

RE-CENTERING THE NORTHERN PERIPHERY: INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND
REGIONAL AUTONOMY IN THE “HIRAIZUMI CENTURY”

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the role of international trade in building the Ōshū Fujiwara’s autonomous Hiraizumi polity, and ultimately critiques the idea of “center-periphery” binaries in Japanese history. Following the introduction, which prefaces the under-representation of the Ōshū Fujiwara and Tōhoku in scholarship, Chapters Two and Three detail the construction of the northern periphery in the Heian imagination, as well as the rise of the Ōshū Fujiwara and their autonomous power during the “Hiraizumi Century” (1087-1189). Chapters Four and Five build upon these foundations, and investigate the family’s involvement with Chinese and North Asian trade respectively. These chapters argue that, by acquiring symbolic foreign goods and by dominating key trade commodities, networks, and ports, the Ōshū Fujiwara not only established themselves as a politically and culturally autonomous entity, but also relocated themselves from the “periphery” of Heian society, to the “center” of Japanese and global historical developments.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The center-periphery binary has long been a powerful and prevailing notion in discussions of Japanese history and culture. Separated from the Asian mainland by vast expanses of ocean, the Japanese archipelago is often regarded as a regional periphery—located at the very end of the Asian landmass and the Chinese cultural realm that influenced the growth of societies throughout East Asia. Moreover, this complex system of “centers and peripheries” even influences how Japanese history and society are understood today. It centers the culture of the Yamato people (大和) and their settlements in the Kinai (畿内) region,¹ and pushes a narrative in which the influence of Kinai extended outward into the eastern and western “peripheries,” driving forth the progression of Japanese history, and ultimately “centering” Kinai and its people as the primary actors in Japan’s historical narrative and cultural development.

While there are certainly valid points here, this thinking nevertheless oversimplifies the complex reality of premodern Japan. Rather than looking at Japanese history holistically, this narrative centers the Kinai elite, glosses over the contributions of those living outside traditional centers of power, and limits historical developments by static categorization. Perhaps best expressed in the introductory remarks of *Tools of Culture: Japan’s Cultural, Intellectual, Medical and Technological Contacts in East Asia, 1000s-1500s*, “these approaches constitute a ‘sedentary mapping’ of history that elides the fluid dynamics of movement, both physical and cultural, in the premodern era.

¹ Kinai is Japan’s west-central region where the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyōto capitals are located.

Such approaches, with their defined centers and peripheries, have also made it difficult to appreciate the areas ‘outside’ the ‘center’.”²

Of all the so-called “peripheral” spaces that have been affected by this Kinai-centric narrative, none have been more misunderstood and misrepresented than Tōhoku (東北)—Japan’s northeast. Far from the historic urban centers of Kinai and Kantō (関東),³ Tōhoku was the last stronghold of the Emishi (蝦夷)—another Japanese people who descended from the islands’ earliest inhabitants. And while it was officially incorporated under imperial control in the 9th century, the region’s rebellious history, distinct cultural groups, and great distance from Japan’s historic capitals has “othered” it within the nation’s collective imagination. Stereotyped as “barbarian” by founding figures like Kūkai (空海) (774-835),⁴ romanticized by Edo poets like Matsuo Bashō (松尾芭蕉) (1644-1694), reviled by Meiji modernists, and ignored by 20th century politicians,⁵ Tōhoku has always been defined solely by its “otherness” in relation to the Kinai and Kantō “norm.”⁶

One of the clearest examples of this may be seen by studying Japan’s Heian era (794-1085). The Heian era is often regarded as a highpoint in Japanese history; a time when a “uniquely Japanese” culture emerged from the foundations of the *ritsuryō* (律令)

² Andrew Edmund Goble, Kenneth R. Robinson, and Haruko Nishioka Wakabayashi, “Introduction,” in *Tools of Culture: Japan’s Cultural, Intellectual, Medical, and Technological Contacts in East Asia, 1000-1500s* (Ann Arbor, M.I.: Association for Asian Studies, 2009), 2.

³ Kantō is Japan’s eastern region, roughly corresponding to today’s Tōkyō metropolitan area.

⁴ Kūkai was an extremely influential monk from the Heian era who is attributed as the creator of the *kana* (仮名) syllabary. See: William Matsuda, “Poets on the Periphery: Kūkai’s Vision of Frontier Governance,” *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University* 4 (2019), 35.

⁵ Nathan Hopson, “Takahashi Tomio’s ‘Henkyō’: Eastern Easts and Western Wests,” *Japan Review* 27, no. 27 (2014), 148.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

state established during the preceding Nara period (710-794). Centered around the political intrigue and cultural ferment of the Heian (平安) capital, Japanese arts and culture flourished, the legacy of which can be seen in the era's grand productions like Murasaki Shikibu's (紫式部) *The Tale of Genji*, and Byōdō-in's monumental Phoenix Hall and Pure Land landscape architecture.⁷ Heian was such a powerful center of culture that a strong case could be made that “Japan” did not exist in this era apart from Heian itself—evidence of which can be seen in the very periodization of the time.

Yet, if one were to look more closely at Heian era Japan, they would find Heian was not the only cultural center to prosper. Instead, during the “Hiraizumi Century”⁸ of 1087 to 1189⁹ the northern city of Hiraizumi (平泉) flourished under the rule of four Ōshū Fujiwara (奥州藤原) lords: Kiyohira (清衡), Motohira (基衡), Hidehira (秀衡), and Yasuhira (泰衡). While often regarded as uncultured “northern barbarians” by Heian aristocrats, the Ōshū Fujiwara were nevertheless a major cultural and political force. Based in their Hiraizumi capital, the family built an autonomous polity and ruled over the entire northern third of Japan. They capitalized on lucrative industries like gold and trade to become one of Japan's richest families, forged a distinct cultural legacy ground in their

⁷ Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York: Kodansha International, 1994), 7.

⁸ Takahashi Tomio 高橋富雄, Miura Ken'ichi 三浦謙一, and Irumada Nobuo 入間田宣夫, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi* 図説奥州藤原氏と平泉 [Illustrated Ōshū Fujiwara Family and Hiraizumi], (Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō Shuppan, 1993), 53.

⁹ These dates correspond to the end of the Later Three Years War and Hiraizumi's use as Kiyohira's military garrison, to the fall of Hiraizumi to Minamoto Yoritomo. See: Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan* (Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), 62.

aristocratic and Emishi heritage, and ultimately played a crucial role in the larger historical events and processes that defined the region over the next millennia.¹⁰

Yet, as significant as the Ōshū Fujiwara were, the family has long been neglected in discussions of Japanese history. Far from the Heian “center” and defying traditional Heian norms, historical chronicles do little more than give the family a passing mention, marginalizing them as minor characters defined only by their relation to the capital and its major actors.¹¹ The continued neglect of so-called “peripheral” spaces like Hiraizumi from the narrative is not just unfortunate, but rather is incredibly harmful. It overlooks the major contributions actors and spaces outside the traditional “center” played in the larger historical narrative, ultimately skewing our understandings of history and reinforcing false notions of premodern life and society.

To correct this issue, some have begun to re-examine Japanese history to bring the experiences of those in the “periphery” to light. Takahashi Tomio—one of the foremost researchers on Tōhoku and the Ōshū Fujiwara—is one such scholar. Takahashi’s 1973 article “*Henkyō*” (『辺境』) illuminates the lives of Japanese living in the often-overlooked northeast. Drawing from Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier” thesis, Takahashi inverts the center-periphery binary and offers an alternative history in which the northern “periphery,” not the Kinai “center,” drove Japan’s historical trajectory. According to Takahashi’s *Henkyō* theory, the “center” cannot exist without its “peripheral” opposite, and vice-versa. Therefore, just as the narrative has traditionally

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹ The Ōshū Fujiwara are rarely mentioned in documentation, and only appear in relation to more “major” figures, such as Hidehira and Yasuhira’s appearance as supporting figures in the life of Minamoto Yoshitsune.

been read from the perspective of the “Kinai center,” so too can it be viewed from those on the “periphery” and thus assumes that “peripheral” spaces like the north played equally important roles in producing Japan’s culture and history. As Nathan Hopson, mentions in his translation of Takahashi’s work, “*Henkyō* is not so much the history of the frontier as it is history *from* the frontier. On one hand, Takahashi recognizes that according to the traditional narrative of Japan’s national history ‘the West is the Center; the East is the Provinces, the Frontier.’ On the other, he contends that the history of Japanese state formation is the history not of that western center but of the eastern frontier.”¹²

In addition to Takahashi, Amino Yoshihiko, a renowned scholar on medieval Japan, has also questioned the “traditional” narrative by focusing on marginalized spaces and voices.¹³ According to Amino, rather than isolating it from the mainland, Japan’s western and northern seas acted as a maritime highway that connected it to East Asia and beyond, and facilitated dynamic exchange for centuries.¹⁴ Additionally, Amino also critiques the notion that history was driven by the “central elite.” Instead, he posits that it was the commoners and pariahs who drove medieval Japan’s historical developments; focusing specifically on the marginalized and the processes of their marginalization.¹⁵ Scholars like Amino and Takahashi played a major role in re-examining the place of so-called “peripheral” actors and spaces in the larger narrative of Japanese history, and were incredibly influential for many other scholars later in the 20th century.

¹² Hopson, “Takahashi Tomio’s ‘*Henkyō*,’” 85-86.

¹³ Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*, 4.

¹⁴ Yoshihiko Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, trans. Alan Christy (Ann Arbor, M.I.: Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2012), xxiii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xix.

Many international scholars have also begun reconsidering the place of the “periphery” in Japanese history as well. In his book *To the Ends of Japan: Premodern Frontiers, Boundaries, and Interactions*, Bruce Batten offers a detailed account of Japan’s geographic and conceptual frontiers and borderlands.¹⁶ By examining these spaces, Batten critiques the idea that pre-modern Japan was a singular space, and instead suggests that the Yamato state of Kinai built physical and conceptual borders to differentiate themselves from the “barbarians” who lived beyond their authority, creating many cultural, geographic, and imaginary “Japans” in the process.¹⁷ In making this claim, however, Batten acknowledges that “centers” and “borders” are relative terms. He suggests that Kinai was no more “central” than places like Hakata (博多) and Hiraizumi, and notes how the different, co-existing “Japans” on either side of the border influenced one another throughout history, ultimately forming the space we refer to as “Japan” today.¹⁸ Finally, no discussion on Hiraizumi would be complete without mentioning Mimi Yiengpruksawan and her work *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan*. Inarguably the most extensive English-language work on the Ōshū Fujiwara, Yiengpruksawan focuses on the family’s artistic legacy; connecting it to power and authority, and suggests that the polity constituted distinct “Japan” in its own right.¹⁹

Yet, despite the valuable contributions of scholars like Takahashi, Amino, Batten, and Yiengpruksawan, to this day Tōhoku still remains vastly understudied. It continues to

¹⁶ Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*, 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13

¹⁹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 4-5.

conjure connotations of the “periphery” within the Japanese historical narrative, while the Ōshū Fujiwara and their accomplishments are still massively under-represented in English-language scholarship. In fact, the last (and only) major piece detailing the family in English was Yiengpruksawan’s work, published nearly twenty five years ago. Therefore, given the continued neglect of the family and the north in scholarship, this paper seeks to re-center Ōshū Fujiwara and Tōhoku in the larger historical narrative through one particular lens: international trade.

By engaging in international trade, the Ōshū Fujiwara established their Hiraizumi polity as an autonomous center of power and culture in its own right. Through this trade the family acquired valuable, symbolic goods which both assisted them in building their own independent, elite society, and also allowed them to achieve cultural autonomy from the Heian “norm,” forming a distinct cultural tradition in the process. Moreover, by conducting trade of their own volition independently of the Heian institution, the family held complete agency over their international engagements—achieving total control over their own ports and trading networks, which ultimately proved to be a feat even southern aristocrats and officials could not replicate.

Finally, by engaging in this trade the Ōshū Fujiwara positioned themselves at the confluence of Heian Japanese, Chinese, and North Asian influences, making them the “center” of their very own world and a power whose influence extended well beyond Tōhoku and the Japanese archipelago. By engaging in this international trade and proving their polity to be an autonomous “Japan” in its own right, the Ōshū Fujiwara and Hiraizumi were major actors in Japanese and global history; ultimately relocating the family from the “periphery” of Heian society to the “center” of their own northern world,

and forcing us to reconsider how we view historical “centers” and “peripheries,” and even the space of premodern “Japan” itself.

Organization

In this work, I will critique the “center-periphery” binary that has long dominated Japanese scholarship and demonstrate how the Ōshū Fujiwara built a powerful, autonomous polity of their own—one which played a foundational role in both Japanese and East Asian history. Following this introduction, I will begin this examination by offering a historical overview of Heian “peripheries” and borderlands. Chapter Two, “Building the Northern Periphery,” will establish the foundations of the autonomous Hiraizumi polity by providing a historical overview of Tōhoku—also known as *Michinoku* (みちのく)²⁰—and the creation of the two distinct “Japans” in the early *ritsuryō* state. It details how the Yamato and *ritsuryō* states of Kinai constructed the “northern periphery” imaginary by focusing themselves as the “center” of Japanese society and culture while relegating the “other” Emishi Japan to the “barbarian periphery.” This profoundly affected how northern spaces would be viewed in subsequent centuries, ultimately distinguishing it as a unique “Japan” in its own right—one with its own centers of culture and power, like Hiraizumi.

Chapter Three, “Establishing the Hiraizumi Polity” builds on the framework established in Chapter Two and details the rise the Ōshū Fujiwara and their northern society in the “Hiraizumi Century.” It describes how the family strategically worked

²⁰ While *Michinoku* can be written a number of ways, including 陸奥 and 道奥, it often appears as みちのく in *hiragana* only.

within the system to gain favor with northern residents and the court alike, consolidating control and ruling for over a century. Far from Heian and neglected by imperial aristocrats disinterested in remote *Michinoku*, the family accumulated great power and prestige and were ultimately left alone to govern the north as they saw fit. Drawing from the region's rich natural resources like gold and horses, the family quickly became one of the wealthiest and most powerful in Japan and built an impressive territorial and artistic legacy that would last for generations, and set the family apart as the rulers of their own internal autonomous polity within 11th and 12th century Japan.

With the background of Hiraizumi's place as an autonomous "center" established, the succeeding chapters are dedicated specifically to the role international trade played on furthering Hiraizumi polity's autonomy. The fourth chapter, "Sino-Japanese Trade," examines Hiraizumi's trade with Song China and investigates how this trade furthered their autonomous and "central" position. By importing luxurious *karamono* (唐物) goods, the Ōshū Fujiwara gained access to symbolic material goods like ceramics and printed texts which boosted their prestige and political power, and even influenced their own distinct Hiraizumi artistic aesthetic. Furthermore, by participating in this trade and exporting vast sums of gold to the capital and continent, the Ōshū Fujiwara disproved their historic "peripheral" position, and instead may be seen as active agents at the center of monumental regional and global historical transformations.

Chapter Five, "The Northern Trade" moves on to detail the Ōshū Fujiwara's involvement with the Northeast Asian trade. This trade, which connected the family to Hokkaidō, Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, and Manchuria through their port at Tosaminato, had a profound impact on their autonomy. As the sole power at Tosaminato and the

primary purveyors of highly-sought goods, the Ōshū Fujiwara attained unparalleled control over international trade indicating the clear autonomy with which they governed their polity. Furthermore, in addition to the political and economic benefits this trade provided the family, these networks also drew the Ōshū Fujiwara closer to the North Asian cultural sphere, allowing them to express their Emishi heritage in Hiraizumi's distinct art and culture that defied the Heian norm and set their society apart. And lastly, much like their gold exports in the Chinese trade, the northern trade also had profound consequences for the region as a whole, putting in place the cultures and contact points that would flourish in the subsequent centuries.

Finally, in concluding this paper, I will reiterate my main objective—to illuminate how international trade facilitated autonomy in the Hiraizumi polity—and I shall look at the broader implications of this on Japanese history. By investigating the Ōshū Fujiwara's involvement in international trade, this paper illustrates how the Hiraizumi polity was not just some “northern periphery,” instead arguing it was a powerful political and cultural “center” its own right. In contrast to the longstanding assumption that Heian and Kinai were the “center” of a singular premodern “Japan,” this paper complicates notions of “center” and “periphery,” suggesting instead that multiple “Japans” and “centers” have coexisted throughout history; one of which was the Ōshū Fujiwara's Hiraizumi polity. Ultimately, by investigating the Ōshū Fujiwara's international engagements, we may question the overly Kinai-centric narrative of history, and see that the Hiraizumi polity did indeed represent a distinct, autonomous “Japan” in its own right.

Methodology

One of the challenges in conducting research on the Ōshū Fujiwara is the notable lack of historical documentation from the north itself. Given that Hiraizumi was razed in 1189, many historians are unsure of what records, if any, were kept by the Ōshū Fujiwara themselves. The documents that do survive today are primarily from anthologies like the *Azuma kagami* (『吾妻鏡』), diaries like Fujiwara Yorinaga's *Taiki* (『台記』), and references in poems and stories like the *Konjaku monogatari* (『今昔物語』). Yet, it is important to remember that these sources were written by aristocrats and bureaucrats who had strong opinions about the north, and often paint a less-than-flattering picture of the family and Hiraizumi. Nevertheless, these sources still offer key insights into how aristocrats and warriors understood this unique, autonomous polity.

In addition to historical references, this paper also draws a great deal from archaeological and anthropological research. Numerous excavations from Hiraizumi, the Sea of Japan, and Hokkaidō, have led to some fascinating finds, and shed a great deal of light on the objects that were both imported and exported by the Ōshū Fujiwara from China and North Asia, and their socio-cultural place in history. And finally, scholarly writings, such those by Amino, Takahashi, Yiengpruksawan, and Batten offer a great deal of information and theoretical structuring, while those of Hudson, Itabashi, Friday, and Farris, among many others, help bring the story of the Ōshū Fujiwara to life and add texture to the northern experience during the late Heian era.

Technical Terms

One final note here is in regard to the technical terms and writing conventions used in this paper. Japanese names are written according to the traditional “surname-given name” custom. Hence, the founder of the Ōshū Fujiwara family, Kiyohira, will appear as “Fujiwara Kiyohira” initially, and subsequently as “Kiyohira” alone.

Additionally, in the classical era it was also customary to attach a “no” suffix between the surname and given name. However, while direct quotations may retain the “no” suffix, for the sake of comprehension, I have omitted the suffix in general writing. Therefore, figures like Abe no Yoritoki will generally appear as Abe Yoritoki unless styled with a “no” in a direct quotation. Finally, dates are generally written according to the Gregorian calendar. When Japanese imperial-style dates and eras are present, they will be followed by the Gregorian dates range in parentheses.²¹

²¹ While this paper generally uses Gregorian dates, it should be noted that the transcription of Japanese dates into Gregorian dates may often be an approximation and are not always entirely accurate. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to primarily use Gregorian dates for clarity and consistency. For a more detailed discussion on the subject, refer to Paul Yachita Tsuchihashi’s 1955 work *Hōreki seireki taishōhyō: Suiko kyūnen yori Meiji gonen* 邦曆西曆對照表: 自推古九年至明治五年 [Japanese Chronological Tables from 601 to 1872 A.D.].

CHAPTER II

BUILDING THE NORTHERN PERIPHERY

Japan's northeastern Tōhoku region has long been overlooked, misrepresented, and regarded as a peripheral backwater in the traditional narratives of history. Yet, Tōhoku, is only peripheral when assuming the Yamato culture of Kinai to be the “center” of “Japanese-ness.”²² If one were to shift their gaze away from a Kinai-centered history and instead look at the historical and cultural achievements of spaces like Hiraizumi, they may find that a number of Japanese “centers” have coexisted throughout the centuries, complicating our assumptions of just what, exactly, drives Japan's historical and cultural developments. Before engaging in a historical re-examination of the Ōshū Fujiwara and their place in history, it is important to understand how the north was marginalized to the periphery in the first-place.

This chapter will preface the subsequent chapters by offering an overview of the north and the rise of the southern Kinai and northern *Michinoku* polities. It will shed light on the people who inhabited early Japan as well as processes by which the Kinai states constructed and reconstructed the north as a foreign land, a frontier, and a periphery. As Japan's Yamato and *ritsuryō* states began to centralize and expand, they built political and cultural boundaries to distinguish themselves from their “foreign” neighbors, classifying the Emishi—another Japanese people native to Tōhoku, also known as *Michinoku*—as the barbarian “other” in relation to their “civilized” center. To quell the threat the Emishi posed to their society, the Yamato and *ritsuryō* states colonized the

²² For a thorough and recent investigation of this very idea, see: Matsuda, “Poets on the Periphery.”

north—and populated the new frontier with Yamato settlers. This generated a unique creole culture known as the Fushū, which, grounded in both Yamato and Emishi traditions, would ultimately form the base of Hiraizumi’s culture and society.

Yet, even after *ritsuryō* Japan crushed the last of the Emishi rebellions in 802, *Michinoku* continued to be Japan’s remote “periphery.” Its geographic distance from the capital suggested its political and cultural unimportance, while the Emishi’s Fushū descendants—who continued to dominate northern society—were, much like their ancestors, regarded as “uncivilized barbarians” by Heian elites. Ultimately, the borders and peripheries constructed by Kinai to distinguish the Yamato from the Emishi, civilization from barbarism, and the “Kinai center” from the “northern periphery,” paved the way for two distinct “Japans” to emerge; one governed by the rules and norms of Kinai court life, and the other characterized by its Yamato-Emishi creole roots.

Demographics in Prehistoric Japan

In order to truly understand the Ōshū Fujiwara and their northern world, it is crucial to first investigate the ancient demographics of the Japanese archipelago. After being settled by North Asian migrants during the last ice age, the first Japanese society—the *Jōmon*—emerged about 16,500 years ago.²³ Known for its distinct pottery, pit houses, hunting-gathering economy, and egalitarian society the *Jōmon* (縄文) flourished for nearly 10,000 years, and were “one of the longest-running single culture traditions in the world, whose hunting-and-gathering economy was so well adapted to the environmental

²³ Mark Hudson, “Japanese Beginnings,” in *A Companion to Japanese History*, ed. William M. Tsutsui (Hoboken, N.J.: Blackwell, 2007), 19.

conditions that few economic disruptions seemed to have occurred.”²⁴ While the *Jōmon* flourished for millennia, by the 5th century B.C.E. major demographic changes began to take place and a new culture took root: the *Yayoi* (弥生).

Although the *Yayoi* culture is now considered a definitive part of Japanese history, its origins are actually intricately tied to the continent. For nearly six centuries, conflict on the Asian mainland forced an estimated two million Chinese and Korean refugees to flee to Japan, settling primarily in northern Kyūshū and western Honshū.²⁵ As these settlers established themselves in the islands, a new culture, known as the *Yayoi*, was born.

In contrast to the *Jōmon*, *Yayoi* culture was defined by rice agriculture and social stratification, from which regional powers began to emerge. Over time the *Yayoi* incorporated and merged with many *Jōmon* communities, and by 100 B.C.E. *Yayoi* influence had spread from Kyūshū in the south to present-day Aomori Prefecture in the north.²⁶ Yet, while *Yayoi* culture undoubtedly impacted the remnants of the latter *Jōmon* culture, Japan’s indigenous people were not completely displaced. Rather, because the north was ill-suited to rice production, *Yayoi* influence remained strongest in the south while late-*Jōmon* society to dominate Japan’s northern and eastern regions—setting up the two emerging “Japans” that dominated the classical era.²⁷

²⁴ Hiroshi Ushiro and Kiyoshi Yamaura, “Prehistoric Hokkaidō and Ainu Origins,” in *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, ed. William Fitzhugh, Chisato Dubreuil, and Arctic Studies Center (Washington D.C.: National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, 1999), 40.

²⁵ Klaus Vollmer, “Japan: Medieval Era Migrations,” in *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*, ed. Immanuel Ness (Oxford, U.K. Blackwell, 2013), 3.

²⁶ Ushiro and Yamaura, “Prehistoric Hokkaidō,” 42.

²⁷ Yugo Ono, “Ainu Homelands: Natural History from Ice Age to Modern Times,” in *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, 33.

Emerging Polities: The Yamato

As *Yayoi* communities—each headed by a powerful clan known as an *uji* (氏)—organized, they developed into a confederacy where the *uji* were governed by a singular, powerful clan that ultimately became Japan’s imperial family. Over time, all aspects of society were tied to the imperial institution, and the first true state, the Yamato (大和), emerged during the *Kofun* period (古墳時代) (300-538 C.E.).²⁸ In addition to Yamato state formation, the Yamato people of the new polity increasingly viewed themselves as united; bound by a similar heritage and culture within the structure of the imperial institution. This shared sense of identity and cultural distinctiveness was further cemented into the Yamato psyche by another important development: continental contact.

After the 4th century C.E., Japan began engaging in greater contact with the mainland, and many continental practices were integrated into Yamato society. Chinese script, for instance, was applied to the Japanese language, and historical texts like the *Kojiki* (『古事記』) (712) and *Nihon Shoki* (『日本書紀』)²⁹ (720) were written to further legitimize the rule of the emperor and create a national history, further solidifying a shared sense of Yamato identity and uniqueness.³⁰ The Yamato also began restructuring their government to fit continental forms, and following the Taika Reforms of 645 the new bureaucratic *ritsuryō* state was born. The *ritsuryō* system, which applied Tang Chinese (618-907) bureaucracy to the Yamato political establishment nationalized all

²⁸ Gina L. Barnes, “The Emergence of Political Rulership and State in Early Japan,” in *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, ed. Karl F. Friday, 77-88, (Boulder, C.O.: Westview Press, 2012), 77.

²⁹ Also known as the *Nihongi* (『日本紀』).

³⁰ Mikiso Hane, *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Boulder, C.O.: Westview Press, 1991), 38.

lands in the emperor's name and ended the *uji* confederation by incorporating family heads into the new political and court systems as ministers, governors, and aristocrats.³¹

This contact not only transformed Yamato society, but it also forged ties between Japan and other societies, especially through the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. According to the *Nihon Shoki*, Buddhism first entered Japan when King Seong (聖王) of Paekche. Concerned about an alliance between the Silla and Goguryeo kingdoms,³² hoped to cultivate a relationship with Yamato Japan and sent a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and many sutras to Emperor Kinmei (欽明天皇) (509-571) in the 552.³³ While Japanese Buddhism was initially marred by conflict, the new religion eventually took root and was patronized by aristocrats and emperors alike.³⁴ As the new *ritsuryō* state grew, Japan became increasingly tied to the continent, sending monks and officials abroad to study and implement continental structures back in Japan; forging bonds with new allies, like Paekche Korea and Tang China.³⁵ Yet, while this contact helped implement Japan's long lasting political structures and cultural practices, it also entangled Japan in messy international conflicts. In 660 the Korean kingdom of Silla, supported by Tang China, invaded Paekche. In order to assist their Paekche allies, Yamato forces were sent peninsula to ward off the attack, only to suffer a devastating loss at the Battle of

³¹ Ibid., 32-33.

³² In the Three Kingdoms period Korea was ruled by the Goguryeo, Paekche and Silla states.

³³ W.G. Aston, *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest times to A.D. 69*, (Rutland, V.T.: Tuttle, 1972), 2:65.

³⁴ Douglas Fuqua, "Centralization and State Formation in Sixth- and Seventh-Century Japan," *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, 102.

³⁵ Bruce L. Batten, "Early Japan and the Continent" in *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, 93-94.

Paekch'on in 663. The victorious Silla thus defeated and overran Paekche, and the Yamato were forced to retreat.³⁶

This was a particularly traumatic experience for the Yamato. Wary of being drawn into international conflict and fearing an invasion of their own, the Yamato began constructing and militarizing borders to distinguish themselves from the threats posed by the foreign “other.”³⁷ While the feared Tang advance never came, building these borders further strengthened the notion of a shared cultural identity that distinguished them from other peoples. From this point on, “Japanese-ness,” if not used in these explicit terms, was identified with the Yamato, and all those living beyond the state’s borders or outside the Yamato cultural norm were considered a “barbarian other,” impacting the lives of other Japanese people, like the Emishi.³⁸

Emishi Origins

While the Yamato and *ritsuryō* states dominated the southwestern regions of the archipelago, the northeast was still largely inhabited by the native Emishi. Early records, which reflect Yamato desires to distinguish themselves from their neighbors, refer to their northern neighbors by a number of names—including *Emishi*, *Ebisu*, and *Ezo*. While all are different pronunciations for the same set of characters—蝦夷—meaning “shrimp barbarian” or “toad barbarian,” each evoke slightly different connotations.

In ancient Japan, the character for *Ezo* was often pronounced by its alternative reading of *Emishi*. *Emishi* was also a man’s name, one used especially to

³⁶ Hane, *Premodern Japan*, 31.

³⁷ Karl F. Friday, *Hired Swords: The Rise of Private Warrior Power in Early Japan* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 44.

³⁸ William Farris, *Heavenly Warriors: The Evolution of Japan's Military, 500-1300* (Cambridge, M.A.: Council on East Asian Studies: 1992), 84.

designate a brave man, but when *Emishi* was pronounced with a provincial accent, it became *Ebisu*, which meant a violent group of people. There is no doubt that this linguistic ambivalence had an effect on attitudes toward the people who inhabited the Tōhoku area of northern Honshū and were not integrated into the political world of the Japanese, who had by then established a centralized state.³⁹

While the two cultures likely had a great deal of contact at first, as a strong sense of Yamato identity developed, the Japanese of Kinai increasingly distinguished themselves from the Emishi.⁴⁰ One of the earliest examples of this comes from Emperor Keikō (景行天皇) in the *Nihon Shoki*.

“Amongst these Eastern savages the Yemishi are the most powerful, their men and women live together promiscuously, there is no distinction of father and child. In winter they dwell in holes, in summer they live in nests. Their clothing consists of furs, and they drink blood. Brothers are suspicious of one another. In ascending mountains they are like flying birds; in going through the grass they are like fleet quadrupeds... Sometimes they draw together their fellows and make inroads on the frontier. At other times they take the opportunity of the harvest to plunder the people. If attacked, they conceal themselves in the herbage; if pursued, they flee into the mountains. Therefore ever since antiquity they have not been steeped in the kingly civilizing influences... Truly Heaven, commiserating Our want of intelligence and the disturbed condition of the country, has ordained that thou shouldst order the Heavenly institution, and save the monarchy from extinction.” (Keikō 40th year, 7th month, 16th day).⁴¹

This passage illustrates how the Yamato constructed the Emishi of the imagination by making them a threatening “barbarian other” in contrast to “civilized” Yamato society. Yet, while it is clear that the Yamato differentiated themselves from other groups on the archipelago, defining just what, exactly, constituted “Emishi-ness” has been debated for decades.

³⁹ Isao Kikuchi, “Early Ainu Contacts With the Japanese,” in *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, 74.

⁴⁰ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 12-13.

⁴¹ Aston, *Nihongi*, 1:203-204.

In traditional narratives of history, the Emishi-Ezo and later Ainu people are all thought to have descended from final vestiges of the *Jōmon*. They were considered ethnically and culturally distinct from the Yamato, living according to hunter-gatherer norms which differed from the agrarian Yamato's polities further south.⁴² This view is not altogether wrong, as analysis of skeletal remains and Hokkaidō and Tōhoku placenames suggests that the Emishi-Ezo of Tōhoku had strong genetic and linguistic similarities to the Ainu of Hokkaidō, making it likely both descended from the earlier *Jōmon*.⁴³ By the Heian era however, as Yamato migrants moved north and integrated into Emishi communities, the ethnic makeup of the north had changed dramatically; so much so that Emishi skeletal remains reveal no significant differences from their southern neighbors either, indicating that the Emishi and the Yamato likely both descended, to some degree, from earlier *Jōmon* populations.⁴⁴

Similarly complex is the reality of Emishi culture and society. While Emishi tribes likely had a more egalitarian, hunting-gathering society early on, evidence suggests that by the 8th century they were politically organized as a confederation, with non-hereditary chiefs overseeing different political districts.⁴⁵ Moreover, they are also thought to have had a complex economy based on agriculture and metalworking,⁴⁶ and horse rearing and mining.⁴⁷ These industries sustained the Emishi and allowed them to trade extensively with the Yamato in the south, the Ezo tribes of Hokkaidō, and even with

⁴² Kazuro Hanihara, "Emishi, Ezo and Ainu: An Anthropological Perspective," *Japan Review*, no. 1 (1990): 37-38.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 38-39

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁵ Karl F. Friday, "Pushing beyond the Pale: The Yamato Conquest of the Emishi and Northern Japan," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997), 4.

⁴⁶ Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 83.

⁴⁷ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 14.

continental North Asia.⁴⁸ Despite there being elements of truth to the traditional view, the Emishi ultimately were a people from a number of ethnic and cultural backgrounds who lived beyond Kinai territory and were thus *not* considered Yamato, regardless of whether or not they were indigenous northerners or settlers from Kinai, making terms like “Emishi” and “Ezo” particularly complex and fluid.⁴⁹

Building the Northern Border

Whether “Emishi” was an ethnic, cultural, or political designation, in the eyes of the Kinai Japanese at least, the Emishi were a distinct “other;” one that constituted a significant threat to their security. As the Yamato polities expanded into the east and northeast, they came into increasing contact with Emishi. This posed a great problem for Yamato and *ritsuryō* security, as the Emishi had long engaged in border raids, sacking local villages and carting off treasures and villagers. One of the earliest examples of this comes from a passage by the Yamato Emperor Keikō in the *Nihon Shoki*:

40th Year, Autumn, 7th month, 16th day. The emperor addressed his ministers, saying: —“The Eastern country is now in an unquiet state, and turbulent Diets have sprung up in numbers. Moreover, the Yemishi have rebelled to a man and frequently carry off the people. Whom shall I send to still this disturbance?”⁵⁰

It is clear from passages like this that the Kinai states believed there was a real need to define and secure their international borders to guard against the “barbarian” Emishi. Therefore, in the Taika Reforms of and Taihō Codes of 645 and 703, a large, Tang-

⁴⁸ Ibid., 16-18.

⁴⁹ Yasunori Koyama, “East and West in the Late Classical Age,” trans. Bruce Batten, in *Capital and Countryside in Japan, 300-1180: Japanese Historians in English*, ed. Joan R. Piggott (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 378-379.

⁵⁰ Aston, *Nihongi*, 1:203-204.

inspired military was introduced to protect against the threat of Emishi and continental invasions.

Hoping to avoid another disaster like Paekch'on, the *ritsuryō* state built a large standing army, with all non-title-holding men serving as soldiers as a part of their dues to the state.⁵¹ Although its initial purpose was to guard against a potential continental invasion, after the feared Tang invasion never came, the state turned northward, and sent thousands of men to Tōhoku to guard against Emishi raids and incorporate northern lands under state control. This began the centuries-long Yamato conquest of the north, where the state attempted to quell the Emishi and govern the north through their own tributary system,⁵² bestowing loyal clans with titles and privileges, and ultimately using “barbarians to control barbarians” to govern their new territories.⁵³ Thus, by the start of the Nara era (710-794), *ritsuryō* territory extended all the way from Kyūshū in the south to southern Tōhoku in the north.⁵⁴

To secure their hold of the north, the state built military garrisons throughout their new territories. Of the twenty-five new garrisons established by the Nara government, seven were located on the northern border, including Tagajō and Akita built to administer the newly formed provinces of Mutsu (陸奥) and Dewa (出羽) respectively, formally

⁵¹ Karl F. Friday, *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2004), 37.

⁵² In the *ka'i* system, China was considered to be the “center” of politics, culture, and civilization, and societies on the “barbarian periphery” like Japan, Korea, Mongolia and Vietnam, among others, would offer China tribute, receiving recognition of their political status and legitimizing their right to rule. In contrast to other Asian societies, Japan did not always fall into this system. While Japan did partake during the early state formation period, and again in the late medieval era, for much of its history, it remained outside this system. Nevertheless, the *ka'i* system played a major role on shaping its view of domestic and international politics in the premodern era. For more information, see: Mark Hudson, *Ruins of Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Japanese Islands*, (Honolulu, H.I.: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 183.

⁵³ Batten, “Pushing Beyond the Pale,” 7.

⁵⁴ Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*, 29-30.

establishing a permanent *ritsuryō* presence in the north.⁵⁵ With this foothold the state began colonizing the north in earnest, encouraging Kinai and Kantō migrants to settle in newly-established villages near the military garrisons.⁵⁶ While some of these new settlers were low-level bureaucrats moving north to work at these administrative centers, most were conscripted soldiers from Kantō known as *chinpei* (鎮平), who were serving out their dues to the state.⁵⁷ Because *chinpei* were permitted to bring their families and work agricultural fields near their garrisons in the off season, many settled permanently in the north.⁵⁸ Thus, by the end of the Nara era a major demographic change took place in southern Tōhoku as many Yamato migrants began settling between the Abakuma and Kitakami river regions of present-day Fukushima and Miyagi Prefectures.⁵⁹

Yet, while southern *Michinoku* was increasingly populated by Yamato settlers from Kantō and Kinai, northern Tōhoku—especially in the Kitakami Valley—remained the stronghold of the Emishi. Over time, the pressures of this military presence and demographic change stressed an already tense situation, and the Emishi—who viewed themselves as culturally and politically independent from the Yamato—rebelled.⁶⁰ Led by Chief Aterui (阿弋流為), the Emishi engaged in mounted guerilla warfare against the *Sei-i-tai-shōgun*⁶¹ Sakanoue Tamuramaro’s (坂上田村麻呂) (758-811) Yamato military

⁵⁵ Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 50. For a map of *Michinoku* in the early *ritsuryō* era, see Figure 1. For all figures, see Appendix.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 86-88.

⁵⁷ Friday, *Hired Swords*, 15-16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 24-25

⁵⁹ Helen C. McCullough, “A Tale of Mutsu,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 25 (1964): 179.

⁶⁰ Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 84-85.

⁶¹ The *Sei-i-tai-shōgun* (征夷大將軍), which literally means the “Barbarian-crushing generalissimo,” was the leader of the *ritsuryō* conquest of the Emishi.

in the south.⁶² Fighting raged throughout the late 700s, and although the Emishi held their own for quite some time, the military gained the upper hand by incorporating subdued Emishi clans into their ranks⁶³ and eventually crushed Aterui at the battle of Isawa in 802.⁶⁴

Constructing the Periphery

While technically under the jurisdiction of the *ritsuryō* state after 802, distant Tōhoku was still considered distinct and was often excluded from the mainstream Heian cultural and political establishment. This was due in large part to the court's increasingly insular nature and its growing obsession with being at the "center" of society. As noted in the introduction, Heian Japan is often regarded as a time when distinctly Japanese institutions and cultural forms began to develop. After China's 755 An Lushan Rebellion,⁶⁵ *ritsuryō* Japan turned away from the continent and began to cultivate its own social institutions and cultural forms.⁶⁶ Court life dominated all aspects Heian society, and even today it is impossible to separate the court from many of the era's historical events and cultural developments.⁶⁷

Part of what made the court such a foundational part of Heian life and society were its strict social hierarchies. During the Heian period, aristocratic society was governed by a complex system of hierarchies, aesthetics, and symbolic texts which determined one's social standing; of which the most important was a person's positioning

⁶²Friday, *Hired Swords*, 50-51.

⁶³Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 85-86.

⁶⁴Yienpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 27.

⁶⁵Morris Rossabi, *A History of China* (Malden, M.A.: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 153.

⁶⁶Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, 4.

⁶⁷Koyama, "East and West," 372.

in relation to the emperor.⁶⁸ Because the emperor was so entwined with politics and even the very essence of “Japanese-ness,” proximity to the emperor was the single most important factor in determining power and authority at court. Generally, the closer one was positioned to the emperor—by blood, position, or physical spacing—the higher status they had.⁶⁹

This, however, also meant that any distance from the capital or institution would be read as a decline in status.⁷⁰ Given that Heian was home to the emperor and the “center” of all the cultural, artistic, intellectual, and religious institutions that defined “Japanese-ness,” being sent to the distant “periphery” was one of the most traumatic events that could befall the ruling class. According to Jonathan Stockdale, who has written extensively on exile in Heian Japan, exile to provinces was so feared that it became a romanticized and popular trope in Japanese literature—one where a befallen hero must endure an unjust life in the rural periphery.⁷¹ Such is the case of one of Heian’s most tragic heroes: Sugawara Michizane (菅原道真) (845-903).

Initially enjoying a privileged position at court, Michizane incurred the wrath of the powerful Fujiwara clan⁷² who had him sent to Dazaifu (大宰府) in Kyūshū until his death in 903.⁷³ While never explicitly banished, the move ultimately amounted to exile, as Kyūshū’s distance from Heian and its historic associations with exile meant that “by Michizane’s time, the Dazaifu carried rich connotations from the courtly center.”⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Jonathan Stockdale, *Imagining Exile in Heian Japan: Banishment in Law, Literature, and Cult* (Honolulu, H.I.: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015), 96.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

Michizane lamented his displacement, and his deep despair may be seen in refrains like: “If the east wind blows this way, Oh blossoms on the plum tree, Send your fragrance to me! Always be mindful of the Spring, Even though your master is no longer there!”⁷⁵ The move ultimately proved unpopular, and Michizane was eventually pardoned and even deified after his death. Nevertheless, the saga reveals just how reviled the thought of living in the provincial “periphery” was in the imagination of the Heian elite.⁷⁶ And among these distant spaces, it was the northeast, known as *Michinoku*—“the land beyond roads”—that truly epitomized the image of the “periphery” in the Heian psyche.⁷⁷

In the eyes of the Heian court, *Michinoku* represented the ultimate periphery. Comprising today’s Fukushima, Miyagi, Yamagata, Iwate, Akita and Aomori prefectures, historic *Michinoku* covered 18 percent of Japan’s landmass.⁷⁸ It was characterized by a rugged terrain and an unforgiving climate—one far removed from the temperate plains of Kinai and Kantō. Cut in half by the high Ōū Mountains, western *Michinoku*, known as Dewa province, was comprised of alluvial plains and basins. Meanwhile, in the east lay the fertile river valleys, the rugged Kitakami range, and the rocky Sanriku Coast of Mutsu province.⁷⁹ As a transitional zone between subtropical Kantō in the south and boreal Hokkaidō in the north,⁸⁰ *Michinoku* held an aura of savage beauty; one that differed in nearly every way from the “civilized” spaces of the capital region. As described by Mimi Yiengpruksawan:

⁷⁵ Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (New York, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁷ Toshio Noh and John C. Kimura, *Japan: A Regional Geography of an Island Nation* (Tokyo, Teikoku-Shoin, 1989), 123.

⁷⁸ Glenn T. Trewartha, *Japan: A Geography* (Madison, W.I.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 367.

⁷⁹ Noh and Kimura, *Japan: A Regional Geography*, 124-125.

⁸⁰ Trewartha, *Japan: A Geography*, 370-371.

The North, *Hoppō*, signified an unknown identity on the edge of the ancient Japanese world. As a place, as an imaginary realm, and in point of fact, this was the back of Japan, *Oku*, where a vast frontier stretched north to the Honshū horizon... In this rough country were all manner of marvels and terrors, from furious gods to men who fought like wolves. It was a cold land of coniferous and deciduous forests, unlike the warmer climate of western Honshū with its glossy-leaved vegetation, and largely unsuited to the wet-rice agriculture that sustained the Kinai economies.⁸¹

In the minds of the premodern elite, the distant north was a savage land occupied by an even more savage people.⁸² The monk Nōin (能因) (988-1051), for example, recalls the great distance between the capital and the north, saying: “I left the capital in the spring mist, and stood upon the Shirakawa Barrier in the autumn breeze,”⁸³ suggesting that *Michinoku* was at such a distance from the “civilized” capital it may as well have been a world away. The 10th century nobleman Taira Kanemori (平兼盛), meanwhile, characterized it as a land haunted by demons, asking: “Is it true what they say, that a demon⁸⁴ hides at *Kurozuka* on the moors of *Adachigahara*?”⁸⁵ Kanemori’s remarks even echo those of Emperor Keikō in the *Nihon Shoki*, who said in the Emishi lands “there are, in the mountains malignant Deities, on the moors there are malicious demons who beset the highways and bar the roads, causing men much annoyance.”⁸⁶

⁸¹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*: 10.

⁸² Jackson Bailey, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: Political and Economic Change in a Tōhoku Village* (Honolulu, H.I.: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 41.

⁸³ 「都をば霞とともに立ちしかど秋風ぞ吹く白河の関。」 The Shirakawa Barrier, located in what is now Fukushima Prefecture, marked the geographic and conceptual boundary between Kantō and *Michinoku*.

⁸⁴ Near the foot of Mt. Atadara near present-day Nihonmatsu, Fukushima Prefecture. According to a famous legend, there was once an *onibaba* demon who disguised herself as an old woman living in a cave near *Adachigahara*. She would lure travelers in with her kindness and hospitality, only to kill and devour them once she gained their trust.

⁸⁵ 「みちのくの安達が原の黒塚に鬼こもれいりといふはまことか。」 See: Gen Itabashi 板橋源, *Ōshū hiraizumi* 奥州平泉 [Ōshū hiraizumi] (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1961), 41.

⁸⁶ Aston, *Nihongi*, 1:203.

Excerpts like these indicate how distant *Michinoku* constituted an other-worldly “periphery” in the Heian imagination. It was a place inhabited by all manner of savage creatures that sharply contrasted with Kinai’s civilized “center,” thus building the “northern periphery” that dominated Japanese historical scholarship for centuries.

Re-Examining the Fushū Frontier

Given the court’s disregard and disdain for “peripheral” spaces like *Michinoku*, after the Emishi conquests of the 8th century, rather than fully embracing the north within the Heian establishment, *Michinoku* was largely left in the hands of powerful local families and military forces. This instigated a period of colonization and creolization that redefined northern culture and society. In the aftermath of Aterui’s rebellion, many powerful Emishi clans pledged allegiance to the state and were allowed to continue controlling the same territories their ancestors had for generations. However, as Kinai and Kantō pioneers continued to settle near garrisons like Senboku and Isawa which were deep in Emishi territory, Yamato and Emishi customs fused in a creole culture during the Fushū (俘囚) “conquered” period.⁸⁷

Throughout the Fushū period, northern residents were subjects of the *Chinjufu shōgun* (鎮守府将軍), the “protector of the north.” Charged with enforcing justice and preventing further insurrection, the *Chinjufu shogun* maintained control by balancing different Fushū clans against one another.⁸⁸ Yet, while the *Chinjufu shōgun* and the Dewa and Mutsu governorships were influential in southern Tōhoku, the mountainous north

⁸⁷ Tomio Takahashi, “The Classical Polity and its Frontier,” trans. Karl Friday, in *Capital and Countryside in Japan, 300-1180: Japanese Historians in English*, 141.

⁸⁸ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 23.

still remained largely autonomous,⁸⁹ and *ritsuryō* authorities depended on local families to help enforce laws and collect taxes on behalf of the state.⁹⁰ By the late Heian era, Japan was gripped by rampant governor absenteeism, and by ruling as the governors' proxy, the Fushū once again came to dominate politics and culture in the north.⁹¹ One of the most powerful of these Fushū families, was the Abe (安倍).⁹²

The Abe were a powerful Fushū Emishi clan who resided in the *Oku Rokugun* (奥六郡)—the “back six districts”—of Mutsu province.⁹³ Lying along the fertile Kitakami River, the *Oku Rokugun* was rich in natural resources, such as gold and horses, and the region has long been considered the heart of Emishi and Fushū territory. A report from the 27th year of Emperor Keikō's reign in the *Nihon Shoki* mentions: “In the Eastern Wilds there is a country called Hitakami.⁹⁴ The people of this country, both men and women, tie up their hair in the form of a mallet, and tattoo their bodies. They are of a fierce temper, and their name is Yemishi. Moreover, their land is wide and fertile.” During the Fushū period, the Kitakami Valley was controlled by the Abe clan, and exploiting the region's rich resources, the head of the family, Abe Yoritoki (安倍頼時), emerged as one of the wealthiest and most powerful Fushū leaders in *Michinoku*.⁹⁵

Despite the paucity of both archaeological evidence and historical records describing life in Fushū *Michinoku*, some information attesting to the wealth and power of the Abe may be gleaned from sources such as the *Mutsu waki* (『陸奥話記』). One

⁸⁹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 32-33.

⁹⁰ Koyama, “East and West,” 378-379.

⁹¹ Tomio Takahashi, “The Classical Polity,” 140.

⁹² McCullough, “A Tale of Mutsu,” 180.

⁹³ Present-day Isawa, Esashi, Waga, Shiwa, Hienuki, and Iwate counties in southern Iwate Prefecture.

⁹⁴ Another pronunciation for *Kitakami*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

particular feature unique to Fushū society were their stockades. Fortified residences like Isawa, Toyota, and Kuriyagawa, were built by to guard against a possible attack from either the state or other clans. While the state had established its own garrisons in the north, such historians as Karl Friday argue that those built by the Fushū were distinct; fitted with a number of novel features to help protect the fortress with moats, arrows and projectiles, and that they may even have served as the inspiration for the castles that proliferated the Japanese countryside in the medieval era.⁹⁶

In addition to the north's distinct military culture, another feature of Fushū life that complicates the traditional narrative of the "northern periphery" are references to their distinct material culture. One passage from the *Mutsu waki*, which recalls the fall of the Kuriyagawa Stockade, mentions the elegance of Fushū clothing, describing "dozens of beautiful women... all dressed in damask, gauze, and green stuff shot with gold."⁹⁷ This image of refined attire is far divorced from the typical "barbarian" associations prescribed to the north, and offers a view of a Fushū society that was, like Heian, governed according to its own set of aesthetic tastes. Finally, one last note detailing the privileged lives of the Abe comes from the fact that even members of the Heian nobility were willing to join the powerful family and remain in the north by marrying Abe Yoritoki's daughters,⁹⁸ such as Taira Nagahira (平永衡) and Fujiwara Tsunekiyo (藤原経清)—a relative of the court Fujiwara who ultimately fathered Kiyohira, the founder of the Ōshū Fujiwara, in 1056.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Friday, *Samurai, Warfare, and the State*, 119-120.

⁹⁷ McCullough, "A Tale of Mutsu," 201-202.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁹⁹ Friday, *Hired Swords*, 91.

While traditional sources historically portray the north as a peripheral backwater inhabited by a barbarian foreign “other,” the reality is far more complex. By reconstructing *Michinoku* up to the rise of the Ōshū Fujiwara, it is evident that the north was a distinct space in the minds of the Yamato and *ritsuryō* Japanese. Yet, while the court attempted to relegate the north to the periphery, the Emishi and Fushū peoples who lived there cultivated their own society. Powerful clans like the Abe facilitate a re-imagining of the north as a political and cultural center in its own right; so much so that the *ritsuryō* state, threatened by their power, set out once again quell the “rebellious north,” plunging the region into conflict from with the Ōshū Fujiwara would ultimately emerge victorious.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Itabashi, *Ōshū hiraizumi*, 41.

CHAPTER III

THE HIRAIZUMI POLITY

Given that northeastern spaces have been continually constructed and reconstructed throughout the early premodern era—changing from a “foreign” land, to a frontier, and finally a “periphery”—it is clear that terms like “state,” “borders,” and “society” are fuzzy and ill-defined at best. Because of this fluidity and the historic disregard for “peripheral” spaces in the Heian imagination, it is easy to see how an autonomous polity like Hiraizumi could take root and flourish outside the traditional “center,” which is exactly what happened during the “Hiraizumi Century.” Between 1087 and 1189, four generations of Ōshū Fujiwara lords—Kiyohira, Motohira, Hidehira and Yasuhira—ruled the north with the mandate of their Fushū legacy, and built a gilded capital of art and culture that flourished for one hundred years.

Successfully abstaining from court intrigue, the family rose to a position of extreme wealth and power, independently ruling all of *Michinoku* as they wished. In the words of Mark Hudson, “the [Ōshū] Fujiwara lords were the first to establish a single polity covering the whole region. Though this polity maintained formal links with the imperial court in Kyōto, in many respects it may be regarded as a separate state.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, this chapter will discuss the rise of the Ōshū Fujiwara and their northern polity. It will detail how the family strategically worked within the system to become the sole authority of a distinct, flourishing society, and ultimately calls into question just what, exactly, constituted the space known today as Heian era “Japan.”

¹⁰¹ Mark Hudson, “Ainu Ethnogenesis and the Northern Fujiwara.” *Arctic Anthropology* 36, no. 1/2 (1999): 77.

The Ōshū Wars

The roots of the Ōshū Fujiwara and their Hiraizumi polity go back to the Ōshū Wars of the late 11th century. As the Abe continued to dominate the north from their base in the *Oku Rokugun* in the Kitakami Valley, they drew the ire of *ritsuryō* authorities. Though technically under state authority, Heian's disinterest in "peripheral" regions like *Michinoku* emboldened Abe Yoritoki, head of the family, to act independently. When Yoritoki tested Heian's resolve by withholding state taxes, the court appointed Minamoto Yoriyoshi (源頼義) (998-1082) as the "protector of the north" known as the *Chinjufu shōgun* to resolve the issue.¹⁰² Initially the situation seemed to improve, and Yoriyoshi and Yoritoki maintained amicable relations. However, in 1051 Abe Sadatō (安倍貞任), Yoritoki's son, violated the truce by raiding local villages, and war broke out.¹⁰³

During the Former Nine Years War (1051-1062), fighting raged throughout Mutsu Province as the Abe fought to maintain their power. While they initially succeeded in keeping Yoriyoshi's forces at bay, after Yoritoki died in 1057, family cohesion and clan alliances eroded. In 1062 Yoriyoshi, with help from the neighboring Kiyohara clan of Dewa, crushed the Abe at Kuriyagawa,¹⁰⁴ beheading Sadatō and Yoritoki's son-in-law Fujiwara Tsunekiyo, and eliminated all remaining Abe threats.¹⁰⁵ Satisfied the Abe could no longer destabilize the north, Yoriyoshi returned to the capital and left the Fushū chieftain Kiyohara Takehira (清原武衡) to rule the north.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² McCollough, "A Tale of Mutsu," 187.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁰⁴ Present-day Morioka City, Iwate Prefecture.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 201-202.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 225-226.

After the war the remaining Abe were either exiled or incorporated into the Kiyohara clan—as Fujiwara Kiyohira (藤原清衡) (1056-1128) was when his mother, the Abe widow of Fujiwara Tsunekiyo, remarried Kiyohara Takesada (清原武貞), the patriarch’s son.¹⁰⁷ The Kiyohara clan divided control of their new holdings between two family lines and preserved peace for roughly twenty years. However, in 1083 a dispute over marriage and inheritance fractured the family, and *Michinoku* once again fell into chaos.¹⁰⁸

During the Latter Three Years War (1083-1087), Minamoto Yoshiie (源義家) (1039-1106), Yoriyoshi’s son, tried mediating peace between the Kiyohara. However, when these talks failed he allied himself with the patriarch’s step-grandson, Fujiwara Kiyohira. The fighting was fierce, and Kiyohira lost his wife and most of his family when his half-brother and rival Kiyohara Iehira (清原家衡) razed his home at Fort Toyoda. Nevertheless, Kiyohira and Yoshiie ultimately succeeded in crushing the Kiyohara in 1087. Upon his return, Yoshiie was sanctioned for violating the court’s explicit order of non-interference.¹⁰⁹ Kiyohira, however, fared better, and was left in control of the *Oku Rokugun* where he established himself as the de facto ruler of all *Michinoku*.¹¹⁰

Hiraizumi: Establishing the Northern Capital

Following his victory in Latter Three Year’s War, Kiyohira quickly consolidated control and secured his position power. After his former base at Fort Toyoda was

¹⁰⁷ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Itabashi, *Ōshū hiraizumi*, 52.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹⁰ Karl Friday, *Hired Swords*, 91.

destroyed, Kiyohira moved further north into the Kitakami Valley, setting up his new headquarters at the confluence of the Kitakami and Koromo rivers.¹¹¹ Known as Hiraizumi (平泉), Kiyohira's new capital was perfectly positioned to serve as his political and economic center. The surrounding valley was rich in natural resources, and its fertile plains were ideal for agricultural estates and horse ranches. Moreover, located on the *Ōshū Kaido* (奥州街道) road near the exact center of his territory, Hiraizumi served as a major transit hub for people and goods traveling between the territories of the deep north and Kantō in the south.¹¹²

In addition to Hiraizumi's physical locale, the city's religious and cultural institutions also helped to cement and project the family's power and prestige. In a short span of time, Kiyohira transformed Hiraizumi from a small, rural backwater into one of Japan's primary urban centers. With abundant natural resources and great autonomy at their disposal, the family built a gilded capital to reflect their prestige; planning the city on a grid system and furnishing it with its own administrative center, markets, mansions, and temples, all built in the style of the capital.¹¹³ Thus emulating the ancient capitals of Nara and Heian, the Ōshū Fujiwara stated their wealth and power, building a capital that surpassed even the governor's palace at Tagajō in grandeur, and in so doing, legitimized their position as the ruling authority in *Michinoku*.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 62. For a map of Hiraizumi, see Figure 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹³ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 108-109. For an artist's rendition of 12th century Hiraizumi, see Figure 3.

¹¹⁴ Yiengpruksawan, 64.

The Founder: Kiyohira

Kiyohira¹¹⁵ was not the first in Heian Japan to try forging his own polity. Just a century before, two rural elites also attempted carve out their own territories. Fujiwara Sumitomo (藤原純友), for instance, was a low-ranking aristocrat from Iyo province.¹¹⁶ After amassing a number of territories in and around northern Kyūshū and the Inland Sea, Sumitomo instigated a brief rebellion in hopes of keeping control of his maritime holdings.¹¹⁷ While Sumitomo was quickly subdued, his contemporary, Taira Masakado (平将門), enjoyed greater success. After a family dispute with his uncle in the mid-930s, Masakado began waging war on rival Kantō lords.¹¹⁸ Local authorities were unable to halt his expanding influence, and the revolt proved so successful that “Masakado began to style himself as the New Emperor, and set about building a new capital near his home and appointing officials to staff his new court.”¹¹⁹ Greatly incensed, the state dispatched Fujiwara Hidesato (藤原秀郷)—the founder of the Hidesato Fujiwara branch from which the Ōshū Fujiwara descended—to crush the rebellion, which he did in 940.¹²⁰

Kiyohira was not the first to try building his own polity. However, he and his descendants were undoubtedly the most successful, due in large part to how they engaged—or more accurately did not engage—with the court. Both Sumitomo and Masakado tried to build their polities in opposition to the court order, ousting imperial authorities through direct confrontation. Thus, while the Masakado and Sumitomo

¹¹⁵ For a portrait of Kiyohira see Figure 4.

¹¹⁶ Present-day Ehime Prefecture on the island of Shikoku.

¹¹⁷ Pierre-François Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society*, trans. Käthe Roth (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2001), 23.

¹¹⁸ Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 132-136.

¹¹⁹ Friday, *Hired Swords*, 144.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

conflicts may have begun at the local level, their use of violence and force posed a major threat to the larger state itself.¹²¹ Kiyohira, however, had no need to engage the state or uproot the status quo. Rather, because the north was already considered distinct and operated differently from Kinai and Kantō, his rise did not cause the same alarm. In some respects, his family even represented the status quo itself—viewed in the eyes of the Heian elite as more “peripheral barbarians” governing the north like the generations of Fushū and Emishi “barbarians” before them. Therefore, rather than openly rebelling like Sumitomo or Masakado, the Ōshū Fujiwara accumulated power by working within the Heian system, engaging with the court strategically and, most importantly, sparingly.¹²² One of the most important ways in which Kiyohira secured his position was through his lineage.

After the Ōshū Wars, Kiyohira was given the *Oku Rokugun* to administer on behalf of the governor. The ambitious Kiyohira, however, hoped to establish key allies at court. Using his father’s Fujiwara lineage, Kiyohira offered gifts of gold and horses to the court Fujiwara, for which he received a number of estates to oversee in both Mutsu and Dewa, allowing him to expand outside his *Oku Rokugun* base.¹²³ Yet, although these connections helped strengthen the family’s hold on the north, the Ōshū Fujiwara were largely skeptical of the court. Fearing political intrigue and infighting could destabilize their position, the family only engaged with it when necessary, upholding a policy of

¹²¹ Friday, *Samurai, Warfare, and the State*, 11-12.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²³ Itabashi, *Ōshū hiraizumi*, 88.

neutrality and non-engagement that both sustained them for a century and which ultimately proved their undoing.¹²⁴

While his father's origins helped him build key relationships at court, it was his Fushū origins that gave clout among locals. As the heir to Mutsu through his Abe mother and Dewa through his Kiyohara stepfather, Kiyohira styled himself as the *Fushū no Jōtō* (俘囚の上頭), the “Chief of the Fushū,” and the *Oku Rokugun no Nushi* (奥六郡の主)—“Lord of the Back Six Districts.”¹²⁵ By stressing his chiefly lineage and styling himself as a proud Fushū, Kiyohira gained strong support among locals, and soon he was recognized, at least by many northerners, as the rightful ruler of the *Michinoku*. Thus utilizing his aristocratic lineage and Fushū origins, Kiyohira secured support from both locals and the court, soon gaining yet another ally: the governor.

Kiyohira's local popularity and good rapport with the court Fujiwara was not lost on the local administrators at Tagajō. Looking for an influential local to help administer the “rebellious” north, the Mutsu governor deputized Kiyohira as an *ōryōshi* (押領使). In the Heian era, governors would select a few “men of valor” known as *ōryōshi* to serve in law enforcement. *Ōryōshi* like Kiyohira were allowed to command a group of warriors to pursue criminals, enforce justice, and execute the governor's orders.¹²⁶ In addition to these powers, Kiyohira was also entrusted with a number of other privileges, such as the right to control Mutsu's finances in the governor's absence.¹²⁷ This was a great boon for Kiyohira which granted him sweeping authoritative powers in *Michinoku*. Thus, by

¹²⁴ Yiengpruksawa, *Hiraizumi*, 2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹²⁶ Friday, *Hired Swords*, 141-142.

¹²⁷ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 60.

working within the system and gaining support from locals, the aristocracy, and state officials alike, Kiyohira emerged as the preeminent power in the north. And as long as he preserved peace and order, he was largely left alone to oversee the north as he saw fit.

The Protector: Motohira

The dynasty that Kiyohira built after his victory in the Ōshū Wars was expanded by his son and grandson. Following his father's death in 1128, Motohira (基衡) (1105-1157)¹²⁸ succeeded Kiyohira as *Michinoku's* primary authority.¹²⁹ While few documents remain from Motohira's time as head of the family, those that do mention Motohira suggest he was a tempestuous and shrewd individual who successfully played officials and aristocrats off one another to amass more territory and power.¹³⁰ Like his father, Motohira wielded great authority and also served as an *ōryōshi*. This time however, the title came not from Mutsu, but from Dewa, ultimately expanding the family's direct influence out of the *Oku Rokugun* and Mutsu, and into all of *Michinoku*.¹³¹ Furthermore, in addition to his official post, Motohira strengthened the ties his father established at court by offering gold and horses as tribute to key members of the aristocracy, further securing his position over their northern estates.¹³²

One particularly notable feature of Motohira's rule, however, was that despite the family's general avoidance of confrontation and non-engagement in intrigue, Motohira was known on a number of occasions to have opposed Heian authorities. During his

¹²⁸ For a portrait of Motohira see Figure 5.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

¹³¹ Itabashi, *Ōshū hiraizumi*, 93.

¹³² Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 95.

reign, Motohira was involved in a number of conflicts, one of the most notable of which was his standoff with the head of the *sekkanke* (摂関家),¹³³ Fujiwara Yorinaga (藤原頼長) (1120-1156). After Yorinaga increased taxes on northern estates, Motohira was outraged and refused to comply with the order. Instead, he withheld their dues altogether, ultimately forcing Yorinaga to not only dissolve the order but even issue a new decreased rate as well.¹³⁴ This earned Motohira a harsh reputation at court yet also demonstrated the growing influence of the family and the begrudging recognition of their influence by southern elites. By the time of his death in 1157, Motohira had expanded his control into Dewa, securing his family's place as the de-facto authority of all *Michinoku*¹³⁵ and left behind a legacy of both fear and awe.¹³⁶

The “King of the North:” Hidehira

When Hidehira (秀衡) (1122-1187),¹³⁷ the third lord of the dynasty, came to power, the polity was at its apex. The family held direct authority in all *Michinoku* and their capital was as a major religious, artistic, and mercantile center in its own right. Moreover, Hidehira used his riches liberally to curry favor, gain prestige, and preserve his family's political neutrality and security.¹³⁸ It was under Hidehira's rule when the true power and importance of the north was finally acknowledged, as the stable north became

¹³³ A group of leaders from the most important court families.

¹³⁴ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 95.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

¹³⁶ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 56.

¹³⁷ For a portrait of Hidehira see Figure 6.

¹³⁸ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 96.

an increasingly important and strategic force amid the turbulence that dominated the end of the Heian era.

By the 900s, the court Fujiwara had largely usurped national politics. Rather than taking over the imperial position themselves, the family maneuvered into power by marrying their daughters into the imperial line. While the symbolically powerful position of emperor still continued, the role was largely ceremonial, and real power lay with the Fujiwara grandfathers and uncles who governed as regents on the emperor's behalf.¹³⁹ The political structure became even more complicated with the emergence of *insei* (院政), “cloistered” rule, when retired emperors who lived “cloistered” in their villas formed alliances with various Fujiwara leaders and vied for influence and power.¹⁴⁰ Yet, while the Fujiwara Regency had dominated Heian politics for much of the later era, things would dramatically change in the 1100s with the Taira ascendancy.

In the 12th century, the Taira, one of country's most powerful aristocratic military families, held substantial influence in Western Japan. However, the head of the family, Taira Kiyomori (平清盛) (1118-1181), had great ambitions, and after he was called on by Emperor Go-Shirakawa (後白河天皇) to suppress the 1156 Hōgen rebellion,¹⁴¹ he ultimately consolidated his control and eliminated his rivals in the Heiji rebellion of 1160.¹⁴² Throughout the late 1100s Kiyomori became increasingly powerful. He put his

¹³⁹ Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, 48-50.

¹⁴⁰ *Heavenly Warriors*, 263.

¹⁴¹ In 1156, a dispute between Heian's elite families over who should succeed to the throne led to the Hōgen rebellion, in which different court factions used aristocratic military families, like the Minamoto and the Taira, to support their cause. Though short-lived, the Hōgen rebellion was significant in that it was the first time full-scale violence broke out in the streets of Heian, and marked the beginning of military force to solve political disputes. See Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 267.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 271.

Taira relatives in administrative positions throughout the country, brutally suppressed any dissent, and even married his daughter, Tokuko (徳子), to Emperor Takakura (高倉天皇). His unchecked power reached its apex in 1179 when he installed his grandson Antoku (安徳天皇) as emperor.¹⁴³ Many aristocrats felt that Kiyomori, who they regarded as an outsider, had grossly overstepped his authority and that this amounted to nothing less than a coup.¹⁴⁴ With such chaos tearing apart the capital, from the mid-1100s on, aristocratic factions like the Fujiwara, Taira, Minamoto, and others, looked to powerful figures all throughout the country to help support their cause. One of the most sought-after of these individuals, was Hidehira.

Although violence plagued the capital, *Michinoku* under Hidehira's authority remained peaceful and prosperous. Hiraizumi thrived, and in 1170, to recognize his years of financial support and administrative service, Hidehira was officially made the *Chinjufu shōgun*.¹⁴⁵ This was a monumental achievement, as the position had long stood as the very epitome of *ritsuryō* colonization, and the promotion of someone with Emishi lineage to this post was absolutely unprecedented.¹⁴⁶ After briefly retiring in 1176, Hidehira was once again honored by the state with an even more prestigious title: that of Mutsu governorship.

As *Michinoku* thrived outside of Japan's developing chaos, Kiyomori promoted Hidehira as the governor of Mutsu in 1181 in hopes of securing an alliance. Although the Taira-Ōshū Fujiwara alliance Kiyomori hoped for died with him later that year, this

¹⁴³ Friday, *Samurai, Warfare, and the State*, 10.

¹⁴⁴ Friday, *Hired Swords*, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 59.

¹⁴⁶ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 97.

promotion was a monumental achievement for the north. It marked the first time since Aterui's defeat that *Michinoku* was once again officially ruled by a descendant of the Emishi. Perhaps best explained by Mimi Yiengpruksawan: "In a twist of fate, and strategy, Hidehira had achieved what no man of his heritage had done in more than five centuries of engagement with the imperium: he had become the protector of the state."¹⁴⁷ By the end of the "Hiraizumi Century," the Ōshū Fujiwara had so successfully established themselves as the ultimate authorities of Michinoku that Hidehira even gained the moniker of *Hoppō no Ōsha* (北方の王者)—"King of the North."¹⁴⁸

From Kiyohira's early efforts to establish his polity in the *Oku Rokugun*, to Motohira's expansion of authority out of Mutsu and into Dewa, and finally to Hidehira's official recognition as *Chinjufu shōgun* and governor, the Ōshū Fujiwara were strategic and adaptable. By working within the system and strategically using their lineage, riches, and allies, the family successfully established themselves as the pre-eminent power in the north; a position that was even recognized by the court itself. Yet, although they established ties that allowed them to hold key positions of power, they never explicitly "submitted" to the court or the state. Instead, they ruled their territory independently of the Heian establishment, and as long as they maintained order in the north and supplied the court with tribute, they were largely left alone.¹⁴⁹ Yet, while the Ōshū Fujiwara made great strides by working within the system, their rise to power was not entirely dependent on their cooperation with the Heian institution.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁴⁸ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Itabashi, *Ōshū hiraizumi*, 89.

Territorial Expansion in *Michinoku*

Part of what made the Ōshū Fujiwara so successful in building their polity was their economic position. The family's traditional home in the Kitakami Valley was rich in economic potential, and abstention from court politics granted them the freedom to exploit these abundant resources. These resources, along with Hiraizumi's strategic position along key trade routes, helped make the Ōshū Fujiwara one of the richest and most powerful families in the country. And because the court and the state relied on the family to oversee northern estates and bring much needed revenue and goods to the capital, Heian elites had no option but to tolerate the family's power and autonomy.

While Kiyohira and his successors were known to oversee the northern estates of the Heian nobility, the family also amassed significant holdings of their own. One method was to establish religious centers in Hiraizumi. The Ōshū Fujiwara were known for their religious patronage, and the family secured control of many lands by gifting them to the loyal institutions they patronized, like Chūsonji (中尊寺) and Mōtsūji (毛越寺). While technically under the administration of the temple itself, given that the Ōshū Fujiwara were the primary benefactors of these institutions, the family ultimately held great influence over these estates.¹⁵⁰

While securing lands through their loyal religious institutions was one of the main ways the Ōshū Fujiwara acquired lands of their own, the most common way the family secured their landholdings was through the *hō* system. Under this system, the state opened unused lands to cultivation which, though relinquishing their titles to private

¹⁵⁰ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 66.

entities, allowed the state to generate more revenue through taxes. Using the *hō* system, Kiyohira opened much of the lower Kitakami Valley to agriculture, generating substantial income for his family. Moreover, because these lands were now held in his name, Kiyohira, expanded his direct control into new territories while building his own estates—a practice later continued by Motohira and Hidehira as well.

Finally, in addition to actively expanding their territory by converting public lands into religious or private holdings, the Ōshū Fujiwara were also given a number of estates by their allies at court. Kiyohira and Motohira worked hard to cultivate a good relationship with the court Fujiwara,¹⁵¹ and as the political situation became increasingly precarious in Heian, the Ōshū Fujiwara were gifted with a number of tax-immune estates confiscated from disgraced lords, examples of which can be seen in Emperor Go-Shirakawa granting Hidehira a number of estates that had been stripped from the losing *sekkanke* faction after the 1156 Hōgen rebellion.¹⁵²

By gaining the trust of the court and the state, the Ōshū Fujiwara accumulated vast landholdings, expanding beyond their *Oku Rokugun* domain and into greater *Michinoku*. This made them incredibly powerful; so much so, that their authority even surpassed that of the governor. In a 1093 dispute over the Odashima estate in Dewa province,¹⁵³ for instance, the governor demanded to see the estate's title, as he doubted the land claim. Kiyohira, who was charged by the court Fujiwara to oversee the estate, staunchly refused to present the deed, and ultimately forced the governor to back down.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 91.

¹⁵² Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, "In My Image. The Ichijin Kinrin Statue at Chūsonji" *Monumenta Nipponica* 46, no. 3 (1991): 340.

¹⁵³ Near present-day Higashine city in Yamagata prefecture.

Anecdotes like these illustrate just how powerful the Ōshū Fujiwara had become over territories technically outside their jurisdiction, and show how their influence even superseded that of the provincial governors.¹⁵⁴

In addition to agriculture, these holdings were also used by the family to raise the swift horses for which they were renowned. Horse rearing was a major industry of the pre-Fushū Emishi and Ezo, and as the inheritors of this tradition the Ōshū Fujiwara established many ranches throughout *Michinoku*. Horses from the far northern *Nukanobu* (糠部) region were especially prized for their speed and agility and became a status symbol for the Heian elite.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, because gift horses have long been considered a symbol of a master-servant relationship, offering these horses as tribute helped reinforce the family's relations with the court. And while Heian aristocrats continued to see themselves as the “masters” in this relationship, in reality it was the court who became increasingly dependent on the Ōshū Fujiwara for resources and protection.¹⁵⁶

Ōshū Gold

While the Ōshū Fujiwara's vast landholdings were undeniably important in securing their power and authority, the family's most valuable asset was gold. *Michinoku* was rich in valuable ore resources like iron, silver, and especially, gold. Early references

¹⁵⁴ Itabashi, *Ōshū hiraizumi*, 91.

¹⁵⁵ For a more detailed description of *Nukanobu* swift horses, see: Alexander Bay, “The Swift Horses of Nukanobu: Bridging the Frontiers of Feudal Japan,” in *JAPANimals: History and Culture in Japan's Animal Life*, ed. Gregory Pflugfelder and Brett Walker (Ann Arbor, M.I.: Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2005): 91-124.

¹⁵⁶ Records reveal that the Ōshū Fujiwara used horse tribute to secure their relations with the court. Both Kiyohira and Motohira gifted horses to nobility to receive their *ōryōshi* status, while Hidehira supplied Minamoto Yoritomo with gold and horses to maintain his position of power at Hiraizumi. For more information see: *Ibid.*, 88-89.

to “Mutsu gold” date back as far as the Tempyō era (729-749), and can even be found in works like the *Manyōshū* (『万葉集』), such as: “Even the golden flowers of the mountains of *Michinoku* in the East bloom for the prosperity of the emperor’s reign.”¹⁵⁷

Gold was especially important because it was more than just a precious material. Rather, it served an important function as Japan’s domestic and international currency, and was therefore a key resource for the *ritsuryō* state to acquire.¹⁵⁸ In fact, gold was so important to the state and *Michinoku*’s reserves were so lucrative that accessing this valuable resource was one of the *ritsuryō*’s primary motives for its northern expansion. Although deeply coveted by the state and court, the actual mining process was extremely laborious, and therefore Fushū clans like the Abe and Kiyohara were hired to oversee the process. This gave them direct control over the extraction and distribution of Mutsu’s reserves, and allowed them to achieve significant power in the region.¹⁵⁹ After the Ōshū Wars, the Ōshū Fujiwara, took over from the Abe and Kiyohara, and holding a control over this key resource, soon became one of the wealthiest and most prestigious families in the country.¹⁶⁰

Building a Cultural Legacy

In addition to establishing their territorial, political and economic importance, one final way in which the Ōshū Fujiwara distinguished themselves was through their cultural

¹⁵⁷ 「天皇のみ代栄えむと東なるみちのく山に金花咲く。」 For more information see Itabashi, *Ōshū hiraizumi* 2, and poem 18-4097 in the *Manyōshū*.

¹⁵⁸ Ethan Isaac Segal, *Coins, Trade, and the State: Economic Growth in Early Medieval Japan* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 43.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

¹⁶⁰ Mimi Yiengpruksawan, “In My Image,” 340.

legacy. By all accounts, Hiraizumi was one of 12th century Japan's most cosmopolitan centers, in many ways even recalled the capital itself. It boasted grand mansions, temples, and its very own administrative centers, and like the capital, its streets were planned in a grid system with the *Ōshū Kaido* running through the very center.¹⁶¹ As a major transit hub for northern and southern wares,¹⁶² a large market known as the *Kuramachi* (倉町) district emerged. All manner of luxuries, like Chinese ceramics, silks, swift horses, gold dust, lacquer, among many others were available, and the district was so grand it even drew comparisons to the *Rokuhara* (六波羅) market of Heian.¹⁶³

In addition to their mercantile center and urban facilities, the Ōshū Fujiwara also demonstrated their power by constructing a unique cultural heritage. Like other Heian elites, the Ōshū Fujiwara commissioned many works of art, like statues, temples, gardens, to express their power, and refinement.¹⁶⁴ This artistic patronage was vital to their autonomous Hiraizumi polity because it allowed the family to demonstrate their wealth and sophistication in a way that reflected their distinct northern tastes; building a cultural tradition that matched the grandeur of court society yet still remained autonomous from the Yamato cultural hegemon.¹⁶⁵ While many of Hiraizumi's treasures have been lost over the centuries, the family's grand artistic legacy society lives on in the city's surviving temples and gardens.

After establishing his capital at Hiraizumi, Kiyohira founded Chūsonji—a grand temple intended to reflect the glorious society he hoped to achieve. While many stately

¹⁶¹ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 108-109.

¹⁶² Hudson, "Ainu Ethnogenesis," 76-77.

¹⁶³ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 114.

¹⁶⁴ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 186.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

buildings were erected on the grounds, Chūsonji's crowning jewel is undoubtedly the Konjiki-dō "Golden Hall."¹⁶⁶ Completed in 1124, the interior of the Konjiki-dō was constructed from lacquered Southeast Asian sandalwood and is decorated with intricate mother of pearl inlay. Covered in gold leaf, the Konjiki-dō strikingly illuminates the ten golden Amida Buddhas enshrined within, allowing the viewer to visualize the supreme beauty of Amida's Pure Land of eternal bliss.¹⁶⁷

Not to be outdone by his father, Motohira built the Pure Land temple and gardens of Mōtsūji in the mid-1100s.¹⁶⁸ Pure Land gardens, like mandalas, are visual representations of Buddhist cosmology, and Mōtsūji's gardens imagine Amida Buddha's Western Pure Land on the temple grounds.¹⁶⁹ While the structures burned down long ago, the main hall was originally set on a rolling lawn behind a large, stream-fed pond surrounded by locally-sourced rocks, trees, and plants. Mōtsūji is particularly notable, because rather than simply following the traditional conventions of Pure Land landscape architecture, Mōtsūji's garden draws connections between Amida's Pure Land and the polity itself. The rocky shore dotted with pine-covered islands imagines the rugged Sanriku coast that eventually gives way to the rolling Kitakami hills and river, imagined in the garden by the rolling, grassy lawn and stream. In this way, Motohira connects his grand, sophisticated capital to the eternal land of bliss by mapping Pure Land cosmologies onto the physical space of Hiraizumi and *Michinoku* itself.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ See Figure 7.

¹⁶⁷ Toshi Fukuyama *Heian Temples: Byodo-in and Chusonji*, trans. Ronald Jones (New York: John Weatherhill Inc., 1976), 109-110.

¹⁶⁸ See Figure 8.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁷⁰ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 101-102.

While these are only two examples of Hiraizumi's many artistic treasures, they nevertheless illustrate how the family used art to express their power and influence. Motohira, for example, used the graceful aesthetic at Mōtsūji to outdo even the calm and quiet repose of Pure Land gardens in the capital. Meanwhile, Kiyohira used extravagant and expensive materials to construct a literal temple of gold, projecting his wealth and aweing those who ventured to his northern capital. In addition to demonstrating their aesthetic tastes, both Kiyohira and Motohira drew analogies between Hiraizumi and Amida Buddha's Pure Land. The splendor of the Konjiki-dō and its ten Amida Buddhas visualize a miniature Pure Land within Chūsonji itself,¹⁷¹ while Mōtsūji maps the Pure Land onto the polity's geography, imagining it as a paradisaical Pure Land of its own. Thus, through this artistic legacy the Ōshū Fujiwara demonstrated their economic and cultural prowess and legitimized their position of ultimate authority in the north.

While this legacy played a key role in exhibiting the family's prestige, it also served as a statement of cultural autonomy—reflecting their unique lineage in their distinct aesthetics and practices. One particularly potent example of this is Chūsonji's place as the family's *bodaiji* (菩提寺) temple.¹⁷² A *bodaiji* is a memorial temple intended to provide for a particular family's spiritual needs. It honors familial ancestors by interring their remains on the grounds, and is continually cared for by their descendants.¹⁷³ *Bodaiji* temples are not unusual for powerful Japanese families. Many elites founded *bodaiji* temples to honor their ancestors and their lineage and securing

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 138.

¹⁷² Yiengpruksawan, "In My Image," 342.

¹⁷³ John Knight, "The Temple, the Town-Office and the Migrant: Demographic Pluralism in Rural Japan," *European Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 1 (1994), 37-38.

their right to rule by forging spiritual and ancestral bonds to the temple and the land.¹⁷⁴

What makes Chūsonji unique, however, is that while most elite families had their cremated remains interred in a family plot on the temple grounds, the Ōshū Fujiwara chose to be mummified and laid to rest on the Konjiki-dō's central dais.¹⁷⁵ This makes the family particularly unique, as although mummification may have been practiced among Emishi chieftains, they were the only elite family of the Heian era to be entombed this way. Thus, rather than have their cremated remains interred like other nobles, these lords defied the norm, indicating their cultural autonomy from Heian dominance.¹⁷⁶ Ultimately, through their unique legacy of art and culture, the Ōshū Fujiwara projected their wealth, prestige and power, and even distinguished themselves from the Yamato cultural norm, setting themselves apart as a true autonomous polity.

Conclusion

Strategically navigating the complex political and social field that was Heian Japan, the Ōshū Fujiwara managed to carve out an autonomous polity and become one of the most powerful families in the country. As the direct descendants of the Mutsu Abe and the victors over the Dewa Kiyohara, the Ōshū Fujiwara united the two provinces of under their control and were ultimately viewed as the rightful heirs of *Michinoku*. The astute family was also able to secure their position by working within the system rather than against it—overseeing the court's northern estates and serving as administrators on behalf

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁷⁵ Jacqueline Stone and Mariko Walter, *Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008): 249.

¹⁷⁶ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 3.

of the state; gaining the support of the Heian elite and operating with little interference from courtiers and official bureaucrats.

Thus left to their own devices, the family built up their territorial holdings and amassed a substantial income by privatizing lands in their name. Moreover, by taking advantage of key assets, like gold and horses, the family held complete control over the region's lucrative economic resources; making them incredibly wealthy and desirable allies in the chaos that gripped 12th century Heian. Finally, as a testament to their autonomy, the Ōshū Fujiwara left behind a grand cultural legacy—one steeped in the tastes and practices of their Fushū and Emishi ancestors—to strike fear and awe, and rival even the greatest works of the capital.

Operating largely outside the Heian political sphere, the Ōshū Fujiwara crafted their own autonomous polity in the north. And although the Heian establishment continued to view the north as a distant “periphery,” they ultimately had no choice but to recognize the family's authority, promoting Hidehira to official positions and allowing them to rule unhindered as long as they supplied the capital with desired resources and support. Ultimately, by working within the Heian system in the early years, the family achieved enough power to detach themselves from the Kinai hegemon and operate independently—an unachievable feat for their other contemporaries.¹⁷⁷ And while not recognized by the court or state as “independent,” per se, in the northern conscious at least, Hiraizumi was autonomous from the Heian system, dominated in every way by the Ōshū Fujiwara—a fact which clearly seen in one of the family's most notable endeavors: international trade.

¹⁷⁷ Hudson, “Ainu Ethnogenesis,” 76.

CHAPTER IV

SINO-JAPANESE TRADE

When the Ōshū Fujiwara rose to prominence in the 11th and 12th centuries, East Asia was in the midst of one of the most dynamic periods of its history. China's new Song dynasty ushered in an unprecedented era of innovation and contact, connecting societies throughout Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific region in an intricate trade network known as the Maritime Silk Road. This had a profound effect on Japan, introducing new cultural, social, and political forms that influenced the archipelago for centuries. Chinese trade also had a particularly strong impact on the Ōshū Fujiwara, as well, helping them accrue the political and cultural capital that preserved their northern autonomy. This chapter will place the Ōshū Fujiwara in the larger processes of Sino-Japanese trade in the "Hiraizumi Century." It will first outline the history of China's Maritime Silk Road in addition to the changing dynamics of Japan's international engagements between the 8th and 12th centuries. Then, it will locate the Ōshū Fujiwara within this trade, arguing that rather than lying on the Heian "periphery," this trade "centered" the family as an independent actor at the very heart of the era's dynamic national and global developments.

China: The Song Dynasty and the Maritime Silk Road

China has long served as the bridge between Japan, East Asia, and beyond. As the *ritsuryō* state emerged in the 7th century, the Tang dynasty (618-907) capital of

Chang'an¹⁷⁸ was one of the great centers of Eurasian cultural exchange. The city hosted traders and migrants from all over Eurasia and connected Korea and Japan in the east to Persia, Europe, and Africa in the west,¹⁷⁹ making it one of the most vibrant and cosmopolitan cities in the world.¹⁸⁰ Eager to emulate its cultured neighbor, Japan dispatched numerous envoys to China throughout the 7th and 8th centuries, returning with valuable Tang knowledge, customs, and cultural practices.

However, in the 8th century internal pressures began to weaken the dynasty. In 755 An Lushan (安祿山), a Tang general of Turkic and Sogdian descent, instigated a seven-year conflict that ravaged the country, displaced the emperor, and left scores dead. While the Tang ultimately suppressed the rebellion, it never regained the territory or stability it had previously enjoyed.¹⁸¹ Finally collapsing in 907, the dynasty fractured into a number of small states, each of which vied to restore the glory of the Tang in their own name.¹⁸² Eventually, one state, the Later Zhou, emerged as the dominant power, and after a successful coup d'état the general Zhao Kuangyin (趙匡胤) united China in 960, crowning himself Emperor Taizu of the new Song dynasty.¹⁸³

While reunited once again, Song China never enjoyed the same territorial or military prestige enjoyed under the Tang. New empires like the Khitan Liao and the Xixia Tanguts took root in China's northern and western regions and became influential

¹⁷⁸ Present-day Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province, People's Republic of China.

¹⁷⁹ Rossabi, *A History of China*, 143.

¹⁸⁰ Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations* (San Diego C.A.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 112.

¹⁸¹ Rossabi, *A History of China*, 153.

¹⁸² Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2008), 163.

¹⁸³ Schirokauer, *A Brief History*, 188.

actors in their own right.¹⁸⁴ After early military intervention failed to regain these lost territories, the Song were forced to reduce their military operations and pay tribute to preserve the peace.¹⁸⁵ Though degrading for the Song, this approach was largely successful, and with the exception of the 1127 Jurchen Jin invasion,¹⁸⁶ the Song enjoyed relative peace and prosperity, cultivating a new internal bureaucracy based on the neo-Confucian *jinshi* (進士) scholar-official.¹⁸⁷

Turning away from the military conquests that built the great Chinese empires of the past, the Song looked to cultivate a peaceful and just society based on neo-Confucian ethics and civil bureaucracy. Men from all backgrounds were eligible to take the civil service exam to become scholar-officials and serve as ministers in different bureaucratic positions. Meanwhile, even Song society as a whole embraced neo-Confucian philosophy and its emphasis on education, aesthetics, and self-cultivation; characteristics which led to the dynasty's greatest technological, cultural, and social achievements.¹⁸⁸

The Song dynasty eagerly embraced new technologies and practices. New irrigation techniques and the adoption of multi-yield Champa rice improved agricultural production, and the population grew exponentially, particularly in urban regions on the southern coast.¹⁸⁹ To serve this burgeoning population, the Song restructured its

¹⁸⁴ Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 20.

¹⁸⁵ Rossabi, *A History of China*, 178-179.

¹⁸⁶ The Song dynasty is often periodized according to the location of the capital. The Northern Song dynasty (960 to 1127) and was based in the northern city of Kaifeng. After the Jin invasion, the court moved south to the city of Hangzhou, where the Song dynasty continued until 1279 under the Southern Song dynasty. For more information see Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Shirokauer, *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 1.

¹⁸⁷ Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 8.

¹⁸⁸ Rossabi, *A History of China*, 179-180.

¹⁸⁹ Hymes and Shirokauer, *Ordering the World*, 3.

economy; developing and localizing industries to create productive centers of specialized, high-quality goods¹⁹⁰ and re-distributing wealth to more people—making commerce more accessible to all levels of society.¹⁹¹ In addition to these technological developments, neo-Confucianism’s emphasis on aesthetics and self-cultivation led to great intellectual and artistic innovations. Movable print was developed in the 10th century, increasing literacy and disseminating knowledge throughout China and beyond.¹⁹² Meanwhile, Song elites were also great connoisseurs art—patronizing literati landscape paintings, embroidered silk textiles, and especially, ceramics.

The impacts of these developments were not just limited to China, but rather were felt by societies all throughout Eurasia. The Song’s large, urban population, mass-produced goods, and emphasis on diplomacy made it particularly adept to international trade, while technological advancements like the magnetic compass and water-tight cargo hulls meant products could be shipped faster and in great quantities than ever before. Chinese coastal cities like Mingzhou,¹⁹³ Fuzhou, and Quanzhou¹⁹⁴ were outfitted with ports and immigration checkpoints to transport all the cargo passing into, out of, and through China, while Chinese communities grew overseas to facilitate this growing trade network known as the Maritime Silk Road.¹⁹⁵ With the rise of neo-Confucian Song society and the Maritime Silk Road, ideas and commodities traveled on an unprecedented scale—utterly transforming the course of East Asian history.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹¹ Billy K. L. So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China: The South Fukien Pattern, 946-1368* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 1.

¹⁹² Hymes and Schirokauer, *Ordering the World*, 3.

¹⁹³ Present-day Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, People’s Republic of China.

¹⁹⁴ Koyama, “East and West,” 374.

¹⁹⁵ So, *Maritime China*, 38.

Sino-Japanese Contacts and the Privatization of Trade

Just as in China, Japan also underwent dramatic changes during this time. Initially, Tang China served as a model for the *ritsuryō* state. Countless bureaucrats and monks traveled to the continent to study and returned with new legal systems, cultural practices, and valued commodities to integrate into Japanese society. However, this contact was strictly monitored by Japanese officials. Ships could only enter the country once every two years and were restricted to docking at the port of Hakata¹⁹⁶ on Kyūshū's northern coast. Foreign merchants and officials were required to stay at Hakata's *Kōrokan* Lodge (鴻臚館), where they were received and inspected by Dazaifu authorities,¹⁹⁷ and only after processing at Hakata could goods be sent on to the capital and foreign travelers returned to the continent with Japanese goods in tow.¹⁹⁸

Following the An Lushan rebellion however, China's political situation grew precarious and Japan, still cautious after its defeat at Paekch'on in 663,¹⁹⁹ slowed its missions, ending them entirely in the 9th century.²⁰⁰ However, it would be inaccurate to say Japan's international engagements ceased altogether. Instead, the Heian elite's intense demand for Chinese goods kept this trade alive, causing it to become increasingly privatized. As official oversight gradually decreased, private activity increased, and by the 11th century the Sino-Japanese trade was organized by a number of actors, including

¹⁹⁶ For a map of Hakata and the Sino-Japanese trade routes of the premodern era, see Figures 9 and 10.

¹⁹⁷ Bruce Batten, "An Open and Shut Case? Thoughts on Late Heian Foreign Trade" in *Currents in Medieval Japanese History: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey P. Mass*, ed. by Gordon M. Berger, Andrew E. Goble, Lorraine F. Harrington, and G. Cameron Hurst III, (Los Angeles, C.A.: Figueroa Press, 2009), 323.

¹⁹⁸ Koyama, "East and West," 373.

¹⁹⁹ Bruce Batten, "Hakata and Dazaifu: Crossroads, Boundaries, and Identity Formation in Ancient Kyūshū," in *Hakata: The Cultural Worlds of Northern Kyūshū*, ed. Andrew Cobbing, (Leiden, Brill, 2013), 14-15.

²⁰⁰ Koyama, "East and West, 372.

official bureaucrats, Chinese merchants, Buddhist and shrine affiliates, and even a select few powerful families.²⁰¹ In Hakata, a small but thriving Chinese merchant community had established itself. Known as *sōjin*, or “Song men” (宋人),²⁰² these merchants were extremely well-connected, and not only facilitated trade between the Heian aristocracy and their Chinese contacts in Mingzhou, but also used their religious connections in China and Japan to strengthen their hold on this trade.²⁰³

In addition to *sōjin* merchants, the powerful Taira also influenced late-Heian’s Chinese trade. By the time of his death in 1181, Taira Kiyomori not only controlled twenty-one of Japan’s sixty-six provinces, including key ports on the Inland Sea, but he also held significant influence in Hakata itself.²⁰⁴ Trade was a foundational part of Taira dominance, and by cultivating personal contacts with Song traders and constructing a new capital at Fukuhara²⁰⁵ to reinvigorate Chinese trade under his authority, Kiyomori sought to expand his influence, both in Japan and abroad.²⁰⁶ While Kiyomori’s grand vision for a trading empire never came to fruition, it nevertheless proved to be such a threat that it was key factor in starting the great Gempei War.

These changing dynamics had a profound impact on the patterns of Japanese trade in the early medieval era. While Hakata—which had been Japan’s entryway to the world-at-large for centuries—remained the country’s primary international port, new port cities,

²⁰¹ Batten, “An Open and Shut Case,” 325.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 314.

²⁰³ Andrew Cobbing, “The Hakata Merchant’s World: Cultural Networks in a Center of Maritime Trade,” in Cobbing, *Hakata*, 65-66.

²⁰⁴ Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 280.

²⁰⁵ Present-day Kōbe City

²⁰⁶ Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 28-30.

like Wakasa, Tosaminato,²⁰⁷ Tsuruga, and Kubota emerged and flourished,²⁰⁸ offering powerful families and religious institutions a way to bypass Hakata and conduct their own trade.²⁰⁹ These new ports were particularly convenient and well-situated for international trade. In fact, ports like Wakasa and Tsuruga, for instance, were closer to Heian than Hakata, and records made by the governor of Etchu province²¹⁰ in the mid-11th century suggest that mass quantities of goods could be quickly and easily transported from these ports to the capital via Lake Biwa instead of going all the way around Western Honshū through the pirate-infested Inland Sea.²¹¹

It should be noted, however, that although Chinese merchants and private actors indeed became much more active during this period, few individuals were able to hold enough influence as to be noteworthy. In fact, of the late Heian lords interested in controlling Japan's international trade networks, only Kiyomori and the Ōshū Fujiwara really stand out in this regard, and they are both very much the exception than the norm. Nevertheless, the late Heian period was a crucial time in this changing trade, as new networks and ports developed to satisfy elites eager to get acquire the Song's technological novelties and exotic luxuries known as *karamono* (唐物).

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁰⁸ Batten, "An Open and Shut Case," 311.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 304-305.

²¹⁰ Present-day Toyama Prefecture.

²¹¹ Yoshihiko Amino 善彦網野, *Nihonkai to hokoku bunka: umi to rettō bunka* 日本海と北国文化 [The Sea of Japan and North Country Culture], (Tōkyō: Shōgakkan, 1990), 26.

Karamono and Song Ceramics

In Japan Chinese goods, known as *karamono*, held symbolic significance in classical and early medieval society. Although *karamono* literally means “Tang goods,”²¹² these objects were not “Tang” nor were many even Chinese. Because China served as an international transit hub for people and commodities, the term referred to all foreign goods imported to Japan from China, regardless of where they were produced. At the height of the Maritime Silk Road, all manner of exotic and novel goods were imported by Japan, including Indian aromatics, Southeast Asian medicines, and spices,²¹³ Chinese textiles and printed texts, and countless other luxuries.²¹⁴ Of all these exotic *karamono* goods however, the most common by far were ceramics.

The Song dynasty is especially well-known for its ceramic production. Not only were they the perfect vehicle to express neo-Confucian values like self-cultivation, and refinement through aesthetics,²¹⁵ but innovative glaze compositions and kiln firing techniques introduced new color and quality contrasts that distinguished Song ceramics from those that came before. Moreover, given the technological and economic innovations of the age, these ceramics could be mass-produced and exported from their production sites in south China’s Zhejiang, Fujian, and Jiangsu provinces from nearby ports like Mingzhou and Quanzhou. In fact, so many southern wares were exported to Japan, that the region’s grey *guan* (官窯) stoneware and blue-grey celadons make up the

²¹² The Tang dynasty has long been viewed as civilization par excellence in Japanese premodern thought, and therefore the term *Kara* 唐 meaning “Tang” was often used as a synonym for China as a whole.

²¹³ So, *Maritime China*, 63.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

²¹⁵ Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 196.

majority of all ceramic remains found in Japan;²¹⁶ imported in such great quantities they were likely available to people from all different social strata throughout the archipelago.²¹⁷

Of all the coveted Song ceramics Japan imported, the most prized were *Longquan* celadons (龍泉青磁).²¹⁸ Known for their striking and cool color, “the light-grey body of *Longquan* ware burns yellowish on exposure in the kiln and wears an unctuous iron glaze ranging in color from leaf-green to a cold bluish-green, which is sometimes, though by no means always, cracked.”²¹⁹ Known as *kinuta* (砧青磁) in Japan, *Longquan* wares were so coveted that Goryeo reproductions were also imported from Korea to supplement the great demand.²²⁰ Other popular wares included *Qingbai* (青白) “bluish-white” ceramics, also known as *Jingdezhen* (景德鎮) wares, and *Yue* (越) grey wares, which were all likely produced in bulk in and shipped from southern Chinese and Korean ports.²²¹

Given that they could be produced in bulk and were valued for their fine quality and relative affordability, ceramics wares were one of the Song’s most important exports and have been found in great numbers all throughout the entire Indo-Pacific region. A sense of the grand scale of the *karamono* and trade can be observed in Song era shipwrecks in East and Southeast Asia. The Java Sea shipwreck, for example, is thought to have transported goods between Quanzhou and Java before sinking in the early 12th century. While exotic luxury goods like ivory, resin and tin were found among the

²¹⁶ Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 203-205.

²¹⁷ Koyama, “East and West” 374-375.

²¹⁸ See Figure 11.

²¹⁹ Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 205.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 198-199.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

remains, the bulk of the cargo were ceramics. In fact, over 100,000 ceramic vessels—mostly *Qingbai* “blue and white” wares—have been recovered from the wreck, attesting to immense volume of ceramics being exported abroad.²²²

Another shipwreck, the 14th century Sinan shipwreck, also offers important insights into the details of Japan’s early medieval trade with China. While the ship’s actual route cannot be verified, it is thought that the vessel departed Mingzhou for Japan based on references made to Kyōto’s Tōfukuji temple, Hakata’s Hakozaiki shrine, and other important figures in Hakata found on lacquer tags in the wreckage. Numerous objects have been recovered, including sandalwood, copper coins, metal, lacquerware, and large quantities of ceramics. In fact, of the 22,040 total relics recovered, 20,691 were ceramics.²²³ The wreck also confirms some of the primary wares being shipped to Japan at the time, as 56 percent of all those recovered were *Longquan* celadons, while another 21 percent were *Jingdezhen Qingbai* wares.²²⁴ While the Sinan wreck transported goods long after the Heian era, it nevertheless offers a clear view of the deep relations between China and Japan and the specifics of this trade in the early medieval era.

Given the vast number of ceramics and other goods that were brought to Japan during the late Heian period, it is clear that *karamono* held special significance for the elite who imported them. In his book, *To the Ends of Japan*, Bruce Batten discusses the important role of foreign objects like *karamono* in establishing the position of powerful families. He divides *karamono* into two distinct categories: “bulk goods” and “prestige

²²² Wenpeng Xu, Lisa C. Niziolek, and Gary M. Feinman, “Sourcing Qingbai Porcelains from the Java Sea Shipwreck: Compositional Analysis Using Portable XRF,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 103 (2019): 58.

²²³ Jianan Fan, and Haichao Li, “A Study on the Departure Port of the Sinan Shipwreck—A Perspective Based on the Chinese Ceramic Cargo,” *Archaeological Research in Asia* 23, (2020): 1-2.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

goods.” “Bulk goods” were imported en-masse with primarily utilitarian functions.²²⁵ “Prestige goods” meanwhile, were luxuries that, while nonessential to daily life, were symbolically important and key to locating one’s position in Nara and Heian’s strict social hierarchies.²²⁶ Although Batten distinguishes “bulk goods” from “prestige goods,” because *karamono*’s significance was subjective to each particular context, these distinctions are fuzzy at best.²²⁷ Song ceramics also straddle this line, as although they were mass-produced and used for primarily utilitarian functions, they still alluded to power and wealth given their exotic “foreign-ness;” evidence of which may be seen in their primary concentration around Japan’s urban power centers like Hakata and Kinai.²²⁸

Regardless of whether or not specific goods were considered “bulk” or “prestige” goods, all *karamono* held great significance for 12th century elites. Given that many early *ritsuryō* rulers attempted to emulate China in their institutions and cultural practices, Chinese goods became an especially coveted commodity. Embodying the culture, aesthetics, and knowledge of China and beyond within the physical object, *karamono* were key symbols of power, wealth, and prestige, and thus held significant power in the imagination of the Heian court.²²⁹

Evidence of just how important *karamono* were in the courtly imagination can be seen in literature and historical texts of the time. In the *Taketori monogatari* (『竹取物語』) for example, *karamono* feature as a prominent plot point. After being pursued by many esteemed gentlemen, Kaguya-hime (かぐや姫) challenges her suitors to bring back

²²⁵ Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*, 162.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

²²⁸ Koyama, “East and West,” 374-375.

²²⁹ Batten, *To the Ends of Japan* 181.

rare and exotic items, promising to marry the first one to do so. These rarities include the Buddha's stone begging bowl from India, a jeweled branch from *Hōrai*,²³⁰ and a coat made of Chinese fire-rat fur, among others.²³¹ This inclusion of *karamono* as a major plot element indicated the degree to which *karamono* "treasures" pervaded the culture and imagination of the court, suggesting that, like the gentlemen in the tale who would be rewarded with the hand of the beautiful *Kaguya-hime*, nobles and aristocrats could also improve their position by acquiring lavish *karamono* treasures such as these.

While the *Taketori-monogatari* demonstrates the role of *karamono* in the imagination and associates them with power and achievement, Heian era documents also attest to the court's obsession with continental goods. In "Chinese Trade Ceramics in Medieval Japan," Saeki Koji describes how the court's desire to obtain *karamono* was so great it caused economic hardship: "The intense interest in acquiring *karamono* is well attested by edicts from 903 in which, concerned with reckless buying of *karamono* by wealthy noble families with no regard to price, the Heian government outlawed smuggling and violation of price regulations."²³² Requiring such drastic intervention to prevent the mismanagement of funds by the country's most powerful courtiers was not something done lightly, and thus indicates how the intense obsession with *karamono* dominated the lives of aristocrats and even national policies. Ultimately, for Japan's rulers, nobility, and anyone eager to climb the social ladder, acquiring *karamono* goods was a particularly potent way to demonstrate and legitimize one's authority and prestige.

²³⁰ Known in Chinese as *Penglai* (蓬莱), this was a mythical island thought to be located somewhere off the Chinese coast and was home to unimaginable wealth and treasure for whomever could find it.

²³¹ Koji Saeki, "Chinese Trade Ceramics in Medieval Japan" trans. Peter Shapinsky, in Goble, Robinson and Wakabayashi, *Tools of Culture: Japan's Cultural, Intellectual, Medical, and Technological Contacts in East-Asia, 1000-1500s*, 164.

²³² *Ibid.*, 164.

Ceramics, Texts, and *Karamono* in Hiraizumi

Hiraizumi is thought to have been a major center of trade and commerce under Ōshū Fujiwara authority. Many commodities passed through the city's large markets, and a great number of them were continental *karamono* goods. While many treasures were lost during the 1189 fall of the city and in the subsequent eight centuries, those that did survive offer a fascinating look at the city's dynamic past. Archaeological excavations from an ancient Heian era storehouse have revealed some of the luxurious goods available to the Hiraizumi's residents, including rhinoceros and water buffalo horns, ivory flutes, South Asian tiles with Islamic patterning, lapis lazuli lamps and scepters, Sichuanese robes, and fine silk brocade.²³³

In addition to these artifacts, recent excavations have also indicated the city boasted impressive commercial capabilities, leading historians like Takahashi Tomio to suggest trade and mercantilism were foundational to the northern economy. Hiraizumi's primary commercial area was the *Kuramachi* district; large and well-developed marketplace where all manner of foreign and domestic goods available for purchase. Excavations of the ancient *Kuramachi* site have uncovered a large inn with stables capable of housing up to ten ox carts at once. While this is but one example of the accommodations available to travelers and short-term residents, the fact that this single inn—likely one of many in the city—could accommodate so many travelers at one time further suggests the major role of trade in the city.²³⁴

²³³ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 114-115.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

Given that Hiraizumi was located halfway between the polity's northern and southern termini, the city's position on the *Ōshū Kaidō* road that connected the Ezo lands of the north to Kantō and Kinai in the south made the city a perfect transit hub. In fact, archaeological excavations of 12th century Hiraizumi indicate the *Ōshū Kaidō* passed directly through the city's *Kuramachi* district, making it extremely convenient for merchants and travelers coming to the city from both the north and the south. While it is possible that some goods were transported from Kinai along this overland route, it is more likely that commodities were shipped from the continent or Hakata to Ōshū Fujiwara ports like Tosaminato²³⁵ or Ishinomaki²³⁶ and were then transported overland via the *Ōshū Kaidō* by oxcart.²³⁷

The large quantity of goods recovered from Hiraizumi suggest the Ōshū Fujiwara were avid consumers of *karamono* goods. Of all the artifacts unearthed by archaeologists, the vast majority were ceramics; ranging from local unglazed cups and *Atsumi* (渥美) wares,²³⁸ to continental products.²³⁹ In fact, of the numerous ceramics recovered from Hiraizumi, many are originally from the continent²⁴⁰ and represent a variety of styles, including blue and white *Qingbai* wares, blue and green *Longquan* celadons, yellow-glazed *Yue* vessels, Chinese vases, and four-eared jars.²⁴¹ Archaeologists and historians even suspect this trade occurred throughout both the Northern and Southern Song

²³⁵ Located in present-day Aomori Prefecture. For further discussion on Tosaminato, see the subsequent chapter.

²³⁶ Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture

²³⁷ Irumada Nobuo 入間田宣夫 and Tomiyama Kazuyuki 冨山和行, *Kita no hiraizumi, minami no ryūkyū* 北の平泉、南の琉球 [Northern Hiraizumi, Southern Ryūkyū], (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002), 95.

²³⁸ From central Japan's Chūbū region.

²³⁹ Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 59.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67. For images of recovered Chinese ceramics from Hiraizumi, see Figure 12.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 76-79.

dynasties based on the presence of coins dating to the 1073 Northern Song rule of Emperor Shenzong (神宗) (1048-1085), and ceramic styles unique to each dynasty.²⁴²

While the large presence of Song ceramics is not unusual in and of itself, certain elements of this trade are. Ceramics account for such a large percentage of Hiraizumi's recovered artifacts, that more Song and Goryeo wares have been uncovered in Hiraizumi than any other locale outside Kinai and Kyūshū.²⁴³ Meanwhile, the specific objects the family imported are also unique. For example, the number of *Yue* wares found in Hiraizumi remains unmatched by the capital region, Hakata, or any other contemporaneous settlement in Japan, while the highly-sought *Longquan* celadons in Hiraizumi have been crafted with four distinct lobes; a style that has yet to be found anywhere outside the Kitakami Valley region.²⁴⁴

In addition to, what Batten would describe as, “bulk” ceramic goods, one particularly notable “prestige” *karamono* artifact in Hiraizumi is a complete printed Buddhist *tripitaka* known as the “Song Canon.”²⁴⁵ Consisting of some 7,000 fascicles, the Song Canon was purchased by Kiyohira for the enormous sum of 105,000 gold *ryō* (兩) and was sent to Hiraizumi from Mingzhou between 1151 and 1160.²⁴⁶ According to Mimi Yiengpruksawan:

The Song Canon is a composite of three editions of the Canon produced in Fuzhou (Fujian) between 1070 and 1151. Before its arrival in Hiraizumi, the Song Canon had belonged to a temple in Mingzhou called Jixiangyuan, whose

²⁴² Ibid., 106.

²⁴³ Mark Hudson, “Ainu Ethnogenesis,” 76.

²⁴⁴ Yiengpruksawan, Hiraizumi, 99.

²⁴⁵ The *tripitaka*—also known as the Buddhist Canon or Pali Canon—is a compilation of the Buddha's teachings, composed of three main books or “baskets”: the Buddha's sermons (the *Sutras*), the rules, regulations, morals, and ethics (the *Vinaya*), and commentary on the Buddha's teachings (the *Abhidhamma*).

²⁴⁶ Irumada and Tomiyama, *Kita no hiraizumi*, 96.

vermillion seal appears on some of the fascicles. Yamamoto and others believe the Canon was purchased directly from that temple by Kiyohira around 1160.²⁴⁷

During the Heian era, many elite lords acquired their own religious and historic texts by copying pre-existing originals. Even though the Ōshū Fujiwara likely borrowed works from Fujiwara Yorinaga to create their own copies, Yiengpruksawan suspects that Yorinaga stopped lending out his works, forcing the Ōshū Fujiwara to find other alternatives. While we may never know exactly how the family acquired their canon, one likely scenario is through Buddhist contacts.

A significant, if often overlooked aspect of this trade occurred through religious actors like monks and pilgrims. Many of those who were first allowed to travel to China after the mid-Heian cessation of official envoys were monks traveling to study from Chinese masters. These monks were instrumental in forging ties with Chinese temples that facilitated the exchange of goods, and were especially key in procuring coveted Chinese texts for Japanese readers.²⁴⁸ An excellent example of this can be seen in the case of Jōjin (成尋).

When the monk Jōjin (1011-1081) traveled to China in 1072, he not only amassed a substantial collection texts, bringing over six hundred Chinese works with him upon his 1073 return,²⁴⁹ but he also established key connections to monks and temples in centers like Ningbo, Wutaishan, and Kaifeng, strengthening ties that would later be used to

²⁴⁷ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 112.

²⁴⁸ Andrew Goble, *Confluences of Medicine in Medieval Japan*, (Honolulu, H.I: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012): 7-8.

²⁴⁹ Ivo Smits, "China as Classic Text: Chinese Books and Twelfth-Century Japanese Collectors," in Goble, Robinson, and Wakabayashi, *Tools of Culture: Japan's Cultural, Intellectual, Medical, and Technological Contacts in East-Asia, 1000-1500s*, 187.

exchange goods and ideas between China and Japan.²⁵⁰ This, together with the fact that he encountered a number of religiously-connected merchants who spoke Japanese—indicating the high frequency with which trade already occurred through these channels—highlights just how extensive and significant these transnational religious networks were, especially in purveying coveted commodities like the many texts he acquired²⁵¹ Given that Chūsonji had strong ties to major temples like Enryakuji, Kōyasan²⁵² and even the Guoqing Temple in China itself,²⁵³ the Ōshū Fujiwara likely used religious networks like Jōjin’s to acquire their treasured Song Canon.

Regardless of how the work arrived in Hiraizumi, the text itself is quite significant when viewed in its historic context. In Heian Japan, Chinese texts were a particularly potent symbol of power and authority. According to Ivo Smits in his work “China as Classic Text: Chinese Books and Twelfth-Century Japanese Collectors:”

[L]ate Heian court nobles valued Chinese books as much for their materiality, the technological innovations they presented (printed books, numbered pages), as for their content, the new insights they offered into a shared textual heritage (commentaries). As luxury imports, Chinese books also had a dimension of power play to them. They granted their owners control over knowledge since they could control access to these books. The relationship between the collectors treated here and the scholars of their age implied that Heian nobles with vast libraries were brokers in knowledge of a ‘China’ that was as much physical as it was intellectual.²⁵⁴

Given the significance of these texts in society, it is no wonder aristocrats were so keen to acquire these goods, with some like Fujiwara Yorinaga even building their own private

²⁵⁰ Robert Borgen, “Jōjin’s Discoveries in Song China,” in Goble, Robinson, and Wakabayashi, *Tools of Culture: Japan’s Cultural, Intellectual, Medical, and Technological Contacts in East-Asia, 1000-1500s*, 25-26.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

²⁵² Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 82.

²⁵³ In Zhejiang Province. See: Takahashi Miura, and Irumada *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 119.

²⁵⁴ Smits, “China as Classic Text,” 185-186.

libraries to house their prized Buddhist, Chinese historical, and literary texts.²⁵⁵ Therefore, the Ōshū Fujiwara's Song Canon would have carried great significance as a source of power and authority valued for its "foreign-ness," not to mention the novelty of it being a printed text—a rare medium of production which was not widespread until the Muromachi era (1338 to 1490).²⁵⁶ Thus, given the novelty of the Canon and the lengths the family went through to procure it, the Song Canon would have been a particularly potent symbol of power and authority.

***Karamono* and the Politics of Power in Hiraizumi**

Karamono goods like Song ceramics and the Song Canon clearly demonstrate the Ōshū Fujiwara's power and autonomy. Given that *karamono* were valued for the symbolic power they gave the possessor and the large presence of *karamono* in Hiraizumi, these goods allowed the family to distinguish themselves as powerful and cultured, much like elite courtiers did when positioning themselves in Heian's strict social hierarchies.²⁵⁷ Therefore one way to read the presence of *karamono* in Hiraizumi is as the family creating their own elite culture and society.

In many respects, the Ōshū Fujiwara represented a dynasty in their own right. They had a distinguished lineage that connected them to both the Japanese aristocracy and ancient Fushū chiefs, they ruled autonomously with little intervention from the Heian establishment, and each successive lord built upon the territorial, political, and cultural advancements made by his father before him. Given that the Ōshū Fujiwara were adept at

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 193.

²⁵⁶ Hane, *Premodern Japan*, 108.

²⁵⁷ Irumada and Tomiyama, *Kita no hiraizumi*, 96.

“working within the system” to maintain their autonomy and control, the family often applied aristocratic customs to their own society, establishing a northern elite culture all of their own. Such examples can be seen in the practice of discarding *kawarake* (土器) wares after their use. The Heian aristocracy often discarded their unglazed earthenware plates and vessels after use and even in certain rituals to rid themselves of polluting influences and to ward off evil.²⁵⁸ As this practice was common among Heian’s ruling elite, large quantities of *kawarake* vessels have been found near the capital. In fact, the custom was so tied to the aristocratic establishment that one of the only other locations where these vessels have been found in great numbers is Hiraizumi—where the ten tons of *kawarake* artifacts unearthed from the city suggest the family implemented court customs within their own society as well.²⁵⁹

Therefore, given that the Ōshū Fujiwara customarily applied aristocratic rituals and power structures to northern society, their acquisition of *karamono* goods was likely a way—intentional or otherwise—to demonstrate their authority. The sheer expense paid to acquire the novel Song Canon, the vast quantities of ceramics present at Hiraizumi, and the symbolic relation to the power of these goods held all served to strengthen and legitimize the family’s authority. And because the Ōshū Fujiwara governed their polity independently from outside interference, the power dynamics and symbolism inherent in these *karamono* goods could be seen as the emergence of a distinct northern elite culture;

²⁵⁸ Takahashi Miura, and Irumada *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 94. For an image, see Figure 13.

²⁵⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Nomination of Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens, and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land for Inscription on the World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, January 2010, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1277/documents/>, 102.

one designed to reinforce the authority of the ruling Ōshū Fujiwara over the Heian establishment, and further cementing their autonomous position of power in the north.

A Legacy of Northern Art: Votive Sutras

While it is clear that *karamono* goods strengthened the Ōshū Fujiwara's autonomy by virtue of their symbolic significance, the impact of the *karamono* trade on Hiraizumi did more than just validate the family's political authority. Rather, it also permeated deep within Hiraizumi's distinct artistic and cultural traditions. In much the same way Kiyohira's Buddhist devotion created Hiraizumi's unique Pure Land aesthetic, so too did continental trade impact its artistic productions, developing a unique aesthetic distinct from the dominant forms of the court. While elements of distinct northern tastes can be found in what the family chose to import—like the distinct four-lobed *Longquan* celadons and vast quantities of *Yue* wares—continental influences can also be observed in locally-produced works like Hiraizumi's votive sutras.

In Heian Japan, many believed copying or commissioning votive sutras helped one accrue karmic merit in this life for the next, and while votive sutras have been produced in Japan since the 8th century, they truly flourished in the late Heian era.²⁶⁰ It was during this time that more elaborate works were produced using all manner of precious materials—such as writing in gold ink on indigo paper, mounting it to silk, and adorning it with precious stones.²⁶¹ Production of these “blue and gold” sutras was especially popular among the Ōshū Fujiwara, and the practice became an integral part of

²⁶⁰ Kōgen Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development, Transmission*, (Tokyo: Kōsei Publishing, 1982), 170.

²⁶¹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 80-81.

Hiraizumi's artistic legacy. Even today the city is still known for its elegant works, collectively known as *Chūsonjikyō* (中尊寺経), or “Chūsonji sutras.”²⁶² Votive sutra production was so central to Hiraizumi's arts scene that of the eight full “blue and gold” canons documented in Japan, two were produced in Hiraizumi: the *Kiyohirakyō* (清衡経) and the *Motohirakyō* (基衡経).

Dedicated in 1126, the *Kiyohirakyō*²⁶³ is a complete canon written in alternating gold and silver script on indigo paper.²⁶⁴ The *Motohirakyō*,²⁶⁵ meanwhile, was likely begun by Motohira in the 1150s and completed by Hidehira in the 1170s, and is written entirely in gold with silver denoting the work's ruler lines. It is illuminated with scenes from the text, and particular emphasis is given to the bodhisattva *Jizō* (地藏) and the surrounding landscape.²⁶⁶ Some scholars believe this particular emphasis on landscape imagery may be the result of continental influence, as many Chinese productions also prominently feature landscapes as well. Yiengpruksawan suggests the *Chūsonjikyō* may have been influenced by Chinese styles, stating, “the predominance of landscape imagery in the blue-and-gold [Motohira] Canon is consistent with a similar tendency in the Kiyohira Canon... Sudo Hiroshi believes that the landscape imagery is Chinese in inspiration, possibly based on a set of printed illustrations in the Song Canon.”²⁶⁷

Because Chinese texts generally served as the models for Japanese productions, it is quite likely that both sutras were copied from Chinese originals—evidence of which

²⁶² Halle O'Neal, “Performing the Jeweled Pagoda Mandalas: Relics, Reliquaries, and a Realm of Text,” *The Art Bulletin* 97, no. 3 (2015): 281.

²⁶³ See Figure 14.

²⁶⁴ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 81

²⁶⁵ See Figure 15.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 111-113.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 117.

may be seen in the distinct script of the *Kiyohirakyō*. The earliest mention of the alternating silver and gold script used in the *Kiyohirakyō* comes from the monk Ennin (円仁) (793-864), who first noted this style while on pilgrimage to China in 840. Given that the *Kiyohirakyō* replicates these Chinese styles—and because it was probably modeled on a copy owned by Fujiwara Yorinaga, who had a substantial collection of Song texts²⁶⁸—many have concluded that the *Kiyohirakyō* was likely modeled on a Chinese original, though this has yet to be verified.²⁶⁹

While the *Kiyohirakyō*'s exact origins are uncertain, one thing scholars have been able to verify is that the *Motohirakyō* was based on the printed Song Canon. Evidence of this can be seen in how even the names of the Song Canon's carvers and inkers were transcribed onto the *Motohirakyō*.²⁷⁰ Given that both sutras were both produced from Chinese originals and exhibit Chinese influence, it is easy to see just how influential *karamono* goods were in producing two of the most “quintessentially Hiraizumi” works of art. Yet, as noteworthy as the *Chūsonjikyō* are, even they are not the most famous of Hiraizumi's votive sutras. That distinction belongs to the *Hōtōkyō* (宝塔經): the “Jeweled-stupa sutra.”

The *Hōtōkyō*²⁷¹ is an illuminated version of the *Golden Light Sutra*, likely commissioned by Hidehira around 1170 to mark his promotion as *Chinjufu shōgun*.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ Smits, “China as Classic Text,” 193.

²⁶⁹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 82.

²⁷⁰ Yiengpruksawan suggests that the *Kiyohirakyō* was likely based on a text owned by Fujiwara Yorinaga or Tadazane at court, and that because Motohira was denied access to the texts used to produce the *Kiyohirakyō*, he therefore procured his own *tripitaka*, the Song Canon, to serve as the basis for his *Motohirakyō*. For more information, see: Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 112.

²⁷¹ See Figure 16.

²⁷² O'Neal, “Performing the Jeweled Pagoda Mandalas,” 282-283

Composed of gold script on indigo paper, the work is a full copy of the *Golden Light Sutra*'s thirty-one chapters inscribed in the form of a ten-tiered pagoda surrounded by the undulating hills and bubbling streams of Buddhist paradise painted in gold and color.²⁷³ Images of Shakyā Buddha preaching from Vulture Peak, bodhisattvas, celestial beings, and other scenes from the text illuminate the work throughout.²⁷⁴ The practice of copying *tōkyō* “pagoda sutras” dates to the Nara period, and while other Japanese *tōkyō* do exist, most are variations of the *Lotus Sutra*. This makes Hiraizumi's *Golden Light Sutra Hōtōkyō* distinct, as all other extant *Golden Light Sutra tōkyō* are of pre-9th century Chinese origin.²⁷⁵ Given that there are no other *Golden Light Sutra tōkyō* in Japan or even other contemporaneous copies in China, this suggests that the *Hōtōkyō* was likely modeled on earlier continental copies; further evidence of which can be seen in the *Hōtōkyō*'s use of Chinese conventions in the illuminations, such as the use of pinks and bright reds, and the blue-green hills which recall those of Dunhuang²⁷⁶ in China over typically aristocratic Japanese productions.²⁷⁷ Ultimately, the distinct sutra content and its unique Chinese influence indicates that even among other rare *tōkyō* Hiraizumi's *Hōtōkyō* is a “one-of-a-kind.”²⁷⁸

Hiraizumi's novel *Hōtōkyō* has been the subject of great scholarly interest, especially regarding its fascinating political implications. The *Golden Light Sutra* is often regarded as one of the most important religious texts in the Japanese state formation.

²⁷³ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 166.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁷⁶ Dunhuang, located in present-day Gansu Province in the People's Republic of China, was an important stop on the Silk Road, and was one of the earliest and most significant centers of Buddhist learning in Tang dynasty China.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 174-175. See Figure 17.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

While stressing the need for repentance and penance to accrue karmic merit, in Japan the text has often been connected to rulership; identifying a righteous and moral king who lives according to Buddhist precepts to serve as a model for earthly rulers. This imagery was central to the imperial foundation of Japan in the Nara period, and by choosing to create the *Hōtōkyō* based on the continental *Golden Light Sutra* rather than the courtly *Lotus Sutra*, this “one-of-a-kind” sutra may be viewed as Hidehira mapping the ideals of the pious, just, and righteous ruler onto himself. Thus, in much the same way the Nara emperors used the *Golden Light Sutra* to legitimize their right to rule, Hidehira sends a clear message that, as the *Chinjufu shōgun* with a birthright to the land, he and his house alone hold the ultimate mandate govern the north.²⁷⁹ While this bold statement clearly reinforces the family’s position of autonomous power over *Michinoku*, the ramifications this trade had on works of the “Hiraizumi style” could even be felt more subtly with yet even greater implications.

It is clear from votive sutras like the *Kiyohirakyō*, *Motohirakyō*, and *Hōtōkyō*, that continental goods and aesthetics influenced Hiraizumi’s distinct culture and society. These sutras, which are some of the best surviving examples of Hiraizumi’s unique artistic tradition, were heavily influenced by the continent. Utilizing Chinese forms within a uniquely Hiraizumi medium, they demonstrate the degree to which Chinese trade impacted Hiraizumi’s culture and allowed the family to create a distinct tradition unlike anywhere else in Japan. This great patronage and unique aesthetic made Hiraizumi

²⁷⁹ Asuka Sango, *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan* (Honolulu, H.I.: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015), 4-6.

a haven for artists leaving the overpopulated capital in hopes of finding work amid the city's flourishing arts and culture scene.²⁸⁰

Ultimately, the *karamono* trade in Hiraizumi led to the emergence of a distinct Hiraizumi aesthetic with two major implications. First, it reinforced notions of northern autonomy. Given that art and culture was so intertwined with politics and power, the creation of a particularly “Hiraizumi” style suggests the Ōshū Fujiwara achieved a degree of cultural autonomy from the Yamato hegemon and legitimized their autonomy through this legacy. Secondly, the creation of Hiraizumi's distinct aesthetic attracted large numbers of artists, architects, and craftsmen who left the capital for the north, re-defining culturally “peripheral” Hiraizumi as a “center” of art and culture in its own right.

Gold in East Asian Trade and Commerce

Of all the ways the Ōshū Fujiwara were involved in Chinese trade, the most profound, by far, was through the gold trade. Gold has long been central to Japan's international trade and commerce. When the Yamato state first began to coalesce, most exchanges were done with in-kind currencies. Taxes were paid in rice, silk, regional crafts, and produce, and were determined by a standardized price under the *kokahō* (沽價法) system.²⁸¹ During the *ritsuryō* reforms the state attempted to introduce a standard coin currency similar to that used in China.²⁸² However, coinage never really caught on in Japan, because although coins circulated around the capital, provincial taxes were still

²⁸⁰ Takahashi, Miura, and Irumada *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 83.

²⁸¹ Richard von Glahn, “The Ningbo-Hakata Merchant Network and the Reorientation of East Asian Maritime Trade, 1150–1350,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 74, no. 2 (2014), 256.

²⁸² Segal, *Coins, Trade, and the State*, 29.

paid with in-kind,²⁸³ leading to an uneven distribution of coinage and goods,²⁸⁴ and ultimately, by the mid-Heian era its usage had largely faded away.²⁸⁵

Although this system sufficed for Japan's domestic transactions, it was not well-suited for coin-based international trade. Therefore, a common currency was needed to facilitate exchanges between the two countries—a currency ultimately determined to be gold.²⁸⁶ Gold was the perfect currency for East Asian trade. Not only could it be traded as a valued commodity itself, but it was also used in both countries to determine the value of goods.²⁸⁷ In fact, gold was not just important in trade and in the *kokahō* system, but it also played a key role in Song China's economic transformations. During the Song dynasty, exponential population growth and growing consumerism led to the over-minting of coins and the need for a new currency. To meet the growing demand for cash, China began transitioning to paper currency, backing up its value with imported gold. This made Japanese gold particularly valuable, as it not only served as the *kokahō* standard in Japan, but also for new Song currencies as well, becoming such a prized commodity that its value even surpassed that of Song coins in foreign Chinese markets.²⁸⁸

While gold was by no means unique to Japan, the archipelago is rich in precious metals, and Japan became the primary supplier of this all-too-important resource. In fact, Japanese gold was so key to international commerce that Japan was globally renowned for the resource, and references to the “golden kingdom of Japan” spread throughout

²⁸³ Ross Bender, “Emperor, Aristocracy, and the Ritsuryō State,” in Friday, *Japan Emerging*, 112.

²⁸⁴ Segal, *Coins, Trade, and the State*, 32.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

Eurasia in the 13th and 14th centuries, due in large part to the diaries of Marco Polo.²⁸⁹

From 1271 to 1292, Polo traveled throughout Asia, spending much of this time as a guest in Kublai Khan's court. His accounts of "exotic" places were immensely popular and even served as a primary source of information on Asian societies for many Renaissance Europeans.²⁹⁰ While Polo describes a number of cultures and societies, one of the most vivid descriptions he offered was on Japan. Polo recalls:

They have gold in great abundance, because it is found there in measureless quantities. And I assure you that no one exports it from the island, because no trader, nor indeed anyone else, goes there from the mainland. That is how they come to possess so much of it—so much indeed that I can report to you in sober truth the veritable marvel concerning a certain palace of the ruler of the island. You may take it for a fact that he has a very large palace entirely roofed with fine gold. Just as we roof our houses and churches with lead, so this place is roofed with fine gold. And the value is almost beyond computation... When tidings of its riches were brought to the Great Khan—that is the same Kublai who now reigns—he declared his resolve to conquer the island.²⁹¹

While Polo's accounts must be taken lightly given that he never actually traveled to Japan and received all of his information from secondhand sources, the passage nevertheless indicates that Japan was known throughout East Asia to have immense reserves—so much so that Japan was imagined as the extravagant society presented here. Japanese gold ultimately proved so desirable that Yuan Mongols even attempted to invade twice in the 13th century to access these riches, further stressing the strategic importance of Japanese gold in East Asia's trade economy.

Given the significance of Japanese gold in East Asian trade, and the fact that that most of this gold was sourced from *Michinoku*, the Ōshū Fujiwara were therefore at the

²⁸⁹ Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 148.

²⁹⁰ Marco Polo and R.E. Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Penguin Classics, New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1992), 13-15.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

very core of this trade itself, with entire system depending on their cooperation.²⁹² Acquiring the gold used by aristocrats to fund their *karamono* acquisitions, the Ōshū Fujiwara held an extremely powerful position; one in which it was the court and state who relied upon their cooperation to source international goods, not the reverse. Even Fujiwara Yorinaga—the very same who denied the Ōshū Fujiwara access to his library—ultimately relied on the family to source the substantial twenty *ryō* of gold dust he used to pay Chinese merchants for new additions to his library.²⁹³ And it was not just Japan that depended on the family to fund this trade. Rather, given that the so-called Japanese “kingdom of gold” supplied the currency that facilitated exchanges throughout the region and even backed the China’s transition to paper money, the powerful influence of the Ōshū Fujiwara ultimately extended well-beyond the boundaries of the Hiraizumi and Japan and instead permeated deep into the societies of East Asia and beyond.

Conclusion

The Ōshū Fujiwara’s involvement in the *karamono* trade played a foundational role in furthering notions of their autonomy and ultimately calls for a re-examination of so-called “centers” and “peripheries” in premodern Japan. By importing vast quantities of novel *karamono* goods—which, like Song ceramics and texts, were valued as symbols of authority by Japan’s elite—the Ōshū Fujiwara demonstrated their power by possessing these symbolic goods, mapping elite power structures onto their polity to build their own autonomous elite culture.

²⁹² von Glahn, “The Ningbo-Hakata Merchant Network,” 257.

²⁹³ Smits, “China As Classic Text,” 188.

Moreover, the family even demonstrated they had the power to source their own *karamono* goods independently of aristocratic or state intermediaries, acquiring works like the Song Canon independently after valuable texts had been denied to them by the court. In addition to the political power Chinese trade brought the Ōshū Fujiwara, the family's involvement with this trade also helped create a distinct northern cultural tradition. Derived from continental influences, the "Hiraizumi style" found in the city's impressive votive sutras distinguished northern arts from the Heian hegemon and attracted artists from the capital, making the previously "peripheral" north a "center" of artistic production in its own right.

And finally, by supplying the gold used to fund the entire endeavor, the Ōshū Fujiwara held significant authority over Japanese elites, the state, and even international entities. It was the gold they sourced that satisfied the court's hunger for *karamono* wares, funded international trade throughout the region, and even backed the Song's monumental transition to paper money, thus making the Ōshū Fujiwara an indispensable part of the Sino-Japanese trade, and ultimately relocating the autonomous Hiraizumi polity from the "northern periphery" to the very "center" of East Asian trade and history.

CHAPTER V

THE NORTHERN TRADE

While scholarship has long privileged the importance of Hakata in Japan's premodern trade, Kyūshū was not the country's only international gateway. Nor was China its only trading partner. Instead, Japan's connections to the continent via Hokkaidō and the Sea of Okhotsk are arguably even more ancient, and people, goods, and ideas have traveled freely throughout the region from Neolithic times well into the late 19th century. This northern trade played a foundational, if often overlooked, role in Japan's international contact in the premodern era, and was ultimately key to securing Ōshū Fujiwara authority in *Michinoku*.

This chapter therefore refocuses our attention to the north and highlights the importance of this often-overlooked network in establishing Ōshū Fujiwara autonomy. It begins with an overview of the Sea of Okhotsk region, detailing its rich history, diverse peoples, and the cross-island intermediaries who facilitated its ancient contact. Then, it locates the Ōshū Fujiwara in this trade, describing how the family used their ancient Emishi connections to capitalize on this trade and transported goods between Kinai and Kantō and the northern world through their port at Tosaminato. Finally, this chapter looks at the implications of the northern trade on Hiraizumi's autonomy. Ultimately, as the sole authorities of this trade, the family achieved immense power and unprecedented autonomy over both trade and their polity, giving them great political leverage and power. Moreover, by engaging in this trade, the Ōshū Fujiwara embraced their North Asian heritage and created a cultural tradition that was distinct from the Kinai and Kantō "norm." And finally, in much the same way their control over Japan's gold exports

“centered” them within the narrative of global history, this trade ultimately forged the historical structures that defined Japan’s international contacts in the centuries to come, ultimately relocating them from the “periphery” of Heian society to the very core of the Northeast Asian historical narrative.

Ezo Connections

Although the *ritsuryō* state extended throughout much of the Japanese archipelago by the early Heian period, its authority grew increasingly weak the further one was from the capital. This was especially true in Tōhoku, where even after quelling the last Emishi rebellion in the 8th century, state control remained nominal and the Emishi’s Fushū descendants were still largely left to govern as their families had for generations. Despite the continued power of the Emishi’s heirs, however, significant cultural changes did occur, and by the Heian era the remaining Emishi had branched into two different cultural groups. In the south, the Fushū had largely adopted the language and customs of their Kinai and Kantō colonizers. Meanwhile, the Ezo of Hokkaidō and Honshū’s northern extreme still maintained their distinct language, culture, and society, developing into what archaeologists currently refer to as the Satsumon (擦文) culture.²⁹⁴

Regarded as the predecessor to the Ainu culture of Hokkaidō,²⁹⁵ the Satsumon culture (700-1200) was centered around the Tsugaru (津軽) Strait region²⁹⁶ and is thought to have grown from the final vestiges of the later *Jōmon* culture (340 BCE-700

²⁹⁴ Toshihiko Kikuchi, “Ainu Ties With Ancient Cultures of Northeast Asia,” in Fitzhugh, Dubreuil, and Arctic Studies Center, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, 76.

²⁹⁵ Fitzhugh, “Ainu Ethnicity: A History,” 18-19.

²⁹⁶ Particularly southern Hokkaidō and northern Aomori prefecture.

CE).²⁹⁷ While it is difficult to determine whether terms like “Ezo” and “Emishi” were cultural, ethnic, or political distinctions, the Satsumon were certainly considered as “Ezo barbarians” by the court. They spoke a different language, lived by different cultural norms, and actively resisted *ritsuryō* expansion—with many scholars arguing that the Satsumon emerged because of Emishi refugees fleeing north to escape the *ritsuryō*’s northern conquests.²⁹⁸

Developing on both sides of the Tsugaru Strait, the Satsumon culture maintained strong ties to Ezo people living both on Honshū and Hokkaidō.²⁹⁹ Evidence may be seen in historical references in the *Nihon Shoki*. When Abe no Ōmi led an expeditionary force in 659 against the Emishi of Akita, they sought assistance from the Ezo of Hokkaidō,³⁰⁰ who in solidarity, agreed to help and were ultimately rewarded with a banquet for their service.

Summer, 4th month. Abe no Omi went on an expedition against the Yemishi in command of a fleet of 180 ships. The Yemishi of two districts of Aita and Nushiro were struck with fear, and tendered their submission. Hereupon the ships were drawn into battle in the bay of Aita. A Yemishi of Aita by the name of Omuka came forward and made an oath, saying:—‘It is not the arrival of the Imperial forces that we slaves carry bows and arrows, but because it is our nature to live upon animal food... We will serve the Government with pure hearts.’ Omuka was accordingly granted the rank of upper Shō-otsu and local governors were established in the two districts of Nushiro and Tsugaru. Ultimately, the Yemishi of Watari no Shima were summoned together at the shore of Arima and a great feast provided them, after which they returned home.³⁰¹

Although this passage presents an unabashedly Yamato-centric version of events, it nevertheless illustrates two key features of northern life during Yamato expansion.

²⁹⁷ Brett Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800*, (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2001), 20.

²⁹⁸ Ushiro and Yamaura, “Prehistoric Hokkaidō,” 41.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Also referred to as *Watari-no-shima* (渡嶋).

³⁰¹ Aston, *Nihongi*, 1:252.

First, by mentioning Ezo and Emishi reliance on “animal food” in contrast to the rice agriculture that sustained Kinai and Kantō Japan, it shows how Japan’s northern peoples continued to live according to their own traditions outside the Kinai cultural hegemon, even in spite of their “subjugation.” Second, the passage also notes the strength of cross-strait Ezo relations. The speed and efficacy with which the Akita Emishi sent word to the Hokkaidō Ezo, who in turn were willing to assist them, reveals that Satsumon communication networks must have been particularly strong. And while scholars still debate as to whether or not there was indeed a shared sense of “Ezo” cultural identity, this passage nevertheless attests to the deep connections between the Satsumon Ezo of northern Honshū and Hokkaidō.

Locating Japan in North Asian Trade

While the imperial boundaries of “Japan” and *Ezochi* (蝦夷地)—the “land of the Ezo”—were ill-defined, Hokkaidō has long been seen as the geographical boundary that, even if vaguely, distinguished Japan from other “foreign” lands.³⁰² Separated from Honshū by the 20-kilometer Tsugaru Strait, Hokkaidō was a cultural transition zone between the Japanese-influenced Satsumon in the south and the North Asian Okhotsk of the north.³⁰³ Like the Satsumon, which emerged from Emishi and Ezo migrants fleeing imperial conquest, the Okhotsk were initially Manchurian refugees who, while keeping close ties to the continent, settled in the Sea of Okhotsk region to escape from Sui and Tang expansion.³⁰⁴ While the Okhotsk and Satsumon initially represented two distinct

³⁰² Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 26.

³⁰³ Kikuchi, “Ainu Ties,” 47.

³⁰⁴ Ushiro and Yamaura, “Prehistoric Hokkaidō,” 43.

cultures, by the 13th century the two had largely merged into the Ainu culture that would dominate Hokkaidō, Sakhalin, and the Kurils into the 20th century.³⁰⁵

Forty-two kilometers northwest of Hokkaidō is the island of Sakhalin, which served as the northern gateway to the continent.³⁰⁶ Historically settled by the Ainu, Orokh, and Nivkh people,³⁰⁷ Sakhalin is only 19 kilometers from the Amur River on the continent, and its proximity to both Hokkaidō, and the Amur River made it a key transit hub that connected Japan to Manchuria and the trans-Baikal region of inner Asia.³⁰⁸ Northeast of Hokkaidō lay the nearby Kuril archipelago; a chain of over thirty-six islands which spans some 1,200 kilometers between Hokkaidō and Kamchatka.³⁰⁹ While lacking the rich woodlands of nearby Sakhalin and Hokkaidō, the Kurils are known for their marine resources, like seaweed, fish, and sealskins.³¹⁰

The Sea of Okhotsk region has been the bedrock of Japanese contact for millennia.³¹¹ In fact, Japan was likely first settled by North Asian migrants who arrived after crossing through Sakhalin and Hokkaidō some 20,000 years ago, and strong similarities between *Jōmon* and paleolithic settlements and dwellings in Russia attest to this long history of contact.³¹² The Sea of Okhotsk was also key in facilitating trade between the Ezo of Japan and the continent. Silver remains dating to *Epi-Jōmon* Hokkaidō (350 BCE-700 CE) are thought to have traveled to Japan from ancient mines

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 45

³⁰⁶ Kikuchi, "Ainu Ties," 47.

³⁰⁷ Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 25.

³⁰⁸ Kikuchi, "Ainu Ties," 47.

³⁰⁹ Mikhail Vysokov, *A Brief History of Sakhalin and the Kurils* (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia: Sakhalin Book Publishing House LIK, 1996), 8.

³¹⁰ Fitzhugh, "Ainu Ethnicity: A History," 10-11.

³¹¹ Shiro Sasaki, "Trading Brokers and Partners with China, Russia, and Japan," in Fitzhugh, Dubreuil, and Arctic Studies Center, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, 86.

³¹² Ono, "Ainu Homelands," 32.

near the Chinese-Mongolian border via the Amur River and Sakhalin. Other objects, like Chinese beads, coins, and copper bells dating from the 6th through 13th centuries are also thought to have traveled to Hokkaidō through Sakhalin and the Sea of Okhotsk.³¹³

In addition to these archaeological discoveries, Ezo-continental contacts can even be found in Chinese and Japanese historical sources as well. Documents from the Tang (618-907) and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties mention tribute paid by Nivkh, Ainu, and Kamchatkan traders to the Korean kingdom of Parhae (698-926), while 13th century Yuan documents record the Mongol's unsuccessful attempts to conquer Sakhalin and control these networks themselves.³¹⁴ This trade even continued to flourish well into the early modern era, when Ainu traders ferried manufactured goods and natural resources between China, Japan, and Russian through the *Santan* network that flourished from the 17th to 19th centuries.³¹⁵ The Sea of Okhotsk region has long been a powerful and dynamic center of international exchange, and it is within this northern world that the Ōshū Fujiwara took root and blossomed during the “Hiraizumi Century.”

Tosaminato: The Ōshū Fujiwara's Northern Port

Although primarily based in Kitakami Valley, the Ōshū Fujiwara were deeply invested in the northern Satsumon-Ezo lands of *Michinoku*. References in the *Azuma kagami*, for example, describe Hidehira's territory as extending all the way from the Shirakawa Barrier in the south to Sotogahama in the north, and many scholars believe that the family actively expanded their influence in the Ezo north by constructing new

³¹³ Vysokov, *A Brief History of Sakhalin and the Kurils*, 12-14.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Sasaki, “Trading Brokers,” 86.

settlements and religious sites, like the Yakushi-dō *zushi* shrine (厨子) at Engaku-ji temple,³¹⁶ which is attributed to Motohira.³¹⁷ Of all the northern settlements and institutions governed by the Ōshū Fujiwara, however, their international port at Tosaminato was undoubtedly the most key to their autonomy and control.³¹⁸

Located on a channel that connects Lake Jūsan³¹⁹ to the Sea of Japan, Tosaminato has been the site of dynamic international contact for thousands of years. However, it was the Ōshū Fujiwara who first developed its port facilities, and it is due to their efforts that Tosaminato became the major trading hub that it was in the medieval period.³²⁰ Linked to Hiraizumi by the *Ōshū Kaidō* road, Tosaminato connected *Michinoku* to both the northern Ezo world and Japan's southern cities,³²¹ and proved such a valuable asset to the family that the Ōshū Fujiwara governed it directly, with Hidehira promoting his brother Hidehisa to oversee the port and international trade on his behalf.³²²

Although official records of 12th century Tosaminato are scarce, we may get a sense of what the port was like by looking at the family's medieval successors: the Andō (安藤). After defeating the Ōshū Fujiwara in 1189, Minamoto Yoritomo entrusted the Andō family with Tosaminato.³²³ The Andō, who were retainers of Yoritomo and Kamakura's Hōjō *shōguns* (将軍), were largely left alone to oversee trade with the north,

³¹⁶ In present-day Fukaura, Aomori Prefecture.

³¹⁷ Miyazaki Michio, 宮崎道生, *Aomori ken no rekishi*, 青森県の歴史[A History of Aomori Prefecture], Prefectural History Series Vol. 2, 県史シリーズ2 [Kenshi shīrizu 2], (Tokyo, Japan: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1970), 52-53.

³¹⁸ For a map of Tosaminato and the Ōshū Fujiwara's northern trade, see Figure 18 and Figure 19.

³¹⁹ While currently referred to as Lake Jūsan (*Jūsanko* in Japanese), the *kanji* used to write *Jūsan* (十三) can also be pronounced *Tosa*. Therefore both *Jūsanko* and *Tosako* refer to the same lake in Goshogawara, Aomori Prefecture.

³²⁰ Sasaki, "Trading Brokers," 84.

³²¹ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 221.

³²² Miyazaki, *Aomori ken no rekishi*, 52-53.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

from which they, like their predecessors, derived great power and wealth—evidence of which may be seen in medieval Tosaminato’s large volume of expensive white porcelains, matched only in quantity by the Kamakura capital itself.³²⁴

Fortified by walls and moats, Andō Tosaminato was a major settlement that even boasted its own commercial and residential districts. It was located on the east side of a channel connecting Lake Jūsan to the Sea of Japan, while the port’s docks were on the western bank of the lake.³²⁵ Medieval Tosaminato served as a key link between the Ainu of the north and the Japanese further south, and records like the 13th century *Nochikagami* (『後鑑』) recall how the Andō transported northern luxuries—like horses, birds, sea otter pelts, and kombu kelp—from Hokkaidō and the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the Ashikaga *shōguns* in the southern capital.³²⁶

Although much of what we know of Tosaminato comes from Andō records and excavations of the medieval site, it was the Ōshū Fujiwara who laid the groundwork for Tosaminato to become the great port it was. In fact, many believe that even in the early medieval period ships would dock at the port in substantial numbers, supplying the family with northern resources, Heian wares, and Manchurian luxuries. The Ōshū Fujiwara even maintained a strong presence at the port, as not only did Hidehira monitor things through his brother Hidehisa (秀栄), but even held a presence in the area well into the early modern era through their descendants, as Tsugaru Tamenobu (津軽為信)—the founder of the Edo era (1603-1867) Tsugaru clan—claimed descent from Hidehisa

³²⁴ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 221.

³²⁵ “Tosaminatoiseki,” 十三湊遺跡 [Tosaminato Archaeological Site], in *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Historical Place Names*, March, 2006. Accessed JapanKnowledge, March 23, 2021. <https://japanknowledge-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/lib/en/display/?lid=30020020000197600>.

³²⁶ Miyazaki, *Aomori ken no rekishi*, 114. For this specific reference, see *Nochikagami*, Ōei 30, 4th month.

himself.³²⁷ Thus, while few records explicitly refer to the Ōshū Fujiwara at Tosaminato, given the legacy they left behind, it is clear the port was particularly important to the family and their Hiraizumi polity.

The Ōshū Fujiwara's Northern Exports

Before looking at the impact this northern trade had on the Ōshū Fujiwara's autonomy, it is important to understand the specific flow of goods that occurred between the north and the south. Most of the goods the Ōshū Fujiwara sent north were manufactured commodities, and while certain prestige goods, like the late-Heian mirrors and Song coins found at Kushiro in Hokkaidō were undoubtedly part of this trade, the vast majority of northern exports were likely bulk goods like metal tools and ceramics.³²⁸ Excavations of Satsumon and early Ainu settlements on Hokkaidō have unearthed numerous metal objects, including iron pots, harpoon tips, sickles, hoes, and personal ornaments. Judging by the volume of metal discoveries and the fact that the Satsumon did not produce metal goods of their own, it is likely that these tools and objects were a major Ōshū Fujiwara export to the Ezo of Hokkaidō and further north.

In addition to metal goods, ceramics also made up a significant part of this trade. Many Japanese *Sueki* (須恵器) and *Suzuyaki* (珠洲焼) wares have been found at these settlements and likely arrived to Hokkaidō after being shipped through Tosaminato from ports on the Sea of Japan in present-day Ishikawa Prefecture.³²⁹ These ceramics are quite significant because the link the Ōshū Fujiwara directly to trade with Hokkaidō. In his

³²⁷ Ibid., 53

³²⁸ Hudson, "Ainu Ethnogenesis," 75.

³²⁹ Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 22.

research on medieval trade along the Sea of Japan, Amino Yoshihiko has noted the large presence of 12th century Japanese and Chinese ceramics in the north. *Suzu* stoneware from Hokuriku,³³⁰ for example, has been found at both Tosaminato and the Yoichi and Kaminokuni Satsumon sites in western Hokkaidō. Given that the same wares—all dating to the height of the Hiraizumi polity—have been found at Tosaminato and at Satsumon-Ezo sites in Hokkaidō, it is therefore likely they were directly exported to the north by the Ōshū Fujiwara from Tosaminato, indicating the close control the family had over this trade.³³¹

Finally, in addition to these ceramics, the magnitude of the Ōshū Fujiwara's involvement can be seen in how *Michinoku*-produced goods influenced traditional Satsumon crafts. Mark Hudson, for example, notes similarities between the distinctly eastern interior-lugged iron pots excavated from Hiraizumi and contemporaneous Satsumon pottery in Aomori and Hokkaidō.³³² Though the iron pots themselves have yet to be found on Hokkaidō, Hudson notes how production sites in Hokkaidō replicated *Michinoku's* interior-lugged styles in their ceramic works.³³³ Furthermore, Hudson also found that production sites in Aomori produced both iron pots and their Satsumon ceramic facsimiles. The fact that production sites in *Michinoku* manufactured wares popular in both Hiraizumi and in Hokkaidō clearly demonstrates the Ōshū Fujiwara played a key role in exporting goods to the north.³³⁴

³³⁰ Ishikawa, Fukui, Toyama, and Niigata Prefectures.

³³¹ Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 59.

³³² Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 220.

³³³ Hudson, "Ainu Ethnogenesis," 75.

³³⁴ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 214.

Japan's Northern Imports

In addition to exporting goods to the north, the Ōshū Fujiwara were also key in supplying Kinai and Kantō buyers with all manner of northern goods. Unfortunately, few records and archaeological artifacts connecting the family to this trade have been uncovered, making it difficult to corroborate the specific objects they sent south. Nevertheless, important information can be gleaned by looking in to the late medieval and early modern *Santan* trade (山丹貿易). The *Santan* trade—which connected Japan, China, and Russia through Ainu intermediaries—built upon the foundations established by the Ōshū Fujiwara. And like the 12th century Sea of Okhotsk trade, the *Santan* network exchanged Chinese and Japanese manufactured goods for highly sought-after northern resources. Because the physical and geographic environment remained stable through time, the northern items supplied by the Ōshū Fujiwara were surely the same as those exported to the Japanese by the Ainu in the *Santan* network that flourished until the mid-19th century.

Some of the most important commodities sent south from Tosaminato were marine goods and consumables. Although Japan already had ample access to seafood and other marine goods, Hokkaidō and the Sea of Okhotsk offered new and exotic products which would not have been accessible to most Japanese. Salmon and *kombu* kelp (昆布), for example, are bountiful in Hokkaidō's cold waters, and were often gathered by the Ainu to be processed, dried, and sold to Japanese traders. Rich in nutrients, they were extremely popular with people living throughout Japan, and the remains of these consumables, like the Hokkaidō salmon and cod bones found at the medieval Kusado

Sengen site³³⁵ attest to the predominance of marine products in this trade and the far-reaching influence of the Ōshū Fujiwara's trade networks.³³⁶

In addition to marine foods like *kombu* and salmon, products from the north's dense Taiga forests also played an key role in providing the south with consumables. During the *Santan* trade, the Ainu were well-known for exporting medicinal products like bear gallbladders, *oculi cancri* (the gastrolith of the *Cambrioedes japonicus* crayfish), and *Cynachum caudatum Maxim*, a climbing vine known for its medicinal properties in traditional Chinese medicine.³³⁷ One of the most significant medicinal products of the *Santan* trade was *eburiko* (エブリコ)—a tree fungus known as *Fomitopsis officinalis* which was used to fight fever, infection, and menstrual pain.³³⁸ *Eburiko* was so coveted that 17th-century records recall Japanese sailors traveling as far as northern Sakhalin just to retrieve it.³³⁹ Although these are just but a few of the many consumable products that were exported from the north during the *Santan* trade, it nevertheless is likely that these were some of the same products Ōshū Fujiwara exported to the south in the 12th century.

While exotic consumables were a key import from the north, they were not the only resource to pass through the Ōshū Fujiwara's ports. In fact, northern lords like the Ōshū Fujiwara, Andō, and Matsumae were well-known for supplying Kinai and Kantō elites with luxurious animal products—the most notable of which were furs. Hunting, tanning, and leatherworking have long been staple industries in the north, and these products likely made up another key import from the north.³⁴⁰ Kuril sealskins and sea

³³⁵ In present-day Hiroshima Prefecture. See: *Ibid.*, 223.

³³⁶ Isao Kikuchi, "Early Ainu Contacts," 77.

³³⁷ Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 196.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

³⁴⁰ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 228-229.

otter pelts, which could only be found in the Sea of Okhotsk region, were especially important. These skins highly regarded for their rarity and fine quality, and it is likely that animal products such as these made up a significant portion of Ōshū Fujiwara's exports to Kinai and Kantō as well.³⁴¹

In addition to furs and consumables, birds and plumage made up another key trade commodity. Of particular note was the Steller's sea eagle which was native to the Sea of Okhotsk's coasts and marshes. Eagle feathers were both an elite luxury and a practical good, used as arrow fletching for *bushi* (武士) warriors.³⁴² As coveted as the feathers were, it was the birds themselves that were most prized. Falconry, known as *takagari* (鷹狩), was extremely popular among Heian elites.³⁴³ In fact, despite Buddhism's strict prohibition on hunting, many aristocrats and emperors participated, and the sport became an important symbol of status and elite culture.³⁴⁴ While hawks and falcons were procured from all over Japan, many are thought to have come from *Michinoku* and the north.³⁴⁵ As the purveyors of these prestigious birds, families like the Ōshū Fujiwara and Andō achieved great distinction from southern elites, furthering their reputation in society.³⁴⁶ Ōshū Fujiwara's contacts with the Satsumon-Ezo people of the Sea of Okhotsk were ultimately a key part of their success. In fact, this northern trade was so lucrative that many believe trade goods, in addition to their gold exports, made up a large portion of the taxes and dues they sent to the capital.³⁴⁷ Records from the mid-12th

³⁴¹ Fitzhugh, "Ainu Ethnicity: A History," 10.

³⁴² Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 76.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁴⁴ Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, 153.

³⁴⁵ Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 106-107.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁴⁷ Koyama, "East and West in the Late Classical Age," 388.

century for example, reveal Motohira paid much of his tribute to Fujiwara Yorinaga in northern goods like eagle feathers and seal skins, indicating just how significant northern trade was for the family.³⁴⁸

One final topic of note here is that Tosaminato did more than just facilitate trade between Hokkaidō and other Sea of Japan ports. Rather, it also enabled the Ōshū Fujiwara to bypass Hakata altogether and engage in direct continental trade of their own accord, and archaeological remains of Song coins and *Qingbai* ceramics at Tosaminato and the nearby Danrinji temple, support this idea. Further evidence can also be found in early references to Chinese silk brocade. While Manchurian brocade would ultimately become a major *Santan* commodity, it was first mentioned in 12th century documents referring to “Ezo brocade” from Hidehira-ruled *Michinoku*. These sources likely refer to Manchurian brocades imported from the Liao dynasty (916-1125),³⁴⁹ and were either brought directly to Tosaminato from China or were possibly sent through the Amur-Sakhalin-Hokkaidō network.³⁵⁰ Whatever the case, these references and archaeological recoveries attest to the fact that the Ōshū Fujiwara clearly engaged in direct trade with continent, and it would not have been uncommon to see Chinese, Korean, or Manchurian vessels all docked at Tosaminato’s port.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 219.

³⁴⁹ Hudson, “Ainu Ethnogenesis,” 79.

³⁵⁰ Ono, “Ainu Homelands,” 45.

³⁵¹ Miyazaki Michio, *Aomori ken no rekishi*, 53.

Trade as a Source of Power

Today, much of what we know of Japan's medieval international interactions come from studies of Japan's engagements with China through Hakata. While Hakata was indeed a key space of international commerce and exchange, over-emphasis on its place as the only official international trade port has led to skewed, even inaccurate, perceptions of global contact and power centers in pre-modern Japan. While Hakata may have facilitated Japan's early connections to China and the Maritime Silk Road, it was Hiraizumi and Tosaminato that linked Japan to the northern world of Hokkaidō, Kamchatka, and Manchuria, and although both ports served as gateways to markets beyond Japan, the power dynamics of each differed greatly.

As Japan's only officially-sanctioned international port, Hakata was especially important to those seeking influence and power amid the changing dynamics of the early medieval Japan. Despite the government's attempt to keep control over its international trade, by the late Heian era private actors like aristocrats, monks, and merchants— together with the lax attitudes of Dazaifu authorities—completely reshaped the nature of Hakata trade.³⁵² Chinese merchants, often well-connected to the city's religious institutions and estate owners, held significant influence in Hakata's international trade. Xie Guoming (謝国明), a 13th century merchant from Hangzhou, was one such case. Xie was well-connected to temples in both Japan and China, like Jōtenji in Hakata and Wanshousi in Hangzhou, and he also curried favor with local elites. This gave him great influence over trade and allowed him to accrue significant power in the city, becoming the steward of the Oronoshima estate and even accrue substantial landholdings of his

³⁵² Batten, "An Open and Shut Case," 323-324.

own.³⁵³ The privileged position Xie achieved from his involvement in trade made him a powerful figure in Hakata's politics and society,³⁵⁴ so much so that he even conducted his own independent trade with China, best seen in his collaboration with Enni Ben'en (円爾弁円) (1202-1280), the head abbot of Jōtenji, in sending over a thousand logs to Hangzhou to rebuild Wanshousi in 1242.³⁵⁵

Chinese merchants were not the only ones to establish themselves in Hakata's international trading sphere. Powerful families also gained great influence in the city. The Taira, for instance, played a particularly formative role in shaping the city and international trade in Japan overall. Taira Kiyomori (1118-1181) was especially interested in growing his powerbase, and seeing trade with Song China as a lucrative economic and political prospect, he set his eyes on Hakata and its profitable facilities and networks. After years of maneuvering and building upon the reputation established by his father, Tadamori, Kiyomori was eventually appointed to the post of *Dazai Shōnai* (太宰庄内) and served as an official at Dazaifu, where he solidified his grip on the city by patronizing key religious institutions and funded a new port facility called the *Sode no Minato* (袖の湊) to secure his position of power within the city and Chinese international trade.³⁵⁶

Yet, for as influential as the Taira and Chinese merchants were in the late 1100s, it is inaccurate to assume the state had lost control over Hakata's trade. In fact, even into

³⁵³ von Glahn, "The Ningbo-Hakata Merchant Network," 275-276.

³⁵⁴ Andrew Cobbing, "The Hakata Merchant's World," 67-68.

³⁵⁵ von Glahn, "The Ningbo-Hakata Merchant Network," 275. See also: Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 10-12.

³⁵⁶ Andrew Cobbing, *Kyūshū: Gateway to Japan, A Concise History* (Folkestone, Kent, U.K.: Global Oriental, 2009), 99.

the medieval age, state authorities still maintained an official presence and kept detailed records of international visitors who arrived to Japan. In his article “An Open and Shut Case? Thoughts on Late Heian Foreign Trade,” Bruce Batten suggests that although Dazaifu’s oversight had become increasingly lax towards by the late Heian era, state authorities still held some measure of control.³⁵⁷ In one 1085 episode from the *Chōya gunsai* (朝野群載)—a compilation of official records from the 12th century—two Chinese merchants petitioned for an extended stay, which, after reviewing the case, Japanese officials denied, expelling the pair back to China.

Concerning the arrival of merchant guests Sun Zhong and Lin Gao, also reported by Dazaifu:

The same lords said, “we have previously reached a decision on the arrival of merchant guests. In particular, this Sun Zhong and company have used the sailing [winds] as an excuse [for not returning home]. Why should the wishes of our court fail to be carried out for foreign guests? Send an order to Dazaifu that they should be deported... The failure of merchants to observe propriety is the fault of Dazaifu officials for not providing [adequate] surveillance. Promptly issue an order for them to be rebuked.”

2nd year of Ōtoku [1085], 10th month 29th day.³⁵⁸

While it is undeniable that private actors increasingly held sway in Hakata’s trade, official oversight did not completely erode, as evidenced by their rebuke of Dazaifu officials and the expulsion of the Chinese merchants mentioned above.³⁵⁹ However, in the process of arguing the government had not lost total control of international trade at Hakata, Batten presents an extremely complex picture of the city; one where multiple actors—like bureaucrats, port authorities, aristocrats, monks, and merchants—all held

³⁵⁷ Batten, “An Open and Shut Case,” 314-315.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 317.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 324.

varying degrees of influence over what, and who, entered the port. This suggests power was incredibly fragmented among Hakata's numerous stakeholders, with little clarity as to who really held control over the city's trade.

While power in Hakata's trade was diffuse and fragmented, the situation in the north was markedly different. Though the northern trade had many stakeholders of its own—such as the Ōshū Fujiwara, their Satsumon suppliers, and their elite consumer base—this trade was largely left to the discretion of the Ōshū Fujiwara alone. While few records discuss Tosaminato under Ōshū Fujiwara authority, there is little evidence to suggest any state presence in the area. Nor is there any indication Tosaminato was plagued by the same intense competition for influence like at Hakata. Rather, because Heian society viewed *Michinoku* as a “northern periphery,” the networks of trade that the Ōshū Fujiwara capitalized on were largely overlooked and allowed the family to conduct business with little-to-no interruption from outside actors.

As the sole purveyors of northern resources and treasures, the Ōshū Fujiwara dominated a particularly lucrative market and supplemented their already substantial income with immense profits from trade.³⁶⁰ Yet, what truly distinguished the family from their contemporaries was the degree to which they controlled this trade. Unlike Hakata, Tosaminato was controlled by a single authority who directly oversaw all the port's activities, allowing them to achieve unprecedented power in the process. In fact, the family's influence was so great, that even their Andō successors tried to replicate what they had achieved, building their own semi-autonomous territory at Tosaminato modeled

³⁶⁰ Kikuchi, “Early Ainu Contacts,” 76.

on Hiraizumi polity, and even styling themselves as the “*Shōgun of Hinomoto*”³⁶¹ to state of their dominance in the north.³⁶² Ultimately, Heian’s neglect of the “northern periphery” benefitted Ōshū Fujiwara, enabling them to control international trade to a degree unmatched by Hakata officials, Chinese merchants, and even the Taira. Their ability to conduct unchecked trade at Tosaminato clearly indicates the autonomy with which they operated—one so great that it was emulated by other ambitious families throughout history.

Constructing a Northern Identity

In addition to their political autonomy, another consequence of this trade was how it further cemented the Ōshū Fujiwara’s cultural distinctiveness. Though their ethnic origins remain contested, the family’s Emishi heritage undoubtedly played an important part in their ability to conduct trade with the north. Drawing upon their ancestors’ historic connections to the “northern world” allowed the Ōshū Fujiwara to access the ancient Tsugaru-Hokkaidō Ezo networks to acquire more goods and expand into new markets.³⁶³ In fact, legitimizing their authority through their heritage was so fundamental to their success that it was copied by other northern families after their demise. For over eight centuries, Tosaminato’s rulers—be they Ōshū Fujiwara, Andō, and Tsugaru—all

³⁶¹ While the exact meaning of *Hinomoto* (日の本) remains unclear, references to *Hinomoto* in the 1356 Suwa Shrine Scroll (*Suwa Daimyōjin E-kotoba*) connecting it to other locales in Tōhoku and Hokkaidō—like Karako and Watari-tō—has led some to speculate it may refer to southeastern Hokkaidō. For more information see Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 23-24.

³⁶² Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 26.

³⁶³ Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*, 116.

descended from the Fushū Abe and used their lineage to justify their right control trade with Hokkaidō and the north.³⁶⁴

Utilizing their Fushū heritage for the sake of trade was key to building the Ōshū Fujiwara's distinct cultural identity. By emphasizing this heritage and drawing themselves closer to the "northern world," the Ōshū Fujiwara stated their cultural autonomy from the court. One crucial example of this can be found in their familial burial traditions. Choosing to be mummified and interred on the Konjiki-dō's central dais, the Ōshū Fujiwara remain an outlier among Japanese lords, who were most typically cremated according to Buddhist customs. After the remains of the Ōshū Fujiwara were exhumed for analysis in the 1950s, archaeologists made some intriguing discoveries. The three lords were all surrounded by numerous treasures, including gold, rosaries and swords. Of particular note was Motohira, who appeared to be dressed in unusual clothing and was adorned with decorative antler carvings. Upon further analysis, researchers found these objects closely resembled Ainu crafts, like traditional Ainu jacket ware, and antlers decorated with common Ainu motifs.³⁶⁵

This was a monumental, if puzzling, discovery. While scholars continue to debate the significance of the Ōshū Fujiwara's unusual mummification, some suggest this was a way for the family to distinguish themselves culturally from the Yamato cultural norm and honor the distinct traditions of their Emishi and Fushū forefathers. While no other

³⁶⁴ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 231. The Ōshū Fujiwara, the Andō, and the Tsugaru all claimed descent from the Abe. Fujiwara Kiyohira was the grandson of Abe Yoritoki by way of his daughter, while the Tsugaru family claimed to be descendants of Fujiwara Hidehisa, the grandson of Kiyohira himself. The Andō, meanwhile, claimed to be descendants of Abe Yoritoki's son Sadatō. While Andō and Tsugaru genealogies do become murky, it nevertheless stands that these three families claimed descent from the Abe to legitimize their right to trade with the Ezo/Ainu inhabitants of Hokkaidō and the north. For more information, see: Miyazaki, *Aomori ken no rekishi*, pg. 53 and 78.

³⁶⁵ Yiengpruksawan, Hiraizumi, 132.

contemporaneous mummies have been found in Japan or Hokkaidō, early 19th century travelers to Sakhalin did note similar mummification practices among revered Ainu chiefs, leading many to speculate the family's choice to be mummified was a way to emulate the ancient cultural practices of ancient Ezo peoples.³⁶⁶ While academia has yet to reach a consensus on the anomaly of the Chūsonji mummies, certain scholars have strongly advocated for the case of a northern connection.

If there is indeed a northern connection in the burial practices between the Ōshū Fujiwara and other northern peoples, then it is quite possible this method of interment was meant to stand as a statement of the family's cultural autonomy from Heian's Yamato cultural norm. While the Ōshū Fujiwara largely secured their position by working within Heian systems and structures, they were also no strangers to defying the cultural and social norms of the capital. Motohira, for example, not only openly challenged the tax increases proposed by Fujiwara Yorinaga as mentioned in Chapter Two,³⁶⁷ but he even stubbornly refused to surrender Mōtsūji's Yakushi statue after it was personally requested by retired Emperor Toba; an act which was considered a major affront and was highly criticized by the court.³⁶⁸

Hidehira was also known to defy cultural norms, if more subtly. Like his father and grandfather who built Chūsonji and Mōtsūji, Hidehira constructed the Muryōkōin temple to stand as a testament to his legacy. While nothing remains of the original temple today, the main hall was reputedly decorated with vivid scenes of hunting warriors.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 132-133.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 95.

³⁶⁸ Fukuyama *Heian Temples*, 115-116.

³⁶⁹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 111.

This would have been extremely unusual, if not abhorrent, to depict in a temple given Buddhism's prohibition on meat eating and hunting, thus making scenes like this particular to Muryōkōin alone.³⁷⁰ While scholars still debate the symbolism behind such seemingly out-of-place scenes, Mimi Yiengpruksawan suggests they may have been a way for Hidehira to express his family's distinct heritage and aesthetics. Hunting was a signature feature of Emishi and Ezo culture, and by expressing this in one of Hiraizumi's most esteemed institutions, Hidehira may have been boldly embracing his family's distinct identity and expressing their connections to the northern world.³⁷¹

If the Ōshū Fujiwara did actively celebrate their distinct Yamato-Emishi cultural identity, then it is quite possible the connections they made with northern cultures through this trade further developed Hiraizumi's distinct cultural traditions and practices. Muryōkōin's hunting motifs could be read as a nod to the family's heritage and the predominance of hunting in northern society, while Motohira's garments and carvings indicate both the desire to express his Emishi heritage and a direct connection to the north, ultimately suggesting this trade—much like *karamono*'s influence on Hiraizumi's artistic productions—impacted the development of Hiraizumi's unique culture and art.

Northern Trade and the Emerging Ainu

Finally, just like their role in China's gold trade, the Ōshū Fujiwara's involvement with the north once again relocates the family from the “periphery” of Japan to the very center of international contact and the region's larger historical developments. Although

³⁷⁰ Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, 153.

³⁷¹ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 111.

viewed as living in the peripheral “land beyond roads,” the Ōshū Fujiwara actually positioned themselves directly at the center of the ancient Japanese and North Asian cultural spheres, enabling them to secure ties to both Heian and the northern world. In the south, Kinai elites and Kantō *bushi* relied on the family to source important goods—like eagle feathers, sealskins, sea otter pelts, Mutsu gold, and horses—that would otherwise have been impossible to procure. The Satsumon-Ezo and early Ainu communities of the north, meanwhile, also depended on the family for rice, iron jars, ceramics, and other manufactured goods.³⁷²

While both the Yamato Japanese of the south and the Satsumon-Ezo of the north relied on the family for important commodities, it is the latter that truly demonstrates the importance of the family in larger processes of history. In his article “Ainu Ethnogenesis and the Northern Fujiwara,” Mark Hudson credits the Ōshū Fujiwara as the main catalyst for the ethnogenesis of the Ainu. According to scholars, the Ainu culture is thought to have emerged around the late 12th century due to two key factors: the merger of the Okhotsk and Satsumon cultures, and increased trade with Japan.³⁷³ While cross-strait trade and contact had continued for millennia, Hudson argues that it was the increased intensity and the volume of goods passing from the Ōshū Fujiwara to the north that developed the “classical” Ainu culture.³⁷⁴

During the Satsumon-Ainu transition which occurred at the same time as the “Hiraizumi Century,” significant cultural changes took place in the north. Late *Jōmon*

³⁷² Richard Siddle, “Ainu History: An Overview,” in Fitzhugh, Dubreuil, and Arctic Studies Center, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, 69.

³⁷³ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 231.

³⁷⁴ Hudson, “Ainu Ethnogenesis,” 77.

and Satsumon pit-houses were replaced by surface dwellings similar to later Ainu *chise* houses. Meanwhile, from the 12th century on, the economy of the north islands became more reliant on trade than ever before;³⁷⁵ evidence of which can be seen in the decline of Satsumon ceramics and the marked rise of imported Japanese lacquerwares, iron jars, and Chinese goods.³⁷⁶ Trade became a major feature of Ainu culture itself, and by the late medieval period coastal Ainu communities were explicitly dependent on trade; exchanging furs and natural resources from the interior for manufactured Chinese and Japanese goods.³⁷⁷ In fact, trade was so key to Ainu society that certain trade goods—like lacquer, Japanese swords, and *tamasay* necklaces made from Chinese glass beads—were endowed with spiritual significance and venerated as treasures known as *ikor*.

According to Hudson, distinguishing practices like *ikor* worship and the Ainu trade economy were key to Ainu ethnogenesis itself, and occurred as a direct response to increasing trade with Japan through the Ōshū Fujiwara.³⁷⁸ Given that “classical” Ainu culture first emerged at the height of the 12th century Hiraizumi polity and that the Ainu’s traditional culture and society depended on trade popularized by the Ōshū Fujiwara, it is clear that the Ōshū Fujiwara were, as Hudson suggests, instrumental to Ainu ethnogenesis, thus placing them as a central factor in the birth of the Ainu culture—a culture and people which still exist to this very day.

Not only were the Ōshū Fujiwara key to the very ethnogenesis of the Ainu themselves, but it should also be acknowledged that they laid the groundwork for the

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 73.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 75.

³⁷⁷ David Howell, “The Ainu in the Early Modern Japanese State,” in Fitzhugh, Dubreuil, and Arctic Studies Center, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, 98.

³⁷⁸ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 214.

later *Santan* network that profoundly affected all of Northeast Asia. During the *Santan* trade, Ainu traders exported furs, feathers, dried salmon, *kombu*, and other marine and animal products to Japan through Matsumae middlemen, imported lacquer, ceramics, rice and sake from Japan, and silk brocade, glass beads, textiles, Chinese crafts in return.³⁷⁹ Qing brocade, which was renowned for its high-quality silk and skilled design, was highly coveted by Ainu traders and Matsumae importers alike, and today these brocades regarded by scholars as one of the most important of all *Santan* commodities. Despite the importance of these brocades in the Edo-era, their origins actually date to the Heian era, as the earliest mention comes from 1143 diary references to “Ezo brocade,” suggesting they were first brought to Japan from Liao Manchuria by the Ōshū Fujiwara and later transported south through Tosaminato.³⁸⁰ While brocade is but one of the many important goods that were traded for in the *Santan* trade, its first mention in 1143—during the height of the Hiraizumi polity—is indicative that, much like the *Santan* trade itself, the items and patterns of trade which would define the region’s history for centuries owe much to the original trade networks formally monopolized by the Ōshū Fujiwara during the “Hiraizumi Century.

Conclusion

Northern trade was ultimately a foundational part of life and society in the Hiraizumi polity. It not only allowed the Ōshū Fujiwara to express their Emishi heritage and build a unique and distinct identity of their own, but through their strong presence at

³⁷⁹ Sasaki, “Trading Brokers, 86.”

³⁸⁰ Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, 229.

Tosaminato and by taking advantage of longstanding yet largely ignored northern networks of trade, the family achieved unparalleled autonomy and control of international trade. Moreover, by building the foundations of the *Santan* network that would prevail throughout the medieval and early modern periods and even initiating the ethnogenesis of the Ainu culture itself, the Ōshū Fujiwara were absolutely essential to the historical developments of Northeast Asia. From their independent Hiraizumi polity, they dominated northern trade and implemented the cultural, social, and economic structures that would define the region for centuries; ultimately showing that rather than being an isolated and “peripheral” outlier, the family were instead at the very “center” of their own trading networks and the larger historical narrative of Northeast Asia as a whole.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Epilogue: The End of a Dynasty

Although the Ōshū Fujiwara's Hiraizumi polity flourished for over a century, it was not to last. In 1180 Minamoto Yoritomo (源頼朝) (1147-1199) and his loyal retainers rose up against the Taira, forging their own independent polity in Kantō free from Taira rule and sparking the chaotic five-year Gempei War. After his brother Minamoto Yoshitsune (源義経) (1159-1189) defeated the last of the Taira at the Battle of Dan-no-ura in 1185, Yoritomo consolidated his power and emerged as Japan's pre-eminent authority—ruling as the first *shōgun* of the new *bakufu* (幕府) establishment. Yet, although Yoritomo held total control over his Eastern warrior government and influence over the remaining imperial establishment in the west, one obstacle still stood between him and ultimate control of Japan: Hiraizumi.³⁸¹

For Yoritomo, the Hiraizumi polity was a source of both inspiration and terror. On the one hand, he sought to recreate in Kantō what the Ōshū Fujiwara already achieved in *Michinoku*: an autonomous polity in which they—a family of rural “outsiders,” no less—freely administered their territory without interference from the capital.³⁸² This, however, made Hiraizumi a great danger to his fragile new government. Therefore, Yoritomo appealed to Hidehira on numerous occasions, requesting he join the *bakufu* and assist in the Gempei War to incorporate the north in his new government and neutralize the Hiraizumi threat. Hidehira, however, clung firm to his family's policy of neutrality

³⁸¹ Hane, *Premodern Japan*, 64.

³⁸² Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 43-44

and could not be swayed. While offering Yoritomo financial assistance to keep peace between them, Hidehira, like his father and grandfather, refused to submit and recused himself from any action that may threaten his family's position.³⁸³

Though enraged, Yoritomo was cautious of challenging the powerful "King of the North" and held back, even after learning Hidehira harbored his brother Yoshitsune, who Yoritomo had branded as "public enemy number one."³⁸⁴ Biding his time for three years, Yoritomo finally seized his opportunity to move on the north in 1189. After Hidehira died he was succeeded by his son Yasuhira (泰衡), who, hoping to appease Yoritomo and protect his family, turned on Yoshitsune and forced him to commit suicide. Yoritomo was livid, and used this as his excuse quell the unpredictable northern threat once and for all.³⁸⁵ The two finally met in battle near Mt. Atsukashi, and after suffering a devastating loss, Yasuhira retreated to Hiraizumi, razing the city to prevent it from falling into Yoritomo's hands.³⁸⁶ Yasuhira then fled deep into the mountains of Dewa, where he was ultimately assassinated by one of his retainers on Yoritomo's orders, bringing a final and bloody end to the Ōshū Fujiwara dynasty and the "Hiraizumi Century."³⁸⁷

Yoritomo's preoccupation with neutralizing the Ōshū Fujiwara and incorporating the north into his own territory illustrates Hiraizumi's importance in the Heian-Kamakura

³⁸³ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 162.

³⁸⁴ Although Yoshitsune was immensely popular for defeating the Taira, Yoritomo feared he could be manipulated by the court to reclaim their influence, and therefore Yoritomo set out to apprehend him. Yoshitsune fled to Hiraizumi, where he lived as a teenager, and Hidehira vowed to protect Yoshitsune and his family. After Hidehira's death however, Yasuhira betrayed Yoshitsune in hopes that this would appease Yoritomo and preserve the status quo, sending Yoshitsune's head to Yoritomo. Yoshitsune has since been immortalized as Japan's ultimate tragic hero, and his romanticized betrayal at Hiraizumi has been a popular subject of literature, art, and the stage for centuries.

³⁸⁵ Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, 315.

³⁸⁶ The battle took place near present-day Date City, Fukushima Prefecture. For more information, see Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 164-165.

³⁸⁷ Takahashi, Miura and Irumada, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi*, 59-60.

transition, and highlights just how independently the Hiraizumi polity operated. As the rest of the Japan devolved into civil war, *Michinoku* remained peaceful, untouched by the violence that ravaged Kantō, Kinai, and Kyūshū. Furthermore, even after securing control over Kinai and Kantō, Yoritomo still feared incurring the wrath of Hiraizumi to the point of waiting three long years before making his move. And finally, after subduing the north, Yoritomo and his successors seized upon the Ōshū Fujiwara's resources and propped up families like the Andō to continue exploiting northern economic assets like trade.³⁸⁸ For Yoritomo, conquering the Ōshū Fujiwara and the Hiraizumi polity was more than just strategic. Rather, it was an absolute necessity, providing his young *bakufu* with the political and economic security it needed to become a major force of its own—one that echoed the autonomous Hiraizumi polity that preceded it.

Re-Examining Centers and Peripheries

In concluding this work, I wish to revisit the primary objectives of this thesis: to highlight the role of international trade in building the autonomous Hiraizumi polity, and to re-examine the place of so-called “centers” and “peripheries” in larger historical narratives. Although Japan's northeast has long been regarded as “peripheral” and is often excluded from “traditional” histories which privilege the contributions of Kinai and Kantō, the Ōshū Fujiwara nevertheless proved to be monumental actors that were “central” to the progression of Japanese and global history, forcing us to reconsider how we understand “centers,” “peripheries,” and even the space of “Japan” itself, in history.

³⁸⁸ Miyazaki, *Aomori*, 76.

By controlling the key networks of trade that connected the Japanese archipelago to Northern Asia, the Ōshū Fujiwara held immense power and achieved a level of autonomy and authority that was both unmatched by their contemporaries, and emulated by their successors. Furthermore, by acquiring valuable imported goods, the family legitimized their power through the symbolic qualities attributed to foreign objects, constructing their own elite society and crafting a legacy that distinguished them from the Heian cultural hegemon—ultimately building a polity that amounted to a distinct “Japan” of its own. Yet, while the impacts of this trade on Hiraizumi are monumental in their own right, the implications of this trade extend well beyond the Ōshū Fujiwara and Tōhoku. Rather, they critique the “center-periphery” distinctions that have long dominated discussions of premodern Japanese history, and ultimately re-center the Ōshū Fujiwara and the northeast in Japanese, regional, and global history.

Hiraizumi and the Ōshū Fujiwara were powerful actors in the Heian-Kamakura transition—itsself an epochal moment in Japanese history—and the family’s legacy of trade-derived power influenced other northern lords, who strove to replicate the family’s great achievements in subsequent centuries. Moreover, by engaging in this trade the Ōshū Fujiwara proved to be key actors in regional history as well, upholding the East Asian trade through their gold exports, and laying the foundations of the *Santan* trade that flourished well into the early modern era. Finally, the Ōshū Fujiwara even proved to be extremely influential in global history, facilitating the rise of the Ainu culture and Chinese paper currency—a revolutionary development which was later adopted by societies throughout the globe. The foundational role the family played in these developments cannot be understated, and by examining the impact of this trade on the

Ōshū Fujiwara's northern polity, we can see that, rather than lying on the "periphery" of Heian society, the Ōshū Fujiwara and Tōhoku were instead at the very "center" of the major historical developments that took place both in Japan and further abroad.

In sum, the Ōshū Fujiwara's autonomous Hiraizumi polity ultimately proved to be a driving force in Japanese and global history, and forces us to reconsider how we view so-called "central" and "peripheral" spaces. By operating outside the Heian cultural and political "norm," Hiraizumi constituted a distinct "Japan" in its own right; one located not on the "periphery" of Heian society, but instead at the "center" of its very own world. Moreover, the Hiraizumi polity complicates how we understand the space referred to as "Japan" today. It demonstrates how, rather than being a single, static entity, Japan is a fluid space—one composed of a number of historic "Japans" like Hiraizumi that continue to impact Japanese culture and society, even today. Finally, by investigating the role of international trade in creating the Ōshū Fujiwara's autonomous polity, this research opens a new door to understanding the role of so-called "peripheral" spaces in history, and offers a more nuanced, holistic view for the future study of the discipline itself.

APPENDIX

LIST OF FIGURES

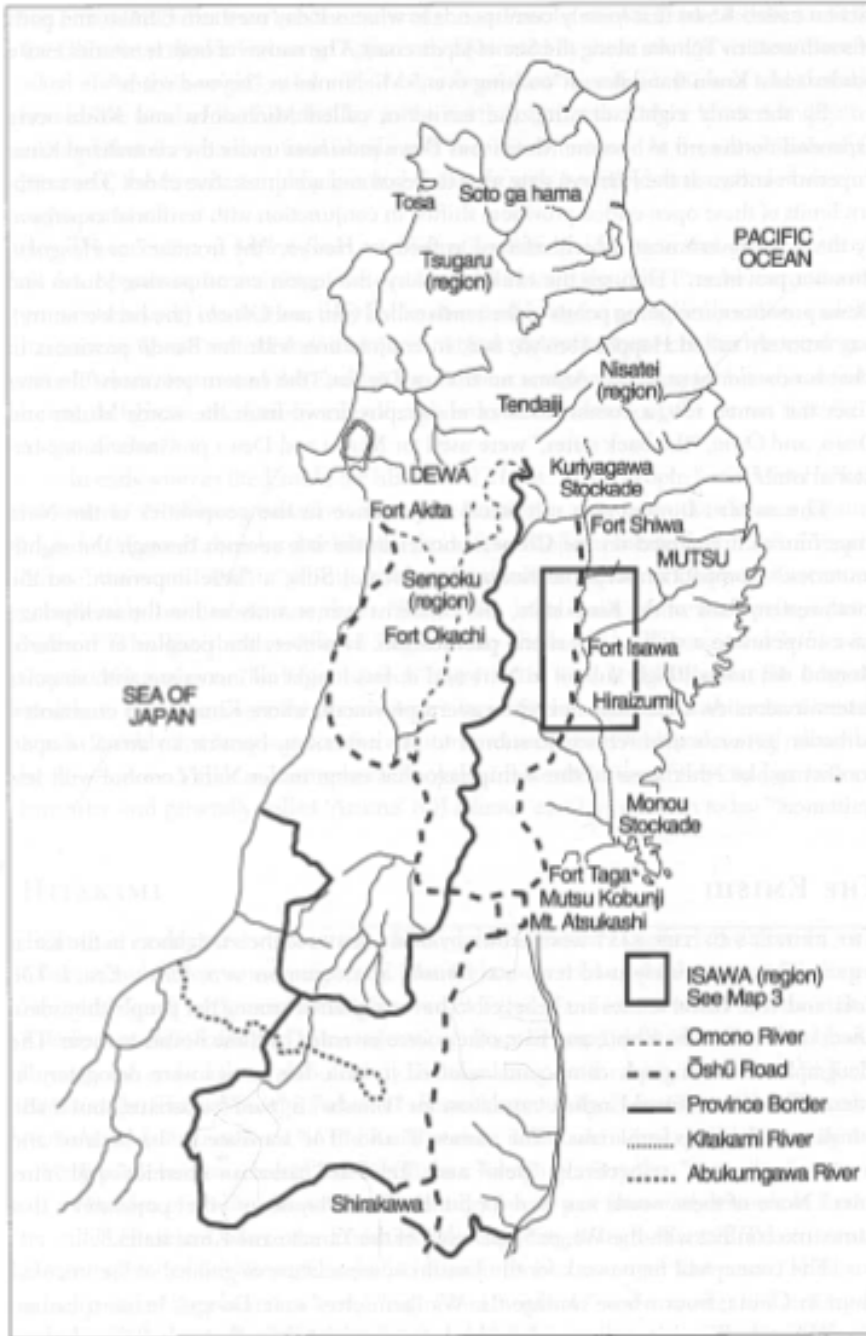


Figure 1: Map of *Michinoku*. Image from Mimi Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-century Japan*, (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998): 11.

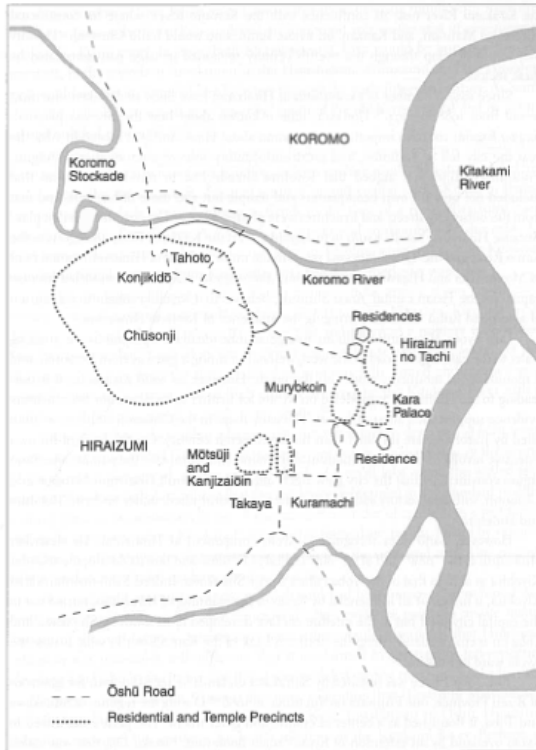


Figure 2: Map of Hiraizumi in 1189. Image from Mimi Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-century Japan*, (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998): 63.

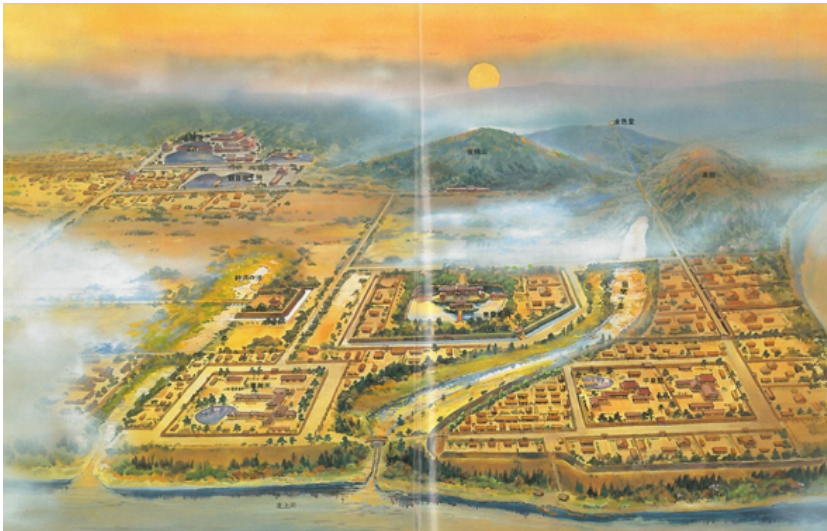


Figure 3: Artist's Rendition of 12th Century Hiraizumi. Takahashi Tomio 高橋富雄, Miura Ken'ichi 三浦謙一, and Irumada Nobuo 入間田宣夫, *Zusetsu Ōshū Fujiwara-shi to Hiraizumi* 図説奥州藤原氏と平泉 [Illustrated Ōshū Fujiwara Family and Hiraizumi], (Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō Shuppan, 1993): Back Cover.



Figure 4: Fujiwara Kiyohira. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Nomination of Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens, and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land for Inscription on the World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, January 2010, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1277/documents/>, 112.



Figure 5: Fujiwara Motohira. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Nomination of Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens, and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land for Inscription on the World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, January 2010, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1277/documents/>, 113.



Figure 6: Fujiwara Hidehira. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Nomination of Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens, and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land for Inscription on the World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, January 2010, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1277/documents/>, 114.



Figure 7: Chūsonji Temple's Konjiki-dō. Takahashi Tomio 高橋富雄, Miura Ken'ichi 三浦謙一, and Irumada Nobuo 入間田宣夫, *Zusetsu ōshū fujiwara-shi to hiraizumi* 図説奥州藤原氏と平泉 [Illustrated Ōshū Fujiwara Family and Hiraizumi], (Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō Shuppan, 1993), 49.



Figure 8: The Pure Land Gardens at Mōtsūji Temple. Image by author.

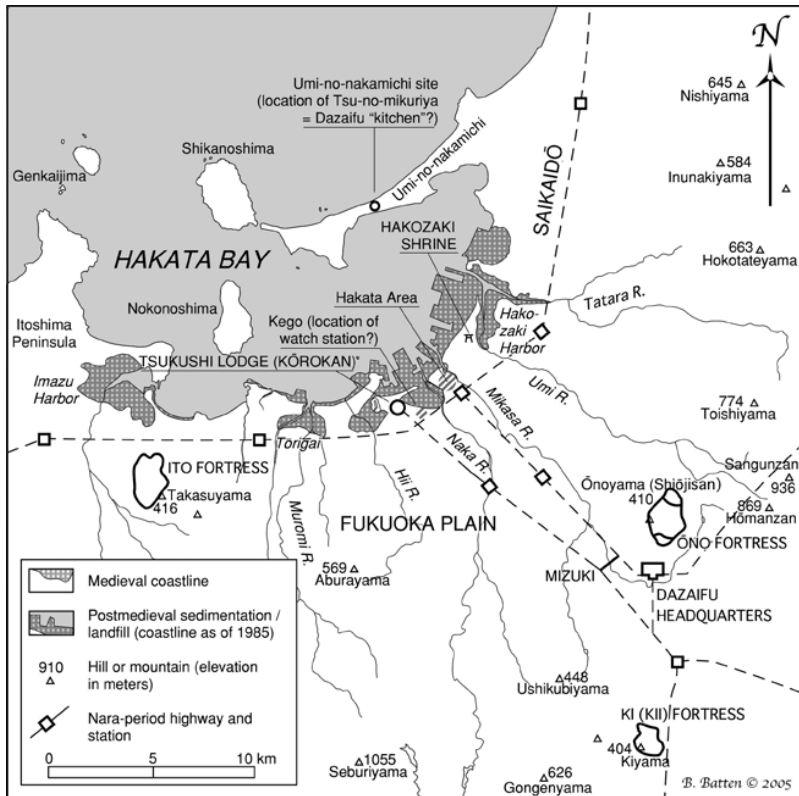


Figure 9: Map of Hakata. Andrew Cobbing, *Hakata: The Cultural Worlds of Northern Kyushu*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 14.

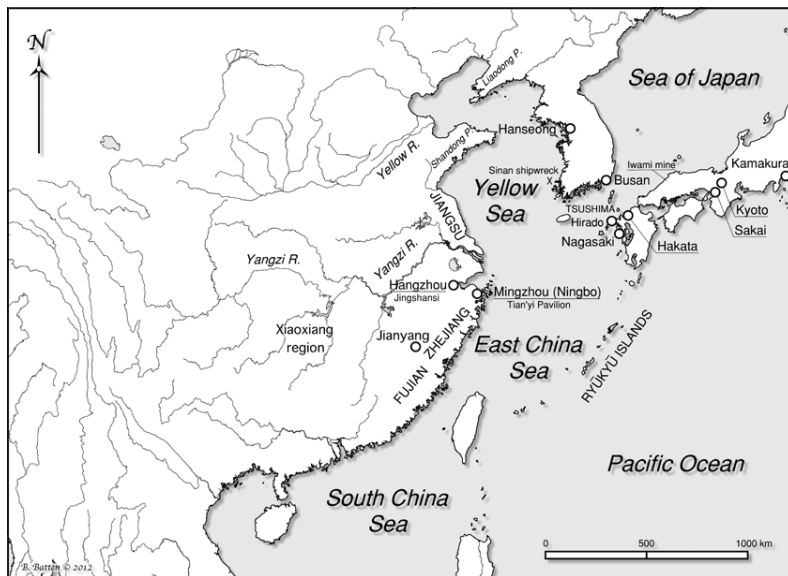


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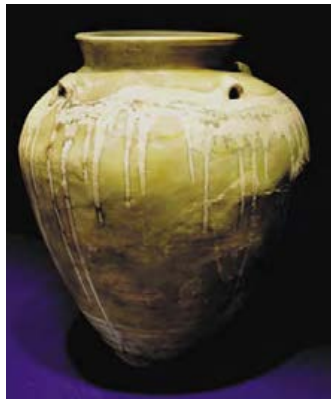


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Figure 13: Recovered *Kawaramono* from Hiraizumi. From Left to Right: Plates and Bowls, *Kawaramono* With a Painted Face. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Nomination of Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens, and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land for Inscription on the World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, January 2010, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1277/documents/>, 82.



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Figure 16: Excerpt from the *Hōtōkyō*. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Nomination of Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens, and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land for Inscription on the World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, January 2010, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1277/documents/>, Appendix 44.



Figure 17: Close-up of the *Hōtōkyō* with detail. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Nomination of Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens, and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land for Inscription on the World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, January 2010, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1277/documents/>, Appendix 45.



Figure 18: Map of Tosaminato. Amino Yoshihiko, *Rethinking Japanese History*, trans. Alan Christy, (Ann Arbor, M.I.: Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2012), 80.

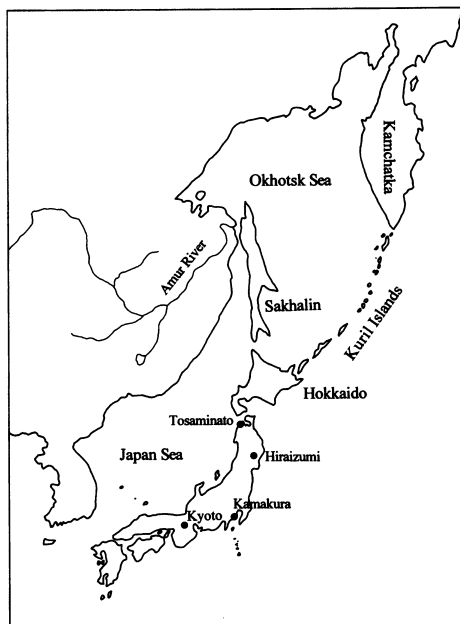


Figure 19: The Ōshū Fujiwara World. Mark Hudson, "Ainu Ethnogenesis and the Northern Fujiwara." *Arctic Anthropology* 36, no. 1/2 (1999), 76.

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