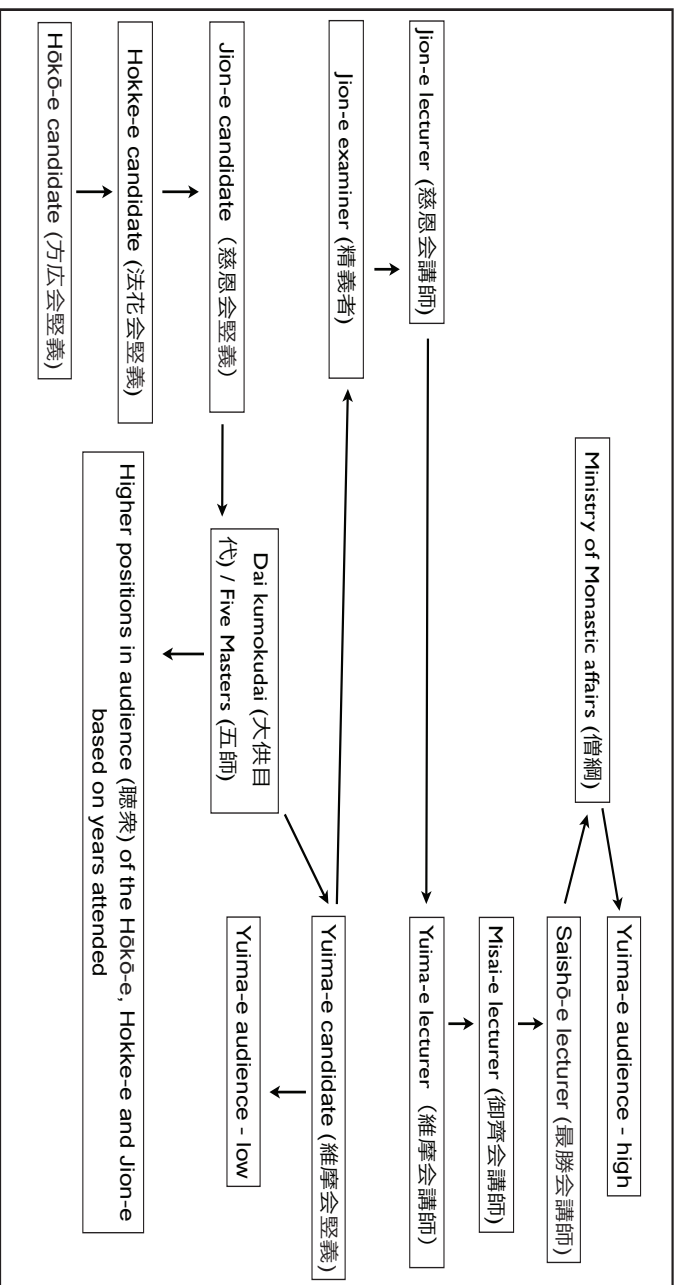


Figure 1. The Jion-e and the Yuima-e's interdependent relationship illustrated by institutional advancement.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank the University of Leeds and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation for their financial support, as well as Tatsuo Saile from UC Berkeley for introducing me to the present Kōfukuji community.
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5. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 211.
6. Hayashi Fumiko 林文子, *Kamakura ki ni okeru kōfukuji gakushū no hōe shusshi* 鎌倉期における興福寺学修の法会出仕, in *Chūsei jīin to hōe* 中世寺院と法会, ed. Michiko Sato 佐藤道子 (Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 1994), 342–477; Hiraoka Jōkai 平岡定海, ed., *Tōdaiji Sōshō Shōnin no kenkyū narabini shiryō* 東大寺宗性聖人の研究並びに史料 (Tōkyō: Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, 1985).
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22. Uejima, *Nihon chūsei shakai no keisei to ōken*, 422.
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25. Takayama, *Chūsei kōfukuji yuima-e no kenkyū*, 75; Bauer, *The Power of Ritual*, 169.
26. Uejima, *Nihon chūsei shakai no keisei to ōken*, 430–431.
27. “Kōfukuji ryaku nendaiki” 興福寺略年代記, *Zoku gunsho ruijū* 29, no. 2 (1965): 113–115.
28. “Kōfukuji ryaku nendaiki,” 122; Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 222.
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30. Horiike, “Yuima-e to kandō no shōshin,” 193.
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38. Nagamura, *Chūsei jiin shiryō ron*, 216; Takayama, *Chūsei kōfukuji yuima-e no kenkyū*, 147.
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40. Horiike, "Yuima-e to kandō no shōshin," 220.
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