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## Myōun and the Heike

### Monastic Influence in Twelfth-Century Japan

In contrast to founders of new Buddhist schools, monastic leaders of established religious centers in pre-1600 Japan have often been ignored as subjects of serious scholarship. In part, this can be explained by their involvement in political and military matters, which has been seen as of little consequence to religious studies or detrimental to the imperial state since, according to later ideals, the religious and political spheres were assumed to be separate. However, recent studies have demonstrated the extent to which state and religions were interdependent, especially through rituals, allowing monks a considerable presence in politics, the economy, and even in warfare. To get a deeper understanding of this interdependence at the individual level, this article focuses on the relationship between Taira no Kiyomori and the Tendai monk Myōun, both of whom were significant figures in the late Heian state.

KEYWORDS: Myōun—Kiyomori—Enryakuji—Tendai—Go Shirakawa—Genpei War

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IN A SEMINAL article published in this very journal in 1989, Neil McMULLIN (1989, 15) commented on the relationship between politics and religion in premodern Japan that “political and religious thinking/language in regard to the state was so totally intertwined that to regard politics and religion as separate phenomena is to impose on early and medieval Japanese society a kind and a degree of fragmentation that it did not know.”<sup>1</sup> Influenced by the scholarship of the Japanese historian Kuroda Toshio, whose work on the interdependence of Buddhist temples and the imperial court inspired a generation of scholars in Japan and beyond, McMullin’s claims similarly contributed to a range of new Anglophone scholarship on Buddhism and its institutions. Indeed, in the decades hence, numerous publications followed suit by attempting to place monasteries, rituals, monks, and nuns in the sociopolitical context of premodern Japan, reflecting a heightened awareness of the close relationship between politics and religion.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding, monastic leaders of established religious centers in pre-1600 Japan have often been ignored as subjects of serious scholarship. To a degree, this can be explained by what one might call a residual lack of interest in their activities because of their involvement in political and military matters. In part, it is connected to a strong preference in previous scholarship for focusing on founders and newer schools.<sup>3</sup>

Today, most scholars have accepted the importance of the interplay between religion and politics, and it may even seem surprising that we did not do so earlier. Indeed, as recent Anglophone publications have convincingly shown, Buddhist rituals in particular played a fundamental role in matters of the imperial court, as well as for the individual elites that comprised the state for a majority of the early medieval age (ca. 1100–1400) (CONLAN 2011; BAUER 2013; SANGO 2015). Based in particular on notions of state sponsorship of Buddhism in China, where the *Benevolent King Sūtra* became influential in the sixth and seventh centuries (ORZECZ 2002, 63–65, 71), Japanese rulers were quick to adopt the idea of a centralized Buddhist state. The *Lotus Sūtra* became another important

1. For a response and a case for the primacy of doctrine, see HUBBARD (1992), and for McMullin’s rejoinder, see McMULLIN (1992).

2. Space does not permit an exhaustive list here but scholars such as Anna Andreeva, Mikael Bauer, Heather Blair, Michael Como, Thomas Conlan, Paul Groner, Lori Meeks, Brian Ruppert, and Asuka Sango exemplify this trend.

3. GRONER (1993) stands out as the sole book-length exception. Recent works that deal with nuns have opened up important new queries into everyday Buddhist practices as well as the contributions made by women. See, for example, MEEKS (2010).

text for this purpose. However, by the mid-eighth century, during the rule of Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (701–756), the *Golden Light Sūtra* became the centerpiece of the great imperial temple of Tōdaiji (whose official name invoked the *Golden Light Sūtra*), the provincial network of monasteries and nunneries, and imperial rituals, giving rise to the notion that the imperial state and Buddha’s law were codependent. Such ideas came to be expressed in different ways over time, but are perhaps best represented by references we find in documents beginning in the eleventh century where clerics compared the imperial and Buddhist laws to the two wings of a bird or the two wheels of a cart (ADOLPHSON 2000, 272–273; KURODA 1980, 48: *Heian ibun*, doc. 702). To probe deeper into this interdependence, this article will focus on the relationship between Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛 (1118–1181) and the Buddhist monk Myōun 明雲 (1115–1183). The former is well known as the first warrior-aristocrat to reach a level of national prominence, but the latter has received scant attention despite having played a more prominent role during the tumultuous time of the late twelfth century than any other monk.<sup>4</sup> The lack of focus on Myōun is perhaps not surprising, especially among scholars of Buddhism, for he left no Buddhist legacy in the form of treatises or commentaries that we know of. And yet, he served as head abbot at the powerful Tendai monastic complex of Enryakuji 延暦寺 longer than most of his predecessors, owing in large part to his popularity among a clergy that was infamously said to be as difficult to control as the flow of the Kamo River and dice.<sup>5</sup>

Among the more dramatic events during his lifetime, Myōun was sentenced to exile by Retired Emperor Go Shirakawa 後白河 (1127–1192) only to be rescued by his own clergy; he became the leading monk in supporting Kiyomori’s move of the capital from Kyoto to Fukuhara 福原 in 1180; and he was unceremoniously killed when Kiso Yoshinaka 木曾義仲 (1154–1184), the cousin of the founder of Japan’s first shogunate (Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝, 1147–1199), ousted the Heike 平家 from the capital in 1183.<sup>6</sup> By thus adding Myōun to the narrative of the turbulent times of the late twelfth century and by focusing on the monk’s relationship with Kiyomori, this article will shed light on both the nature of the

4. Myōun was obviously not born a monk, but his given name is unknown and for the sake of convenience I will refer to him under his Buddhist name throughout this article. In literary works, his name is often given as Meiun, but the character 明 was more commonly read as “myō” in Buddhist sources of the twelfth century.

5. The comparison of the clergy to the game of *sugoroku* 双六, which is played with dice, is said to have been made by Retired Emperor Shirakawa: “The flow of the Kamo River, the roll of the dice and the mountain monks [of Enryakuji] are things I cannot control” (*Heike monogatari* 1: 93; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 50).

6. Because there were numerous loosely connected Taira families descending from different emperors, I follow Takahashi Masaaki in referring to Kiyomori’s branch of the Ise Taira 伊勢平 as Heike, as that is how they were distinguished from other Taira at the very end of the Heian age (TAKAHASHI 2013, 4–6).

interaction between the religious and political spheres and on several of the crucial events that led to the Genpei War of 1180–1185, which eventually resulted in the downfall of the short Heike rule and the subsequent establishment of the first shogunate. Such a focus will demonstrate that the lead-up to the Genpei War was more than merely a struggle between political factions within the imperial court, and that it involved considerations of religious alliances.

### *Myōun's Early Years*

Three years older than his eventual patron Taira no Kiyomori, Myōun was born in 1115 during the peak of Shirakawa's (1052–1129) rule as retired emperor. Following more than two centuries of Fujiwara dominance of court politics and two (un)timely deaths of influential Fujiwara chieftains in 1099 and 1101, Shirakawa had managed to restore a leading role to the imperial family by acting as its chieftain and controlling politics behind the throne. Foremost among his tools was control of the imperial succession, which he had accomplished by imitating the Fujiwara strategy of forcing young emperors to resign before they could effectively utilize their position. Shirakawa's rise was additionally based on an expansion of privately held land in the name of consorts, imperial princes, and the retired emperorship itself, the establishment of a new set of religious ceremonies under exclusive control of the imperial family, and the recruitment of political allies and armed retainers led by mid-ranking nobles (ADOLPHSON 2000, 76–88).<sup>7</sup>

Myōun's family had benefited greatly from Shirakawa's successful rise to power. He was the son of a ranking aristocrat named Minamoto no Akimichi 源 顯通 (1081–1122) and the grandson of Minamoto no Masazane 源 雅実 (1059–1127). The latter was a respected courtier who reached the pinnacle of the Heian court as grand minister of state (*daijō daijin* 太政大臣) in 1122 at the age of sixty-two. That office had been monopolized by the Northern Fujiwara House for close to three centuries, and Masazane was in fact the first Minamoto to reach that level within the court hierarchy. As is well known, the Minamoto and the Taira were both surplus royals, whose importance as retainers and allies increased dramatically with the emergence of the imperial family under the leadership of a retired emperor in the early twelfth century. Stemming from different emperors, these loosely connected kinship groups became mid-ranking nobles, taking on careers at court or as commanders in the provinces where their imperial descent afforded them status and administrative positions. Masazane was a member of the Seiwa Genji 清和源氏, a line that descended from Emperor

7. The new set of religious rituals were known as the "Lecture Meetings of the Northern Capital" (*hokkyō no sandai e* 北京三大会), and were designed to compete with the "Three Great Lecture Meetings" (*sandai e* 三大会), which were under the control of the Fujiwara (ADOLPHSON 2000, 85; UEJIMA 2010, 442).

Seiwa 清和 (850–881) and that had been successful in serving the imperial family from the late eleventh century. It is therefore no coincidence that Masazane, as a ranking retainer of Shirakawa, received the honor of becoming the first non-Fujiwara Grand Minister of State in centuries. However, he only enjoyed his status for two years before becoming ill in 1124, which induced him to take Buddhist vows early in the seventh month of that year. His retirement from the highest post at court appears to have revived him somewhat as he lived another three years until 1127. Well known as an accomplished performer of *bugaku* 舞楽 (a court dance that hailed from Tang China) and a poet, he was praised by contemporaries as well as by later chroniclers (*Sonpi bunmyaku* 3: 497; KOKUSHI DAIJITEN, s.v. “Minamoto no Masazane”).

As the eldest son of Masazane, Akimichi was poised to reach the same level, but despite a promising start he was not as fortunate. Akimichi’s early years resemble those of his father with gradual promotions through the court hierarchy until he reached the third rank (making him a member of the highest council as a *kugyō* 公卿) in 1100 at the age of nineteen, only one year older than his father was when he obtained the same rank. In 1122, the same year that Masazane was appointed Grand Minister, Akimichi became acting Grand Counselor (*gon dai nagon* 權大納言), but he suddenly fell ill with a stomach illness and died three months later at forty-one years old (KOKUSHI DAIJITEN, s.v. “Minamoto no Akimichi”; *Sonpi bunmyaku* 3: 496). Akimichi appears to have fathered two sons who lived until adulthood: Myōun and Masamichi 雅通 (1118–1175), of whom the former was the older by three years.<sup>8</sup> However, Myōun’s mother was a consort of lesser status, whereas Masamichi was the son of Akimichi’s principal consort and thus likely to have been considered the main heir. Masamichi followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather by joining the ranks of Minamoto poets and courtiers. He received support from Masazane and later from his uncle Minamoto no Masasada 源雅定 (1094–1162), who adopted him, though he never became as prominent as his grandfather (*Sonpi bunmyaku* 3: 497; KOKUSHI DAIJITEN, s.v. “Minamoto no Akimichi”).

Of distant imperial descent, Myōun at first glance appears to have had the advantages of rank and status for a court career, but born only seven years before Akimichi’s sudden passing and with a mother of low status, he may have had little choice but to become a monk. For minor sons of nobles and those lacking sufficient support, monastic careers were especially appealing because it was, in sharp contrast to the imperial court, theoretically possible to be promoted through the ranks regardless of background or patronage. In fact, we find numerous examples of monks of low status who rose to the top of the monastic

8. The *Tendai zasu ki* in fact notes that Myōun was the “second son,” which may mean that he had an older brother of whom we have no record (*Tendai zasu ki*, 101).

hierarchies during the first three centuries of the Heian period. And yet, from the twelfth century, monastic posts had become part of the competitive atmosphere of the court, and many sons of high-ranking nobles and of imperial descent were put on a fast track to take on the most important posts. Thus, by the time Myōun entered the Tendai temple of Nashimoto 梨本 (also Sanzen'in 三千院), the likelihood of a monastic career toward the higher echelons was fairly low since most major monastic complexes were headed by imperial princes or sons of the main Fujiwara families. We can only speculate, but Myōun was likely taken to the monastery shortly after his father's death in 1122 but before his grandfather's retirement in 1124. He became a disciple of the ordained prince (*hōshinnō* 法親王) Saiun 最雲 (1104–1162), who was the son of Emperor Horikawa 堀川 (1079–1107) and who was later appointed Tendai head abbot in 1156. Though Myōun lacked the pedigree and patronage for a career at court, it seems probable that his grandfather would have used his connections here to introduce the boy to Saiun, who was the younger half-brother of the reigning emperor Toba 鳥羽 (1103–1156) whom Masazane in turn served as grand minister (*Tendai zasu ki*, 101).<sup>9</sup>

Little is known about Myōun's training and upbringing within the temple itself. He certainly received broad training, as did most Tendai monks, studying texts and rites from both the exoteric and esoteric traditions. But whereas many monks appear in temple records and diaries for ceremonial duties, promotions, and religious debates in their thirties and even before, Myōun cannot have been particularly favored since we have no records mentioning him at all until 1156, when he was promoted from preceptor to second-rank prelate of the lower rank (*gon shō sōzu* 権小僧都) in the official Buddhist hierarchy. Seeing that this is the year that his teacher Saiun was appointed Tendai head abbot (*zasu* 座主), Myōun's promotion was perhaps not unexpected, but at age forty-three it was later than many of his contemporaries. Indeed, if we hypothesize that he entered the priesthood around 1124, when his grandfather retired from office, Myōun spent more than thirty years without leaving a mark in monastic records that are otherwise quite detailed (*Tendai zasu ki*, 92–93, 96).<sup>10</sup> Hence, at a time when many monks were promoted at a much younger age, Myōun appears to have

9. Myōun would thus have been between seven and nine years old. The title of *hōshinnō* was created in 1099 by Shirakawa for his third son, who took the Buddhist name Kakugyō 覚行 (1075–1105), in a deliberate effort to increase imperial presence and control within religious institutions. The appointment was accompanied by a new post of administrative head and substantial land. Similar to Myōun, Kakugyō was the son of a lesser consort (ADOLPHSON 2000, 86–87).

10. Saiun is said to have been the first imperial prince to enter a monastery, which he did in 1118 at the age of fourteen. It is of course worth noting the second character 雲 in Myōun's Buddhist name, which connected him to the lineage of his teacher.

paid his dues and only belatedly earned his appointment, in part due to his master's promotion despite his lacking noble patronage.

The Tendai head abbotship was a high stakes position for both the Enryakuji clergy and for the court. Following the death of the founder, Saichō 最澄 (767–822), leadership of Tendai was in flux for some four decades with competition between two factions and frequently a division of duties. By 864, however, the different roles were subsumed under the head abbotship, and subsequently, the head abbot's signature started to appear also on administrative edicts. It was additionally at that time that the Tendai head first obtained a position within the office of monastic affairs (*sōgō* 僧綱), reflecting the abbotship's official recognition and increasing importance (ADOLPHSON 2000, 39–43). Besides leading the clergy (*daishu* 大衆) and the Tendai school, the head abbot was expected to represent the court within the monastery, as indicated by the emperor's right of appointments. Indeed, not unlike middle management positions today, the head abbots at all major monasteries had to perform a delicate balancing act as a two-way channel of communication between two different constituents, in the case of the head abbot, the court, and the Tendai clergy. As a result, there were constant struggles for control of the post at times of new appointments. These tensions had intensified in the eleventh century when leading aristocratic families began appointing sons to important posts to exert influence over the monasteries, but also as the monastic posts themselves had become objects for the intense factional competition at the court. For instance, following the death of the Fujiwara regent Moromichi 師通 (1062–1099), the elderly father and former regent Morozane 師実 (1042–1101) proceeded to appoint his own son, Kakushin 覚信 (1065–1121), head administrator (*bettō* 別当) of the Fujiwara family temple, Kōfukuji 興福寺. Kakushin, aged only thirty-six at the time of appointment, was the first in a line of young head abbots at Kōfukuji from the main, regental branch of the Fujiwara, reflecting a desire by leading nobles to take more direct advantage of the ritual tools maintained by the elite temples (*Kōfukuji ryaku nendai ki*, 142–144; *Dai Nihon shiryō*, 3: 6, 457–459; MOTOKI 1996, 251–252; ADOLPHSON 2000, 104–107).

Morozane was not alone in seeking to control Kōfukuji. Retired Emperor Shirakawa, also wanting to extend his own influence within the world of Buddhist rituals, managed to appoint one of his own Buddhist teachers, Hanshun 範俊 (1038–1112), as assistant administrator (*gon bettō* 権別当) only two months later. It may be argued that appointing someone trained at Tōji 東寺 mainly in Shingon rituals would upset the Kōfukuji clergy, but as Mikael Bauer—among others—has shown, training in different Buddhist schools was not unusual and if anything would have strengthened the temple's presence in a wider range of rituals (*Chūyūki*, Kōwa 康和 4 [1102] 7/10, 8/1, 2, 6, 7, 8; *Denryaku*, Kōwa 4/7/29; *Kōfukuji ryaku nendai ki*, 142–144; *Dai Nihon shiryō*, 3: 6, 457–459; MOTOKI 1996,

251–252; BAUER 2013, 127–129). What was more problematic was his patronage by the retired emperor, which was seen as a direct challenge to Fujiwara control of Kōfukuji. When Shirakawa later recommended Hanshun for the prestigious Yuima e 維摩会 ceremony, the clergy protested, resulting in heightened tensions. An armed confrontation took place in 1102, when some of Shirakawa's warriors were detained by Kōfukuji monks, inducing the retired emperor to briefly suspend Kakushin from the headship (*Kōfukuji bettō shidai*, 2, 11; ADOLPHSON 2000, 105).

Go Shirakawa eagerly continued his great-grandfather's strategies by promoting princes within major temples, and when he made Saiun Tendai head abbot in 1156, some fifty years after Shirakawa's efforts, it was the first time that a descendant of the imperial family had been appointed to that office. It was in this context of competition between aristocratic factions, between monasteries, as well as increasing tensions within the monastic complexes that Myōun had entered Saiun's temple as a disciple, which proved fortuitous. However, in 1162, the same year Myōun performed an ordination ritual and was promoted to precept master (*kashō* 和尚), Saiun died (*Tendai zasu ki*, 92–93, 96).<sup>11</sup> The new head abbot, Kaishū 快修 (1100–1165), managed to annoy his monks within a year because of his reluctance to act against the sibling temple Onjōji 園城寺, which had reactivated its demands for a separate Tendai ordination platform with the implicit support of Go Shirakawa. Fearing a challenge to Enryakuji's primacy within Tendai, some monks attacked and burned parts of Onjōji and then turned on Kaishū for his lack of support. Two years later, the clergy went as far as to attack its own main temple hall on Mt. Hiei to stop the head abbot's administration, effectively deposing him (*Tendai zasu ki*, 98–99). His successor, however, passed away after only two years, and so Kaishū was reappointed by the court in the ninth month of 1166. Such a reappointment was in itself not uncommon, but, given the clergy's opposition, it is hardly surprising that it led to confrontations on the mountain between different factions. Some of the clerics supported Kaishū, but they seem to have been at a disadvantage as the skirmishes went on for months with numerous buildings being burned down while demands for Kaishū's removal continued. Unable to balance expectations for Tendai head abbots to satisfy both the clergy and the imperial court, Kaishū's abbotship became untenable, and he lasted only four months in his second round as head abbot. He was replaced on the fifteenth day of the second month of 1167 by a monk who had been all but invisible but who also met with no resistance from the clergy. That monk was Myōun (*Tendai zasu ki*, 100–101; *Sankaiki*, Nin'an 仁安 2 [1167] 2/15; *Kajji monzeki ryakufu*, 485).

11. Readings of 和尚 vary between different schools.



*The Abbotship of Tendai: Leading the Clergy in Times of Change and Uncertainty*

Myōun ascended Mt. Hiei as head abbot two months after his appointment in a great procession, accompanied by all ranking Tendai monks as well as administrators of the monastery, as if to emphasize the welcoming of a popular head abbot (*Akihiro ō ki*, Nin'an 2/4/13). He was clearly also known among courtiers in Kyoto due to the importance of his temple, Nashimoto, as it attracted princes and sons of the highest-ranking courtiers to Ōhara 大原, just northeast of Kyoto where the temple was located.<sup>12</sup> But perhaps there was more. In fact, there are indications that Myōun had started to attract patrons of the highest order at the palace before his appointment. In 1165, he had performed a ceremony in Kyoto, which earned him an appointment as protector monk (*gojisō* 護持僧) (*Kajii monzeki ryakufu*, 485). Tasked with ensuring that prayers were said to protect the emperor throughout the night, Myōun became one of a handful of monks who took turns in spending time at the palace. Considering the small number of monks appointed for this duty and its religious significance, the honor of praying for the sovereign did not come about lightly or without good reason.<sup>13</sup>

Further evidence of the monk's rising star can be found in the tenth month of 1167, only eight months after Myōun's appointment as head abbot, when Go Shirakawa himself paid a visit to Mt. Hiei to spend seven days at the Central Hall (*Chūdō* 中堂), where there was assuredly frequent interaction between the two (*Tendai zasu ki*, 102). The importance of such a visit must not be underestimated, for it not only confirmed and enhanced the status of the host but also resulted in further privileges. Indeed, Myōun was subsequently honored with numerous titles, climbing the ranks to junior grand master (*gon sōjō* 権僧正) in his first year as head abbot, and he began performing rituals at the palace soon thereafter. After numerous appearances across the capital, he was rewarded with another appointment, as assistant head of Hosshōji 法勝寺. Hosshōji was one of the six imperial temples (*rikushōji* 六勝寺) founded and patronized by the retired emperors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and thus highly prestigious (*Hyōhanki*, Kaō 嘉応 1 [1169] 6/26). Early in 1173, Myōun was even granted the privilege of riding in an ox-drawn carriage, an honor restricted to only the highest-ranking courtiers (*Gyokuyō*, Jōan 承安 3 [1173] 1/12). It is difficult to ascertain

12. Many of the aristocratic cloisters (*monzeki* 門跡) were located a very short distance from Kyoto, so as to allow the noble abbots to enjoy the aristocratic privileges of Kyoto. Nashimoto was originally part of the monastery on Mt. Hiei but had by the late eleventh century been relocated to Ōhara just under ten miles northeast of the palace area, making it less accessible and more austere than other cloisters.

13. The number of protector monks fluctuated from just one in the early Heian period to up to seven during the reign of Go Ichijō 後一條 (1008–1036). By the twelfth century, there was commonly three monks appointed, one each from Enryakuji, Onjōji, and Tōji. For a treatment of the protector monks, see UBEJIMA (2010, 370–389).

the reasons for this privilege. It was not granted to just anyone appointed Tendai head abbot, but it may have been in recognition of the many rituals he had performed for the court through which he clearly had made many important connections. This may also be why in 1175 one of Go Shirakawa's sons, the six-year-old Jōnin 承仁 (1169–1197), entered Myōun's temple as his disciple, marking yet another honor for the head abbot. Jōnin was, naturally, not one of Go Shirakawa's highest-ranking sons since he was born to one of his mid-ranking courtesans, a certain Tanba no Tsubone 丹波局, who bore him two sons, but the choice of Myōun as his master was not coincidental (*Sankaiki*, *Gyokuyō*, Angen 安元 1 [1175] 8/16).

By that point, in the mid-1170s, Myōun was in his sixties, and after first having paid his dues performing Buddhist rituals and reciting sutras at the Nashimoto temple for decades, he had made crucial connections within the upper echelons owing to his master Saiun's appointment as head abbot and the opportunity to perform ceremonies at court. But Myōun's main ally was at that stage Taira no Kiyomori, who, like the monk himself, was a newcomer in a rigid court hierarchy. Kiyomori's rise through the court ranks had been swift following the crucial role he played in the Hōgen War (Hōgen no ran 保元の乱) of 1156, when he helped Go Shirakawa survive a challenge from a rival faction. He repeated that feat only four years later, when he defeated a former rival who had detained Go Shirakawa over a lack of rewards. The rewards heaped upon Kiyomori in the form of court appointments, titles to land, and ranking titles within the court for his relatives and allies reflected both his success and his importance to Go Shirakawa. In 1167, the very same year that Myōun became Tendai head abbot, Kiyomori was appointed grand minister of state, becoming the first member of the warrior aristocracy to reach that level. Whereas the appointment marked a new development in court politics, it was at that time mainly an honor since the post had lost much of its authority following conflicts in the early part of the twelfth century, and so Kiyomori relinquished it only three months later. Notwithstanding, the status that came with such an appointment should not be ignored, for Kiyomori had built a major, new temple complex (Rengeōin 蓮華王院) close to his own mansion in Kyoto for Go Shirakawa and had been heavily rewarded with more governor titles and land. In 1171, the Heike chieftain managed to have his daughter become principal consort to Emperor Takakura 高倉 (1161–1181), which would eventually make him grandfather of an emperor.

Learning from how the Fujiwara had dominated the court for over two centuries, Kiyomori also put into place a number of other initiatives. Above all, he needed allies among the monastic elites, and he promoted a whole set of rituals, texts, and religious locations, something that Heather Blair astutely has called Kiyomori's "ritual regime" (BLAIR 2015). For example, already in 1164, he commissioned and donated the *Heike nōkyō* 平家納経, a collection of sutras copied

by members of Kiyomori's family, to the shrine at Itsukushima 厳島. The copying of sutras was seen as generating merit for those engaged in the act itself, but it also served to bind a group, or a fellowship together, which suited Kiyomori and his Heike relatives (LOWE 2017, 6–7, 13–14). Four years later, Kiyomori funded and supported the expansion of the shrine to the world-famous structure it has now become. Located in the Inland Sea close to today's Hiroshima, Itsukushima was an important ritual site for Kiyomori, whose governorships, income, and luxury items were mainly tied to the Inland Sea and the western part of Japan.

In the early years of his rise to power, Kiyomori's favoring of Itsukushima was relatively unproblematic, but finding a Buddhist ally was an altogether different matter. He had himself experienced the force of monasteries such as Enryakuji, Onjōji, and Kōfukuji, and had even been involved in skirmishes with them in his career as a junior commander. In 1147, for example, he was part of a group that confronted protesters from Gion 祇園 Shrine when arrows were fired at the demonstrators. Gion was an Enryakuji affiliate, and so a complaint was lodged, which resulted in a temporary suspension of Kiyomori and his father (*Honchō seiki*, Kyūan 久安 3 [1147] 6/15, 24; *Taiki*, Kyūan 3/8/13). Later accounts, mainly based on the *Heike monogatari* corpus of war tales, have chosen to portray Kiyomori as a fierce opponent of the established monastic centers, in part because of this incident. While it cannot be denied that Kiyomori often confronted temple clerics, and indeed refused to give in to the demands of powerful religious complexes on several occasions, one must also consider those tensions in conjunction with frequent shifts in alliances within the capital as well as with Kiyomori's later political aspirations to establish his own imperial line with a different religious constellation.

Steering capital politics without access to and control of Buddhist rituals would have been difficult, and Kiyomori needed to secure the support of at least one of the major temples in central Japan. As in the case of his other strategies, Kiyomori began the work early and may well have come into contact with Myōun in the mid-1160s, eventually leading to an alliance that would last until the former's death in 1181. We do not know how these two influential figures met, or the circumstances behind their initial relationship, but in 1168, just a year after his appointment as Tendai head abbot, Myōun performed a healing ceremony for Kiyomori, who had fallen ill and had decided to take Buddhist vows (TAKAHASHI 2007, 70–71; *Hyōhanki*, Nin'an 3/2/10, 11). The following year, Myōun was the master of ceremonies at a large sutra-copying ceremony at Kiyomori's estate in Fuku-hara, at which a thousand monks are reported to have participated (*Hyōhanki*, Nin'an 4/3/21; *Hyakurenshō*, Nin'an 4/3/23; ŌYAMA 1975, 23, 31). Naturally, such rituals carried an important meaning beyond the religious one as Kiyomori was taking steps to make his estate a political center, if not a new capital.

The relationship between Kiyomori and Myōun developed into a strong partnership, as can be seen in the so-called Narichika Incident of 1169–1170. Named after Fujiwara no Narichika 藤原成親 (1138–1177), it unfolded in the twelfth month of 1169 when monks from Enryakuji protested at the palace against intrusions into an estate in Owari 尾張 Province (the western part of Aichi Prefecture), which was managed by one of its branch shrines. The offending party was the deputy governor, but his master and the provincial proprietor was in fact Narichika, who was a retainer of Go Shirakawa. Since the retired emperor was not prone to giving in to the demands of the monks, he ordered Kiyomori's oldest son, Taira no Shigemori 平重盛 (1138–1179), to drive the protesters away from the area around the palace, and to use violence if necessary. Shigemori refused the order no less than three times, claiming concerns about potential damage to the portable shrines that the protesters had brought with them. Such concerns were of course common at this time since any damage might be seen as an affront to the deities, which, in the spirit of the interdependence of the Buddhist and imperial law, in turn might have a negative impact on the imperial court. Employing delaying tactics, Shigemori instead promised to confront the protesters the next day, by which time the monks had already scattered, leaving only the carts behind. Since the gods in the carts were agitated (or at least believed to be so), many courtiers refused to go to the palace and so court activities there had to be scaled down (*Hyōhanki*, Kaō 1/12/17, 23, 24; *Gyokuyō*, Kaō 1/12/23, 24; *Gumaiki*, Kaō 1/12/23, 24; *Tendai zasu ki*, 103).

In the end, Go Shirakawa was forced to punish Narichika, but it was just to calm the monks, for Narichika was pardoned just a few days later. Instead, the retired emperor attempted to deflect the situation and put the blame elsewhere by exiling two scapegoats, but also by stripping Myōun of his role as protector monk for having failed to control the clergy. Go Shirakawa was, in other words, sending a strong message to which, unsurprisingly, the Enryakuji clergy reacted by staging yet another protest. This time, Go Shirakawa was forced to exact an actual punishment by exiling Narichika, though he was pardoned after two months (*Hyōhanki*, Kaō 1/12/24, 27, 29; *Gyokuyō*, Kaō 1/12/24, 30, Kaō 2 [1170] 1/13, 22, 23, 27; *Gumaiki*, Kaō 1/12/24; *Hyakurenshō*, Kaō 1/12/28; *Kugyō bunin*, Nin'an 4 [1169] and Kaō 2).<sup>14</sup>

The Narichika Incident contains many layers of conflict, from disputes over land at the provincial level to competition between the elites at the very top. The historical term for those elites is “influential houses” (*kenmon* 権門) and whereas Myōun headed one of them (Enryakuji), he was squeezed between two other elites: the imperial chieftain and an emerging military elite. And none of those

14. Myōun was later reappointed protector monk. The pardon was likely planned by Go Shirakawa from the outset.

powers was powerful enough to govern alone, which is exactly what led to the need for alliances, frequent shifts, and to a governance structure that relied on collaboration as much as competition (ADOLPHSON 2000, 353–355). On a more individual level, the relationship between Shigemori and Myōun illustrates that need well. The former's refusal to confront the protesters despite direct orders from Go Shirakawa was unusual to say the least. One may, of course, take Shigemori at his word about his fear of the portable shrines, but warrior-leaders were, in contrast to courtiers, known to be notoriously disrespectful of clergies and monasteries, and shooting arrows at a portable shrine was certainly not uncommon among warriors. Regardless of his religious beliefs, it is unlikely that Shigemori would have acted without consulting his father, and Kiyomori would not have benefited from a conflict with Enryakuji and its head abbot, both of whom he counted on as allies. But what is salient here is that the retired emperor expected Myōun to represent the court's interests with the clergy, while the monk himself saw matters the other way around. The support of someone like Kiyomori was essential in balancing expectations, reflecting the complexities of factionalism of the twelfth century. That became all the more obvious in one of the most significant events leading up to the Genpei War of 1180–1185: the Hakusanji 白山寺 Incident.

*The Hakusanji Incident of 1176–1177 and Myōun's Demotion*

By the mid 1170s, Myōun had become an important figure in the capital region. He led or attended numerous ceremonies in Fukuhara and frequently performed rituals in Kyoto, which earned him a promotion to the office of monastic affairs. It is in this context that he received permission to ride in an ox-drawn carriage, as noted earlier. In further confirmation of Myōun's status, but also in a somewhat surprising development given the retired emperor's demotion of Myōun following the Narichika Incident, Go Shirakawa himself was ordained at Enryakuji in the fifth month of 1176 (*Tendai zasu ki*, 105–106; *Gyokuyō*, Jōan 3 [1173] 1/12, Angen 2 [1176] 5/27, Angen 3 [1177] 3/22; *Kitsuki*, Angen 2/6/9; *Hyakurenshō*, Angen 1/6/18, Angen 3/3/18; BLAIR 2015, 67). One should bear in mind, though, that the late Heian state was a highly competitive environment, and, as such the falling out and realignment of allies were commonplace, even if Go Shirakawa stands out as extraordinarily flexible in that regard. Such maneuvering notwithstanding, the trust between Kiyomori and Myōun remained throughout the 1170s, leading to a dependency that only grew stronger as the Heike chieftain attempted to take direct control of capital politics. Nothing demonstrates this tight relationship more clearly than the Hakusanji Incident, which involved the Tendai clergy both centrally and at branch temples, Kiyomori, and trusted retainers of the retired emperor. More importantly, it became a major factor in

the fall-out between Go Shirakawa and Kiyomori, which would eventually lead to the Genpei War.

The incident began in 1176 when Enryakuji lodged an appeal that Fujiwara no Morotaka 師高 (d. 1177), the governor of Kaga 加賀 Province (Ishikawa Prefecture on the coast northeast of Kyoto), and his younger brother Morotsune 師經 (d. 1177), who also served as deputy, be exiled. In short, they were accused of having burned residences and stolen crops from an estate (*shōen* 莊園) that belonged to Hakusanji in Kaga. Since Hakusanji was a branch temple of Enryakuji, the latter's clergy acted on behalf of its provincial affiliate (*Akihiro ō ki*, *Jishō* 治承 1 [1177] 4/13; *Gyokuyō*, *Jishō* 1/3/21; *Tendai zasu ki*, 105; McCULLOUGH 1990, 48–50). Disputes over land were common throughout the early medieval period, but despite the existence of tens of thousands of estate documents many conflicts are poorly understood because of the spotty nature of the records, and scholars often find themselves seeing only the tip of the iceberg with no way of knowing what was beneath. When it comes to the Hakusanji Incident, however, we are fortunate; because it engaged three of the most influential powers (Enryakuji, Kiyomori, and Go Shirakawa), it is discussed in several contemporary sources. In addition, letters that were produced in connection with the incident were reproduced (likely from contemporary diaries that are now lost to us) in later war tales, such as in variants of the *Heike monogatari*, which have recently been explored in-depth by Japanese scholars (MATSUSHITA 2015). Owing to this richness, we are able to get a fuller glimpse of Myōun's relationship with Kiyomori and his engagement in matters beyond the Tendai center and its network.

The court initially ignored the appeal from Enryakuji, which was not unusual when it was at a loss as to what to do, or simply did not want to act. This caused the monks to demonstrate against the governor and against the lack of action in the fourth month of 1177. The clergy, numbering several hundred, carried six portable shrines from Enryakuji-affiliated shrines with them, and assembled at one of their branches in the capital before continuing to the palace. At that point, the crowd had reportedly grown to two thousand protesters and eight shrines, and contemporary diaries note that the court dispatched warriors to confront the protesters in what became a skirmish during which the Enryakuji side suffered some fatalities. The protesters had little choice but to leave the sacred shrines in front of the palace in order to escape more injury, but also to ensure that the kami were still present to express their displeasure (*Tendai zasu ki*, 105; *Gumaiki*, *Jishō* 1/ 4/13; *Heike monogatari* 1: 102–103; McCULLOUGH 1990, 52–54).

Following the protest, the capital was in chaos. The spiritual threat of the abandoned shrines was troubling to its residents, and it seemed as if the clergy might be planning additional demonstrations. Concerned with the unruliness, the court sent Emperor Takakura to the safety of the Hōjūji 法住寺 Palace in the southern part of the capital, while rumors of riots continued to circulate.

Myōun's whereabouts are unknown at that time, but he must have facilitated communication between the clergy and Kiyomori since he sent letters to the Heike chieftain, alerting him to further demonstrations that would be staged. Undoubtedly, the clergy was not just making threats but also hoped to ensure the support of Kiyomori (MATSUSHITA 2015, 46–47; *Gyokuyō*, Angen 3 [1177] 4/14). One courtier compared the situation to the Heiji Disturbance of 1159–1160, when the capital was filled with armed men, battles broke out, and numerous buildings were burned down. Go Shirakawa eventually promised the clergy that he would deal with the matter and to punish those involved, but those promises may have been less than genuine as it soon became clear that he did not intend to actually accommodate Enryakuji's demands. Rather, he issued an edict claiming that the estates in question were public land, which shows that the dispute centered on competing interests between deputies of a central estate proprietor, namely Enryakuji, and provincial officials who were retainers of the retired emperor. Since the stance taken by Go Shirakawa lacks support in other sources, it is most likely that the estate did in fact belong to Hakusanji, and that the retired emperor's actions were based on a desire to protect his retainers rather than on a commitment to justice (*Gumaiki*, Jishō 1 [1177] 4/14, 15, 16; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/4/14, 17; *Tendai zasu ki*, 106).

Enryakuji's pressure eventually forced Go Shirakawa to admit that the burning of residences in the Hakusanji estate, as well as the handling of the protesters, deserved punishment. Morotaka was exiled on the twentieth day of the fourth month of 1177, and six retainers of the court's commander (Shigemori) were arrested for shooting arrows at the protesters and their portable shrines.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Morotaka's father, Saikō 西光 (Fujiwara no Moromitsu 藤原師光, d. 1177), an avid supporter of Go Shirakawa who was also accused of being complicit in the intrusions, escaped punishment altogether (*Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/4/15, 16, 20; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 1/4/15; *Heike monogatari* 1: 105; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 55–56). Just a few days later, Go Shirakawa imposed an unprecedented punishment on Myōun; he had the head abbot arrested for not having supported the court (that is, Go Shirakawa's personal retainers) against his own clergy. In addition, Myōun was accused of the same crime in the aforementioned Narichika Incident, of having ousted the preceding Tendai head abbot for whom he was

15. It would be surprising if Shigemori, who had refused to confront protesters in the Narichika Incident, would have condoned the shooting of arrows at Enryakuji demonstrators. It is possible that the retainers acted without Shigemori's consent, though it is also worth noting that he has, especially in later sources, often been seen as a loyal subject of Go Shirakawa. Contemporary sources do indeed indicate that there were at times different views within the Heike about how to relate to the court, and it is known that Shigemori attempted to intervene for Fujiwara no Narichika, who was his brother-in-law following the Shishigatani Incident of 1177. For later treatments of Shigemori in the *Heike monogatari*, see TAKAHASHI (2015, 128–129).

appointed to replace in 1167.<sup>16</sup> Not wanting to deal with further protests, Go Shirakawa moved quickly, excluding Myōun from the monk register, deposing him as head abbot, and confiscating both his private and public (head abbot) estates within a couple of days. On the fourteenth day of the fifth month, Myōun was sentenced to exile, which, as one might expect, greatly angered the monks on Mt. Hiei, who engaged in numerous meetings and mobilizations and pleaded for Myōun's pardon, even spreading a rumor that they would rather kill him than let him be exiled (*Tendai zasu ki*, 106; *Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/5/7, 11; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/10, 11, 13, 14; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 57–59; *Genpei jōsui ki* 1: 143–148).

Diary entries around this time reflect a sense of desperation often lamenting the decline of the world, which was exacerbated by a fire that had ravaged the capital on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month destroying parts of the palace, including the Enthronement Hall (Daigokuden 大極殿) and countless noble mansions and administrative buildings (*Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/4/29; *Gyokuyō*, Angen 3/4/28, 29; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 1/4/28). In this dire situation, it is not surprising that many nobles expressed astonishment at Go Shirakawa's unprecedented exile of an Enryakuji head abbot, especially considering that the retired emperor had received the Tendai precepts from Myōun the previous year and had even placed his son in his care in 1175. As Matsushita Kenji suggests, however, there were likely other actors besides the retired emperor behind the decision to exile. In fact, one diary suggests that Go Shirakawa's retainers, headed by Saikō, had raised the issue of Myōun's lack of loyalty, and had persuaded the retired emperor of Myōun's role in the punishments of Narichika and his allies seven year earlier (MATSUSHITA 2015, 47; *Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/5/5, 6; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/8; *Akihiro ō ki*, Jishō 1/5/11). Still, most courtiers seemed to hold the retired emperor responsible for this bad turn of events. But the matter did not stop there. Immediately after the announcement of the punishment, the clergy began mobilizing. Eleven of Tendai's top-ranking monks (all members of the office of monastic affairs) went to the palace and presented an appeal, demanding, in the polite language of the documents of the time, that the exile and the confiscation of Myōun's estates be reversed (MATSUSHITA 2015, 48; *Gumaiki*, *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/15, 16).

Five days later, a meeting was held to discuss alternative punishments at the guard's hall (*jin no sadame* 陣定), where ranking courtiers often gathered to decide on important matters. The riots had subsided somewhat by that point,

16. From the imperial court's perspective, the accusation that Myōun failed to control the clergy in the Narichika and Hakusanji incidents is to some extent understandable since most head abbots were close relatives of the aristocracy, and thus expected to act on its behalf. The charge that Myōun had ousted the Tendai head abbot prior to his appointment in 1167 is more difficult to explain. The *Gukanshō*, written around 1219, makes a similar accusation (*Gukanshō*, 367). There is no evidence in contemporary sources that Myōun, who spent most of his time in the capital and at the Nashimoto cloister, was involved in the riots against the former head abbot.



and Myōun himself had sent messengers to the mansions of nobles who might be persuaded to defend his position. Indeed, some members appeared to have been sympathetic to the former head abbot, arguing for a lighter sentence, but the retired emperor insisted on banishment to a distant province, which represented a punishment that was just one notch below execution (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/20; *Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/5/14, 18, 19, 21; *Heike monogatari* 1: 113–114; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 57–58). As the clergy was mobilizing, they also sent letters to the court, but above all to Kiyomori. In those letters, the clergy extolled the importance of Tendai Buddhism for the imperial state, compared the decline of the sect to the devastating attacks on Buddhism in China in the 840s by the Tang court, and reminded Kiyomori that Go Shirakawa himself had taken Buddhist vows at Onjōji in 1167 but had been initiated as a monk at the Enryakuji platform in 1176 with Myōun as master of ceremonies (YAMASHITA 1963, 54–56; MATSUSHITA 2015, 51–55; *Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/5/14, 16, 21; *Genpei jōsui ki* 1: 145–147).

During this time, Myōun was confined to his dwelling, the Shirakawa Hall (Shirakawabō 白川房), in the eastern part of Kyoto, where many noble abbots resided. These residential arrangements were typical for monks of noble descent in the late Heian and Kamakura periods, but obviously less commonly used for house arrests. As sons of high-ranking families began taking up leading posts at various monasteries in the mid-Heian period, the practice of having residences, or even sub-temples closer to the capital, spread. As a result, some abbots found it difficult to connect to the clergies as they spent most of their time performing ceremonies in the capital, though it was not uncommon to divide the time between Kyoto and their respective monasteries. Myōun was clearly not foreign to the monastic complex on Mt. Hiei as we know from historical records, but he was also deeply involved in capital politics and rituals in the capital area, so it is hardly surprising to learn of his Higashiyama residence. At the time of Myōun's house arrest, one courtier noted that the gate of the monk's residence had been tied shut and that the area was guarded by members of the imperial police, no doubt because of threats of riots (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/5, 8). Then, on the eleventh day of the fifth month, fearing attempts by the Enryakuji clergy to free the head abbot, the guards at Myōun's residence were increased, and there were even rumors that Go Shirakawa had ordered the imperial police captain to kill Myōun should the clergy appear (*Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/5/16; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/15; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 1/5/13).

Soon after the decision to exile Myōun to Izu 伊豆 Province (Shizuoka Prefecture), he was taken to a holding place and then to a sub-temple of Enryakuji known as the Issaikyō Branch (Issaikyō bessho 一切経別所). Following one night there, Myōun, guarded by five or six mounted warriors, was then moved eastward toward Ōmi 近江 Province, but the procession was intercepted just east of Mt. Hiei at Setabashi 勢多橋 by supposedly two thousand Tendai clerics, who managed to free him and take him to Enryakuji. Go Shirakawa was

naturally furious, ordering two of his main generals, Shigemori and Munemori 宗盛 (1147–1185), both sons of Kiyomori, to attack Mt. Hiei. Rather than simply following the orders, however, the two commanders replied that they needed to check with Kiyomori first. On the morning of the twenty-fourth day of the fifth month, a messenger was sent to Fukuhara, causing Kiyomori to leave his estate and travel to Kyoto a few days later (*Akihiro ō ki*, Jishō 1/5/24; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/27; *Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/5/23, 24; MATSUSHITA 2015, 49–50; *Heike monogatari* 1: 118–120; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 60–61).<sup>17</sup>

Kiyomori met with the retired emperor the next day, but he could not convince him to change his mind, and so he was forced to agree to launch an assault on Enryakuji. However, Kiyomori was still unwilling to confront the monastery and especially Myōun. One courtier noted that such a course of action surely made Kiyomori feel uneasy, since he would have to face his own monk-ally as well as a major monastic complex with which he was generally on good terms. In the meantime, Go Shirakawa had used members of the office of monastic affairs as messengers to demand that the clergy on Mt. Hiei return Myōun, but he was ignored. Pushing for an all-out attack, Go Shirakawa additionally ordered provincial governors and warriors to confiscate estates held by Enryakuji branch temples and shrines. Tensions were understandably high late in the fifth month of 1177 in a capital that also saw a large number of warriors assembled to attack Enryakuji (*Akihiro ō ki*, Jishō 1/5/29, 6/10; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/28, 29, 6/10; *Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/5/28, 29, 6/2; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 1/5/23; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 62).

While Myōun was thus in asylum on Mt. Hiei, the monastery under siege, and the capital in a prolonged state of general disorder and destruction because of the fire, frustration with Kiyomori became increasingly widespread among Go Shirakawa's closest retainers. Tension had been building between Kiyomori and Go Shirakawa since the Narichika Incident throughout the 1170s, much of it due to the former's ambitions but also the latter's habit of playing his own retainers against one another. What had kept the alliance going during those times was Kenshunmon'in 建春門院 (Taira no Shigeko 平 滋子, 1142–1176), Go Shirakawa's consort and Kiyomori's sister-in-law, who had been the all-important tie between the retired emperor and the Heike. She had become a consort of Go Shirakawa and at the age of nineteen bore him a son, Norihito 憲仁, who would later become Emperor Takakura.

In 1166, when Norihito became crown prince, Shigeko was made imperial consort and allowed to surround herself with a number of retainers, all of them Heike relatives. Two years later, she was formally given the prestigious title of grand imperial dowager (*kōtaigō* 皇太后), when her son ascended the throne.

17. The notation that Shigemori here expressed his desire to check with Kiyomori undermines the interpretation that he may have ordered his retainers to fire arrows at the protesters earlier.

The road to the throne had been anything but straightforward for Takakura as there were other candidates with more prestigious pedigrees, and so his promotion has been taken to reflect Go Shirakawa's deep affection for Kenshunmon'in. That she was essential in the Go Shirakawa-Heike alliance is in any case beyond any doubt. When the retired emperor visited Itsukushima in 1174, Kenshunmon'in was with him, together with most ranking members of the Heike. And early in the third month of 1176, when a big celebration lasting several days for Go Shirakawa's fiftieth birthday took place at the Hōjūji Palace, Kenshunmon'in stood at the center together with her Heike relatives and all ranking members of the court. Shortly thereafter, Go Shirakawa and his favorite consort went to enjoy hot springs in Settsu 摂津 Province (*Kitsuki*, Jōan 4 [1174] 3/16; *Hyakurenshō*, Angen 2 [1176] 3/9). By the sixth month of 1176, however, Kenshunmon'in suddenly took ill, causing Go Shirakawa to spare no effort to get her well. Among the monks who were called, Myōun performed the Shichibutsu Yakushi Hō 七仏薬師法 ritual, which was believed to have healing powers. Unfortunately, all efforts were for naught, and Kenshunmon'in passed away on the eighth day of the seventh month of 1176 at the age of thirty-four (*Tendai zasu ki*, 105–106; *Gyokuyō*, Jōan 3/1/12, Angen 2/5/27, Angen 3/3/22; *Kitsuki*, Angen 2/6/9; *Hyakurenshō*, Angen 1/6/18, Angen 3/3/18; BLAIR 2015, 67).

The death of Kenshunmon'in greatly affected the relationship between the retired emperor and the Heike chieftain, offering evidence of the often underestimated importance of women behind the public political stage in Kyoto. It was she who had promoted Takakura's enthronement over the opposition of non-Heike courtiers, some of whom served the retired emperor. Following Kenshunmon'in's death, those forces reemerged and Go Shirakawa's relationship with Kiyomori grew increasingly frosty. As in the recent Hōgen (1156) and Heiji (1159–1160) disturbances, uncertainty regarding imperial succession threatened to destabilize the court and throw it into open factional fighting. The reigning fifteen-year-old emperor, Takakura, had no male heir. Seeing an opportunity to reassert his power, Go Shirakawa ensured that his retainers (*in no kinshin* 院近臣) were well rewarded at the annual promotion ceremony in the twelfth month of 1176, bypassing several members of the Heike. However, the next month, Kiyomori countered by having two of his sons, Shigemori and Munemori, granted the title of captains of the left and right guard, sending a clear message that he intended to exert control over the palace (*Kugyō bunin*, Angen 3; *Gyokuyō*, Angen 2/12/5, Angen 3/1/24).

Perhaps the relationship was temporarily restored at that point, for Go Shirakawa visited Kiyomori at his Fukuhara mansion in the third month of 1177. However, when the Hakusanji Incident wreaked havoc on Kyoto two months later, Kiyomori's reliance on and support of Myōun came to exacerbate the tensions between the Heike chieftain and the retired emperor. There was much opposition

among Go Shirakawa's retainers over Kiyomori's reluctance to act against Enryakuji, and influential members such as Saikō and Fujiwara no Narichika, who remained in high confidence with the retired emperor after the incident in 1169–1170 that sent Narichika into exile, were pushing for harsher punishments of Myōun and the clergy (MATSUSHITA 2015, 57–58). The retired emperor's own role in this latest upsurge of opposition is unclear, but there can be little doubt that it was reinforced, if not triggered, by Kiyomori's unwillingness to act against Myōun and Enryakuji in the Hakusanji Incident.

Then, late in the evening of the twenty-ninth day of the fifth month, the very same day he had been ordered to lay siege on Enryakuji to retract Myōun, Kiyomori was approached by one Tada Yukitsuna 多田行綱 (d.u.), who informed him that there was a plot underway to topple him. The plotters, who had assembled at the villa of the Shingon monk Shunkan 俊寛 (1143–1179) at Shishigatani 鹿ヶ谷 in northeastern Kyoto, were led by Saikō and Narichika. Originally, Yukitsuna was part of the group of plotters but he apparently thought better of it and went to Kiyomori's mansion in the Heike-built Rokuhara 六波羅 area in Kyoto to reveal the plans. Kiyomori wasted no time, arresting Saikō, then subjecting him to torture before executing him, while Saikō's son Morotaka was killed in exile in Owari Province. The heads of both men were brought to the capital for display, which the clergy somewhat morosely rejoiced over. Shunkan and two more plotters were exiled to the sulfurous island of Kikaigashima 鬼界ヶ島 south of Kyushu, where food and fresh water was said to be scarce. Fujiwara no Narichika was arrested but his life was spared in favor of exile owing to pleas by Shigemori, whose principal wife was Narichika's sister. Myōun was exonerated, his exile was lifted, and he subsequently moved to Ōhara, where he secluded himself until late in 1179 (*Akihiro ō ki*, Jishō 1/5/29, 6/10; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/5/29, 6/1, 3, 10; *Gumaiki*, Jishō 1/6/1, 2; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 1/6/1, 3; *Heike monogatari* 1: 123–134, 135, 165–166; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 63–64).<sup>18</sup>

### *Myōun in the Genpei War*

Myōun was out of action after the Hakusanji and Shishigatani incidents, distancing himself from Kyoto and the center stage. In the twelfth month of 1177, the clergy began to ask that Myōun's estates be returned to him (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 1/12/18). We have no record of any action by the court at that time, so it is likely that Go Shirakawa, despite the obvious debacle earlier that year, refused to grant this request. In fact, when Myōun returned to the capital, he did so, according to

18. Narichika did not survive long in exile in Bizen 備前 Province, where he, according to some later sources, was left to starve to death in confinement. The *Heike monogatari* describes Narichika's fate in some detail, though in that version he was killed by his prison guards (*Heike monogatari*, 188–192; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 63–64, 64–70, 78–80, 82–84).

one contemporary source, “secretly” in the eighth month of 1178 (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 2 [1178] 8/25). He kept a low profile, but a new dispute between Kiyomori and Go Shirakawa changed the circumstances. That same year Go Shirakawa attempted to sponsor a separate ordination platform at Onjōji, which would have challenged Enryakuji’s leadership of Tendai. The latter lodged yet another protest. Go Shirakawa ordered Kiyomori to confront the protesters, but again he refused (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 2/1/20, 2/5, 7; *Sankaiki*, Jishō 2/1/20, 2/10, 5/16, 20; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 2/2/1; McCULLOUGH 1990, 63–64). Any hope of reconciliation was finally crushed in the sixth month of 1179, when one of Kiyomori’s daughters passed away and both he and the retired emperor made claims to her landholdings. Go Shirakawa was supported by the Fujiwara chieftain, Motofusa 基房, since the daughter had married into the latter’s family. This time, however, Kiyomori had no interest in being diplomatic, for he promptly put Go Shirakawa under house arrest and exiled Motofusa (*Sankaiki*, Jishō 3 [1179] 11/17, 27; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 3/11/16, 12/3; ADOLPHSON 2015, 25; MOTOKI 1996, 309, 329).

Meanwhile, on Mt. Hiei, severe confrontations had been taking place between high-ranking scholar-monks (*gakushō* 学生), often of noble birth, and the rank-and-file monks (or “hall-clerics,” *dōshu* 堂衆) over rights to land and the performance of rituals, which the former saw as their exclusive privileges. The conflict continued for over a year, from the middle of 1178 until the eleventh month of 1179 with numerous attacks being launched by both sides against dwellings and estates. Without Myōun as head abbot, not only was the clergy unruly but the incumbent head abbot, the ordained prince Kakukai 覚快 (1134–1181), was utterly unable to control the monks. When Kiyomori took charge of matters directly in the capital in the eleventh month of 1179, Myōun was also reappointed head abbot of Tendai, undoubtedly to pacify the clergy (*Sankaiki*, Jishō 3 [1179] 11/17, 27; *Gyokuyō*, Jishō 3/11/16, 12/3; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 3/11/2, 5, 16; *Tendai zasu ki*, 108).

Myōun was thus back in the spotlight after almost two years of living what seems to have been a quiet life, partly in Ōhara and partly in Kyoto. But that also meant more involvement in Kiyomori’s schemes. Soon after his reappointment, for example, he was granted estates that had belonged to Prince Mochihito 以仁, who was not just Go Shirakawa’s son (and possibly a candidate for the throne) but also the one who would eventually send out the call for arms against Kiyomori in the middle of 1180. Further, Myōun was reappointed imperial protector monk again before the end of the year (*Sankaiki*, Jishō 3/11/25; *Tendai zasu ki*, 108). When Kiyomori made his grandson Emperor Antoku 安徳 (1178–1185) in the second month of 1180, it became abundantly clear that he would not allow Go Shirakawa back into the picture and that the house arrest was anything but temporary. The following month, the clergy at Onjōji, which had been close to the retired emperor, pleaded with Enryakuji and Kōfukuji to join forces and force the release of Go Shirakawa from his detention. Shortly thereafter, Prince

Mochihito called for help to unseat Kiyomori, but a lack of response forced him to seek refuge at Onjōji (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 4 [1180] 3/17, 18; *Meigetsuki*, *Sankaiki*, and *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 4/5/17, 18; McCULLOUGH 1990, 122–123, 126–129, 145–147). Whereas Mochihito was quickly eliminated, resistance from three of the capital region’s major monasteries (Onjōji, Kōfukuji, and Tōdaiji) remained a major concern. Myōun played a crucial part in convincing his own clergy not to join forces with Onjōji, but the newly instated Fujiwara chieftain was far less successful with Kōfukuji (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 4 [1180] 5/17, 18; *Meigetsuki*, *Sankaiki* and *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 4/5/17, 18). Had Enryakuji been part of the opposition, Kiyomori would have faced a far more serious challenge to retain control in the capital.

Unfortunately for Myōun, Kiyomori did not make things easy. Aiming to create a Heike imperial line with his grandson as the progenitor, Kiyomori had his son-in-law, Takakura, visit the Itsukushima Shrine following his retirement rather than the Hie 比叡 Shrine, as the Enryakuji clergy had expected. Kiyomori had been promoting Itsukushima since the 1160s, so his decision may be understandable, but it came at a high cost since it intensified the opposition from the major temples in the capital area. Then, early in the sixth month of 1180, Kiyomori moved the imperial court from Kyoto to his estate in Fukuhara, in effect moving the capital itself. I have discussed this move elsewhere, but suffice it to say that it was another stratagem that alienated the Enryakuji monks (ADOLPHSON 2015).

Throughout these challenges, Myōun remained loyal to his ally, and for his services he was rewarded with the abbotship of Shitennōji 四天王寺, a prominent temple in the southern part of today’s Osaka (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 4 [1180] 6/21; *Meigetsuki*, *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 4/6/21). It was during a visit to the temple shortly after his appointment that Myōun wrote a poem entitled “Composed when visiting Tennōji and worshipping relics of the Buddha”:

Night-time smoke  
is an example  
of that which does not last;  
how delighted I am to see  
these relics that remain!

(*Senzai wakashū* 1: 214)<sup>19</sup>

The poem is probably a version of an earlier creation by another monk, but it was still considered sophisticated enough to be included in the imperial anthology

19. The original passage reads: “Tsune naranu/tameshi wa yowa no/keburi nite/kienu nagori o/miru zo ureshiki” つねならぬためしは夜はのけぶりにてきえぬなごりをみるぞうれしき. The reference to smoke, coming from a relic ritual at the temple, invokes images of the Buddha ascending to nirvana. A slightly different version reads, “Tennōji ni mairite, yuishin shari o rai shite yomihaberu” 天王寺にまいりて遺身舍利を礼してよみ侍 (*Senzai wakashū* 10: 380). I am indebted to Anne Commons and Richard Bowring for their help with the poems.

*Senzai wakashū*, which in itself was an honor. Such collections contain several poems by nobles, aristocratic warriors, and emperors, and the inclusion of Myōun in this anthology in every way reflects the monk's status and involvement not just in religious settings but also in the political and cultural environment of the time.

But while Myōun was moving in the highest circles, he also began experiencing problems with his own clergy. Most of the lower echelons, especially the hall clerics, had already sided with Onjōji against the Heike following the court's move to Fukuhara. Many higher-ranking monks stayed loyal to Kiyomori, likely because of Myōun, but Enryakuji as a whole seemed to turn more and more toward the Minamoto following the outbreak of civil war in the eighth month of 1180. Kiyomori returned the court from Fukuhara to Kyoto in the eleventh month to deal with the monastic opposition he was facing, though the emperor Takakura was also ill, and it was believed that he would fare better in the Kyoto basin than by the sea. Regardless, the return did not improve matters for Kiyomori's son, Tomomori 知盛 (1152–1185), who clashed with some Minamoto supporters in Ōmi Province in the twelfth month and damaged peasant houses under Enryakuji control in the process. Some three to four hundred Enryakuji monks reacted forcefully, joining their colleagues at Onjōji, and within a short time we learn of small skirmishes between members of the Enryakuji clergy and Heike warriors (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 4/12/9–14; *Heike monogatari* 1: 94–95; McCULLOUGH 1990, 193–194). Later that same and very fateful twelfth month, Kiyomori set out to confront the recalcitrant monastic complexes decisively by dispatching Tomomori and his younger brother, Shigehira 重衡 (1157–1185), first to Onjōji, which was heavily damaged for a second time during the ensuing assault, and then to Nara, where large parts of Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji were burned to the ground (*Gyokuyō*, Jishō 4/12/15, 16, 22, 24, 25, 29; *Hyakurenshō*, Jishō 4/12/28; *Heike monogatari* 2: 96–101; McCULLOUGH 1990, 194–196).

It would have been impossible to predict at the time, but the destruction of three major temples came to mark the beginning of the end for the Heike. Kiyomori died from a high fever, and apparently in extreme agony, in the second intercalary month of 1181. His son-in-law, Takakura, had passed away just two months earlier. While Kiyomori's sons struggled to sustain the position their father had tried to create, Myōun faced his own challenges. In the sixth month of 1181, a letter arrived at Enryakuji from the Minamoto forces in Kanto, asking the monastery for support against the Heike. In return, the Minamoto chieftain, Yoritomo, promised to confirm Enryakuji holdings in the east in addition to providing new funding for Tendai ceremonies. But Myōun revealed the contents of the letter to the Heike, which caused the monks to stage a protest against the very head abbot they had saved from exile four years earlier. While no major riots took place, Myōun now failed for the first time to unite his monks and to

bridge the divisions within the monastery (*Gyokuyō*, *Jishō* 5/*Yōwa* 養和 1 [1181] 1/5, 3/11, 6/14; *Tendai zasu ki*, 109).

The Heike, for their part, continued to support Myōun, but, strangely, so did Go Shirakawa, who seems to have yet again reconciled with the monk after years of conflicts, alliances, and dramatic realignments. In the third month of 1181, about a month after Kiyomori's death, Go Shirakawa's son Jōnin was reaffirmed as Myōun's disciple (*Kachō yōryaku*, *Yōwa* 1/3/27). But perhaps this reconciliation was less than genuine. Go Shirakawa, often described as wily and manipulative (SANSOM 1958, 267; GOODWIN 1990, 223–224; MCCULLOUGH 1966, 18; FARRIS 2009, 107; HURST 1982, 8), was simply doing what was commonplace—realigning himself for a post-Heike world—and with Kōfukuji, Tōdaiji, and his old ally Onjōji largely destroyed, there would have been few options in terms of finding influential religious allies. Besides, Go Shirakawa had long had an affinity for Tendai Buddhism, and the Hōjūji Palace, which was a Tendai branch temple, had been his retirement mansion since the mid-1160s. Undoubtedly in recognition of his central role both to Go Shirakawa and the new Heike leaders, who themselves now had an uneasy alliance with the retired emperor, Myōun was appointed head late in 1181 of the most important cluster of imperial temples known as the *rikushōji* 六勝寺; a massive temple complex located a short distance north of the retired emperor's mansion in the eastern part of the capital that also included a substantial number of estates (*Tendai zasu ki*, 109). But Go Shirakawa continued to hedge his bets. At one point in 1182, the Heike leader, Munemori, sent troops to Mt. Hiei to bring the retired emperor back to the capital over fears that he was attempting to solicit support from the Enryakuji clergy for the Minamoto (*Gyokuyō*, *Juei* 寿永 1 (1182) 4/15, 16; *Kitsuki*, *Hyakurenshō*, *Juei* 1/4/15).

By 1183, it had become clear to most residents in the capital that the Heike would not be able to hold on to Kyoto for much longer. Kiso Yoshinaka 木曾義仲 (1154–1164), the cousin of Yoritomo, headed the forces battling for the Minamoto side in central Japan, making his way toward Kyoto from the east via Lake Biwa. Once within striking distance, he first sent a message asking for the Enryakuji clergy's active support, or at least a promise of not siding with the enemy. The monks, always willing to take advantage, expressed interest but also asked for funding for Buddhist ceremonies and repairs to buildings as well as confirmation of estates and branch temples (*Gyokuyō*, *Juei* 2 [1183] 7/24, 25; *Heike monogatari* 2: 202–208; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 237–239). For his part, the Heike leader tried to induce the Enryakuji clergy to support him by offering the temple exclusive status as a clan temple (*ujidera* 氏寺), which would have meant a tremendous change from Kiyomori's strategy of supporting his own network of temples. Nevertheless, Enryakuji rejected the request, and the Heike fled the capital on the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month of 1183. Just the day before, Myōun had gone to the retired emperor's mansion at Hōjūji, and shortly thereafter the two



traveled together to Mt. Hiei, presumably to greet Yoshinaka. In point of fact, they were not the only ones leaving the capital, as many ranking nobles decided to make their way to Mt. Hiei to avoid potential repercussions from remaining Heike supporters. It was a risky move to leave the imperial palace undefended, but fortunately, the Heike must have seen little benefit in further alienating the court. Yoshinaka climbed Mt. Hiei on the thirtieth day, triumphantly entering the capital a few days later (*Kitsuki*, Juei 2 [1183] 7/12; *Hyakurenshō*, Juei 1/7/8; *Gyokuyō*, Juei 2/7/22, 23, 25, 26; *Heike monogatari* 2: 209–213; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 239–240).

With the Heike removed, Go Shirakawa returned to Kyoto to resume his position and role as retired emperor. But it did not take long for him to realize that Yoshinaka had no intention of restoring the polity to the pre-Kiyomori ascendancy. Rather, the Minamoto commander seemed determined to simply replace the Heike, which induced the retired emperor to appeal to Yoritomo in the Kanto region for help, acknowledging the latter's military headquarters as the nationwide command center over the warrior class in the process. Fearing an attack by Yoshinaka, who had driven the Heike away from the Kinai area, Go Shirakawa once again escaped to Mt. Hiei, this time under the pretext of a pilgrimage to Hie Shrine (*Hyakurenshō*, Juei 2/9/15; *Genpei jōsui ki* 2: 274–275; *Gyokuyō*, Juei 2/int. 10/19, 26). Upon Go Shirakawa's return to Hōjūji Palace, however, Yoshinaka acted swiftly to arrest the retired emperor, who was detained for the second time in his life. During the attack on the mansion, several ranking monks from Enryakuji and Onjōji, who had responded to Go Shirakawa's pleas for help, were captured and executed. One of those killed was Myōun, who had tried to escape but was killed by the attackers (*Tendai zasu ki*, 110; *Gyokuyō*, Juei 2/11/22). Contemporary sources offer few details, but later accounts provide some clues as to how it may have happened. The *Gukanshō*, a chronicle written by the Tendai monk Jien 慈円 (1155–1225) less than four decades after the events, notes that Myōun had been accompanied by warriors, but found himself alone and without carriers of his palanquin when a large number of Yoshinaka's warriors attacked. Having no other recourse, Myōun mounted a horse and was struck by an arrow, causing the sixty-nine-year-old monk to fall off his horse at which point some warriors killed and beheaded him, leaving the head by the river (*Gunkanshō*, 365–367; BROWN and ISHIDA 1979, 136–138). Considering that Jien would have been in his late twenties at the time of the attack, it is possible that he had reliable secondhand information about how things occurred. Later accounts seem to have continued on the same theme, as Heike variants state that it was one of Yoshinaka's "four heavenly kings" (*Yoshinaka shitennō* 義仲四天王), Tate Chikatada 橋親忠 (d. 1184), who hit the monk with the arrow. Myōun was then killed by some of Chikatada's retainers who proceeded to behead him (*Heike monogatari* 2: 299–300; MCCULLOUGH 1990, 276–278; *Genpei jōsui ki* 2:

280). Such details notwithstanding, it is clear that Myōun's eventful life ended at the hands of the same kind of aristocratic commander that had drawn him into the dramatic events of the late Heian age in the first place.

### *Legacies and Historical Memories*

In contrast to his near contemporaries Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), Myōun did not leave much of a Buddhist legacy. As far as we know, he produced no religious or personal texts, whereas most erudite monks wrote commentaries or ritual manuals. Myōun's greatest claim to fame was perhaps that he took as one of his disciples the son of Fujiwara no Tadamichi, the aforementioned Jien, who became a recognized poet, appointed to the Tendai head abbotship no less than four times, and who was also the author of *Gukanshō*. Well known for its pessimistic view of the world, and extolling the notion that the world had entered the Buddhist age of decline (*mappō* 末法), *Gukanshō* details the rise of the warrior class and the decline of court society. A member of the traditional aristocracy, Jien's assessment of his own mentor was anything but kind because of the latter's involvement with members of the warrior-aristocracy. In fact, he noted that "Myōun was a person who did one evil thing after another," showing little sympathy for his mentor (*Gukanshō*, 367; BROWN and ISHIDA 1979, 138). Perhaps most remarkable about Jien's comments are claims that Myōun even commanded warriors, not just in the final debacle at Hōjūji, but also many years earlier, in 1167, when the clergy rioted (*Gukanshō*, 365–367; BROWN AND ISHIDA 1979, 136–138).<sup>20</sup> In contrast, contemporary sources, which tend to be rather specific when armed followers are engaged in riots or led by ranking monks, do not mention any occasions where Myōun was involved in any form of violence, much less led armed followers in battle.

Yoshida Kenkō 吉田兼好 (ca. 1283–1352), the author of *Tsurezuregusa*, was similarly critical of Myōun's involvement with Kiyomori. In a famous passage, Kenkō describes how Myōun met a seer, perhaps the influential and erstwhile ally of Kiyomori, Shinzei 信西 (Fujiwara no Michinori 藤原通憲, 1106–1160), and asked him if he would suffer hardships caused by weapons. Upon hearing that this would be the case, the monk asked how the seer could know that. The latter answered: "You are a man who is very unlikely, even for a moment, to have any fears of injuries, and yet, you consider it and ask me such a question. This is already a sign of danger." The section ends by explaining that Myōun was indeed killed by an arrow (*Tsurezuregusa*, 167; PORTER 1914, 117; *Genpei jōsui ki* 2, 288).

20. It is noteworthy that Brown and Ishida erroneously translate the term *akusō* 悪僧 as "armed priests" rather than "evil monks." As I have shown elsewhere, *akusō* was a common term used by courtiers to denote monastics who they found troublesome in general (ADOLPHSON 2007, 62–65).

There was thus substantial criticism of Myōun among later observers but those closer to Myōun's time offered a different perspective. In the *Ima kagami*, the author praises Myōun for being "a rare Tendai head abbot at the end of the Buddhist law" (*Ima kagami*, 303; HIRANO 1984, 20).<sup>21</sup> This historical chronicle, detailing the history of the court and Kyoto from 1025 to the reign of Emperor Takakura, overlaps in time with Myōun himself and, as such, offers a valuable perspective of his leadership. Bearing in mind that the chronicle was written prior to the Genpei War and the unfortunate debacle of Myōun, it is noteworthy that the monk's contemporaries so valued his leadership, even holding him as a beacon in the age of decline, quite in contrast to Jien's views. Myōun was above all praised for having settled what were considered unsurmountable tensions between the lower ranking clergy and the scholar-monks. It was what earned him the head abbot appointment in the first place in 1167, and it is what prompted Kiyomori to urge for a reappointment in 1178, reflecting Myōun's importance in the uncertain times of the late twelfth century. Altogether, he served as head abbot for close to fourteen years at a time when few survived even a couple of years.<sup>22</sup> Like the author of the *Ima kagami*, the ranking noble Fujiwara no Kanezane 藤原兼実 (1149–1207) also commented in the sixth month of 1173 that "there is peace and order among the clerics of Kyoto and Nara because the Tendai head abbot went around to mediate and pacified the monks on Mt. Hiei" (*Gyokuyō*, Jōan 3/6/8; HIRANO 1984, 20).

Regardless of what one might think of Myōun as a monk, his life was in many ways exceptional even as he represents the close connection of the imperial and monastic worlds. Not many monks were appointed head abbot twice, even fewer were ordered exiled (there was just one precedent in the 1160s of a Kōfukuji head abbot), few were as popular with the clergy, and no ranking monk was as involved in the tides of the Genpei War as Myōun. In terms of his own clergy, Myōun was more trusted and popular than any other head abbot of his century. The reception he received when he first climbed Mt. Hiei as head abbot, the quelling of brawls and tensions, and above all the clergy's forceful interception and rescue of the monk from banishment bear witness to an unusual commitment to his leadership. He was steadfast in supporting the Enryakuji clergy's complaints about injustices, which frequently emerged from attempts by the retired emperor's retainers to expand their influence. Though of Minamoto descent, the good fortunes of the family had declined with the death of his grandfather and as the son of a minor consort, he was seemingly far less committed to representing the

21. The author of the *Ima kagami* is unknown, but it is believed to have been written by Fujiwara no Tametsune 藤原為経 (d.u.) some time in the late twelfth century.

22. It was not until the late fifteenth century when we find a head abbot who served as long as Myōun. In the century before Myōun, only three of the twenty-two head abbots served more than ten years. Data drawn from the *Tendai zasu ki* with the help of Colton Runyan.

interests of the imperial court than the princely abbots that both preceded and succeeded him.

What set Myōun apart more than anything, and what has provided the basis for the criticism levied against him, was his close relationship with Taira no Kiyomori, a warrior-aristocrat whose career has come, in hindsight, to represent the rise of the warrior and corresponding decline of the imperial court. Of course, today's scholarship has decisively shown that the succeeding Kamakura age did in fact not spell the end of the Heian court and its governance, but rather meant an adjustment that allowed it to survive into the fourteenth century, though to the noble contemporaries of Jien, it looked differently (see for example, MASS 1998). The relationship between Kiyomori and Myōun was, in terms of political alliances, one of the most enduring during times of shifting loyalties despite the challenges that Kiyomori threw Myōun's way. In sharp contrast, Go Shirakawa vacillated between punishing Myōun, taking ordination vows, and sending his son to become his disciple, not to mention taking refuge at Mt. Hiei under the wings of the head abbot.

In point of fact, the close relationship between Kiyomori and Myōun also tied their historical legacies, and if the monk today suffers from neglect and long-standing criticism, it is not just because he was part of the factional struggles but also because of his association with the vilified Heike chieftain.<sup>23</sup> Kiyomori was certainly more criticized by his contemporaries than Myōun, but the latter's historical legacy was, like in the case of Kiyomori, established in later texts from the *Gukanshō* to the many variants of the *Heike monogatari* (the Kakuichi text, which is most commonly used by scholars, is dated to 1371). Likely produced as a placatory narrative, the latter depicted most members of the Heike as lovable losers who attempted to sustain the court-centered order against the less refined eastern warriors banded together under the Minamoto name. The main exception to such a sympathetic view is Kiyomori, who is thoroughly demonized and seen as a scapegoat for the Heike's downfall (ADOLPHSON and COMMONS 2015, 9). This vilification continues throughout the ages, even during the Tokugawa period when artists frequently depicted other members of the Heike as hapless victims of ruthless schemes by the Minamoto. Through artistic representations, the Heike had become a voice for the oppressed, especially the merchant class, while the Minamoto, from whom the Tokugawa claimed kinship ties, were used as a way of criticizing the shogunate. Notwithstanding, the critique of Kiyomori continued into the modern age though in the postwar era a reassessment has

23. It is noteworthy that another monk, Mongaku 文覚 (1139–1203), who was greatly favored by Yoritomo and played an important part in creating religious allies in the Kinai for the shogunate following the Genpei War, has been more kindly treated by scholars, despite critical notes in some thirteenth-century texts such as the *Gukanshō*. A more thorough comparison of Myōun and Mongaku and their relationships with the Heike and the Minamoto is warranted.

taken place according to which he has been seen as someone standing up against the establishment and even as a trade visionary (KERN 2015, 210–215; TONOMURA 2015, 227–228).

Based on their lives as well as their legacies, Kiyomori and Myōun further represent interests and groups that set them apart from the ingrained hierarchies at the Heian court and in that way appear rather unusual for their times. Kiyomori was a newcomer who challenged the entrenched elites in Kyoto, and yet, as he attempted to shift the center of power, he used tools most familiar to him, which included a new imperial line, a new capital, and a new religious center at Itsukushima. But he also saw the importance of religious allies in the capital, and Myōun's position outside the established hierarchies of the court may have suited Kiyomori perfectly. Myōun was, in contrast to the noble abbots of the twelfth century, not a member of the major elite families and lacked familial connections and obligations at court. In addition, perhaps exactly because of that freedom, he represented the interests of the menial clergy more than his noble peers. In that sense, he was an anomaly at a time when noble abbots tended to remain aloof to their clerics and align themselves closely with their relatives at the imperial court. In short, Myōun was a throwback to earlier centuries when head abbots lacked close kinship relations to the highest-ranking members of the court and made their way to their positions through years of service.

Whether these outsider commonalities were the foundation for a partnership that was remarkably consistent during times of shifting loyalties and realignments is perhaps difficult to argue with certainty, but the codependence of the two leaders is beyond doubt. Kiyomori could not promote his line or replace the existing structures without a religious ally. And Myōun, whose life appears quite dramatic and perhaps even tragic, was even more dependent on Kiyomori. His appointment as Tendai head abbot came at a comparatively late stage in his life, possibly earned through his service internally combined with the patronage of his master, and his ability to remain in office, and above all to be reappointed, relied on his alliance with the Heike chief. Notably, however, there are no records that Kiyomori ever dispatched warriors in support of Myōun, nor that the monk himself headed troops. Quite the opposite, for when the scholar-monks were in conflict with the menial clergy in 1178, government warriors were sent out to aid the former, and Myōun was at that time not the head abbot. If anything, Heike forces were used, or meant to be used, consistently against Enryakuji and Myōun, and it was only Kiyomori's commitment that spared the monk and the monastery from military attacks.

The relationship between Kiyomori and Myōun thus offers evidence of the extent of the importance of alliances between different elites. As KURODA (1976, 17–18) has argued, it was impossible to rule without allies, and no single elite, including the imperial institution regardless of its constitution, had the means

to dominate by themselves. Go Shirakawa certainly tried, but his dependence on Kiyomori became all too obvious when his retainers attempted to unseat the Heike chieftain, and the retired emperor's consistent on-again, off-again relationship with Myōun further underscored the imperial family's inability to rule singlehandedly. As criticized as Kiyomori has been by later observers, he did understand the context of court factionalism, as well as the importance of symbols of rule, as exemplified by his patronage of Itsukushima, the production of rituals texts, and the sponsorship of religious ceremonies with Myōun at the forefront. And the role of monastic allies must not be underestimated. The Shishigatani Incident is commonly seen as a fall-out between Go Shirakawa's retainers and Kiyomori over land in a majority of textbooks and monographs. Whereas those tensions were an important reason for the deterioration of the relationship between the Heike commander and the retired emperor, its direct cause was in fact the Hakusanji Incident, Kiyomori's protection of Myōun, and his reluctance to attack Enryakuji. One can thus add to McMullin's statement on the fallacy of separating religion and politics that studying religious institutions and individuals also enables us to enhance our understanding of the complex nature of society itself. Kyoto and the state surrounding it were, as seen through both Kiyomori's and Myōun's lives, composed of a complex web of elite alliances whereby properties, military, supporters, and cultural treasures and rituals were used to position the competing groups within a structure where power was shared. The imperial throne was both the target of competition and a tool for exercising power, but it was behind the throne that political action occurred. That was the very nature of the Heian court and it was what gave a monk such as Myōun a place of influence within it.

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