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In the Service of the *Kaihōgyō* Practitioners of Mt. Hiei
The Stopping-Obstacles Confraternity (Sokushō kō) of Kyoto

This article introduces the Sokushō kō of Kyoto, a lay confraternity engaged in the service of the *kaihōgyō* practitioners of Mt. Hiei. While it is naturally the Tendai circumambulating monks who have captivated the attention of popular as well as scholarly publications, my study seeks to bring to light the support group behind them, focusing on a lay association whose members serve the *gyōja* during their rounds of Kyoto. I discuss the Sokushō kō's possible origins, its current structure, its ranks and practices, and the services it performs for the *kaihōgyō* monks. I also examine why people join the confraternity, attitudes within the group, and the challenges it faces.

KEYWORDS: *kō* – Tendai – *kaihōgyō* – *sendatsu* – Mt. Hiei – Katsuragawa *geango* – Sokushō kō

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THIS STUDY originated in the spring of 2003, when the monk Fujinami Genshin 藤波源信, abbot of Hōshūin 宝珠院 on Mt. Hiei, was in the midst of his “great circumambulations of Kyoto” (*Kyōto ōmawari* 京都大廻り). Although I had been aware of the *sennichi kaihōgyō* 千日回峰行 (one-thousand-day circumambulations-of-the-mountain practice) of Mt. Hiei¹ for years and had met a few of the monks who had completed this arduous form of Tendai mountain asceticism, it was not until the spring of 2003 that I was directly exposed to the practice itself and to the practitioner’s (*gyōja* 行者) entourage. I was deeply impressed, not only by the intensity of the practice and Fujinami’s dedication to it, but also by the dedication of the remarkable individuals who devotedly served him as guides through the city. This group of lay people belong to a religious association known as the Kyōto Sokushō kō 京都息障講, Stopping-Obstacles Confraternity of Kyoto, to which this study is dedicated. Following a brief introduction of the *kaihōgyō*, I will discuss the possible origins of this confraternity, the current structure of the group, its ranks and practices, and the services it performs for the *gyōja*. I will also examine why people join the Kyōto Sokushō kō, attitudes within the group, and the challenges with which it is faced.

The Kaihōgyō

The *kaihōgyō* is often called a “walking meditation” (*hokō zen* 歩行禪) and interpreted as a form of the constant-walking *samādhi* (*jōgyō zanmai* 常行三昧), one of the four types of meditation (*shishu zanmai* 四種三昧) practiced in Tendai.² In spirit it is traced back to the Never Disparaging (Jōfugyō 常不輕) Bodhisattva of

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1. Henceforth referred to as *kaihōgyō*. Here Mt. Hiei is the “mountain” (*hō* 峯) alluded to in the name of the practice.

2. On the four kinds of meditation, see STEVENSON 1986. On the constant-walking *samādhi*, see also GRONER 2002, 176–79.

the *Lotus Sutra*, who went about paying obeisance to monks and laymen alike as future buddhas. In the *kaihōgyō*, reverence is extended to all of nature, including every tree and blade of grass, for they too are endowed with Buddha nature. While those who complete this practice are believed to be living buddhas, the *kaihōgyō* is in fact a bodhisattva practice, wherein the *gyōja* stop short of attaining buddhahood in this life so as to continue to help all sentient beings.³

The *kaihōgyō* consists in walking around the sacred space of Mt. Hiei along a set course, stopping to worship at numerous sites along the way, including temple halls, shrines, graves, peaks, forests, trees, mounds, stones, waterfalls, ponds and water sources, by forming mudras and reciting mantras. Throughout the circumambulations, furthermore, the *gyōja* recite the mantra to Fudō Myōō 不動明王, the central deity of the *kaihōgyō*. Worship, therefore, is not limited to the established stops, but represents, ideally, a constant state.

The one-thousand-day practice is divided into one-hundred-day segments and can be completed over a period of seven years: during the first three years, each year consisting of one hundred days of walking, the course extends over 7.5 *ri*⁴ and includes some two hundred and sixty worship stops; during the next two years (fourth and fifth years), two hundred days each, the same route is followed; during the sixth year, the course is extended to fifteen *ri*⁵ over one hundred days; during the seventh year, it is extended further still to twenty-one *ri*⁶ over one hundred days, as the practitioner circumambulates both Mt. Hiei and Kyoto (*Kyōto ōmawari*), followed by a final segment of one hundred days along the 7.5 *ri* route around the mountain.⁷ In the fall of the fifth year,

3. On the purpose and the doctrinal background of the *kaihōgyō*, see MISAKI 1979; HIRAMATSU 1981; HAGAMI 1986, 121–28; RHODES 1987, 198–99.

4. The distance of 7.5 *ri* is usually said to be thirty kilometers, calculating one *ri* as the equivalent of four kilometers. However, MITSUNAGA Kakudō (1996, 77) explains that it does not make sense to convert the 7.5 *ri* into kilometers because the number 7.5 is based, not on distance, but on Buddhist teachings and on ancient Chinese numerology. In Chinese thought, according to Mitsunaga, eight is the perfect number, and in esoteric Buddhist teachings, eight represents a state of completeness. Since the *kaihōgyō* is a bodhisattva practice, if it is brought to completion or buddhahood, the practice can no longer be performed. Therefore, the monk covers 7.5 *ri*, so as to remain in the bodhisattva stage, and not eight *ri*. The actual geographical distance is about twenty-five kilometers (MITSUNAGA Kakudō 1996, 78).

5. The distance of fifteen *ri* represents the doubling of 7.5 *ri*. The actual geographical distance covered, however, is about ten *ri* or less than forty kilometers (MITSUNAGA Kakudō 1996, 77, 156).

6. The numeral twenty-one is, according to MITSUNAGA Kakudō (1996, 77, 170), another number (7 x 3) significant in Buddhism, and the actual geographical distance covered is about sixty kilometers.

7. It is not obligatory, however, to complete the one-thousand-day *kaihōgyō* in precisely seven years following the above program. Practitioners may follow a different schedule, as in the case of the *gyōja* currently engaged in the *sennichi kaihōgyō*: Hoshino Endō 星野圓道, who is in the fifth year of his one-thousand-day practice (2006), has been performing one hundred days of *kaihōgyō* each year (rather than two hundred days during the fourth and fifth years as per the seven-year program).

furthermore, after seven hundred days of circumambulations, the monk is secluded in the Myōōdō 明王堂 of Mudōji 無動寺 on Mt. Hiei, headquarters of the practice,⁸ for nine days without eating, drinking, sleeping, or lying down, as he performs mantra and sutra recitations. He emerges from the hall at 2:00 AM every night, to gather water for his ritual practices from the nearby Akai 關伽井 well. This seclusion, known as *dōiri* 堂入り (hall-entering),⁹ divides the prior period of practice dedicated to the benefit of the monk (*jirigyō* 自利行), from the latter period of “practice for the conversion of others” (*ketagyō* 化他行). That is also why the seventh year includes one hundred days of walking around the populated city of Kyoto. According to Ryōkai’s 亮海 *Shokoku ikken hijiri monogatari* 諸国一見聖物語 [Story of saints once seen in the provinces] of 1387, the *kaihōgyō* used to consist only of seven hundred days of circumambulations and ended with the nine-day *dōiri* (see KODERA 1979, 283; MISAKI 1979, 288–89, 300). Because of the burning of the Enryakuji complex on Mt. Hiei by military ruler Oda Nobunaga in 1571, very few pre-1571 documents remain.¹⁰ We know that the one-thousand-day practice was performed following this period,¹¹ and that since 1585, forty-nine monks have completed the one-thousand-day *kaihōgyō*. One monk, Hoshino Endō, abbot of Daijōin 大乘院 on Mt. Hiei, is currently performing the one-thousand-day practice.¹²

Supporters of the Gyōja

While it is naturally the *gyōja* who command attention in popular as well as scholarly publications on the *kaihōgyō*, there is a significant support group behind them, consisting of lay route-guides (*osaki* お先 or *sendōsha* 先導者), attendants (*gubu* 供奉), young monks (*kozō* 小僧), and lay devotees (*shinja* 信

8. The *kaihōgyō* of Mt. Hiei was practiced by three lineages with headquarters in different parts of the mountain complex of Enryakuji 延暦寺, including the Gyokusen-ryū 玉泉流 (Mudōji honryū 無動寺本流) of Tōtō 東塔 precincts, the Shōgyōbō-ryū 正教坊流 of Saitō 西塔 precincts, and the Ekō-ryū 回向流 (Imuro-ryū 飯室流) of Yokawa 横川. See HIRAMATSU 1982, 60. The main surviving *kaihōgyō* practiced today is that of the Mudōji honryū. The Shōgyōbō-ryū *kaihōgyō* is no longer performed, whereas the Imuro-ryū *kaihōgyō*, which lapsed for four hundred years, was revived in the twentieth century by Hakozaiki Bunnō 箱崎文応, who performed one hundred days of it, and then by his famous disciple Sakai Yūsai 酒井雄哉, who completed two one-thousand-day *kaihōgyō*. Sakai’s disciple Fujinami Genshin likewise performed the Imuro *kaihōgyō*, finishing his one thousand days in 2003.

9. The hall in question is the Myōōdō.

10. The *kaihōgyō* practice, furthermore, is an orally transmitted tradition, which also accounts for the scarcity of surviving documentation. The *gyōja*’s manual of practice known as the *Kaihō tefumi* 回峯手文, containing the list of sites to be stopped at and prayers to be recited, was never to be shown to anyone. In 1975, a *Kaihō tefumi* was first published (MURAYAMA 1975, 407–24), and in 2004 a *tefumi* from 1827 was put on display in a museum exhibition (ŌTSU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 2004, fig. 110).

11. KŌUN’s 幸運 *Hokurei gyōman ki* 北嶺行滿記 of 1634 describes the one-thousand-day practice.

12. For a fuller treatment of the practice and history of the *kaihōgyō*, see especially HIRAMATSU 1982; KODERA 1979. In English, see RHODES 1987; STEVENS 1988, 62–132.



FIGURE 1. Fujinami Genshin (seated fourth from left in front row) and Sokushō kō members at Sekizanzen-in, 5 July 2003. Courtesy of *dai ajari* Fujinami Genshin. All other photos are by the author.

者, “believers”). The *gyōja* perform their mountain circumambulations on their own, but they are financially supported by lay devotees, and during their rounds through Kyoto, they are led by guides, accompanied by young monks and attendants, and followed by devotees. The walks through Kyoto, furthermore, do not take place only during the one-hundred-day *Kyōto ōmawari*, but also once during each one-hundred-day segment around the seventy-fifth day (*Kyōto kirimawari* 京都切廻り), and likewise constitute *ketagyō*.¹³ During the *dōiri* as well, there is a host of attendants and supporters, including a large group of devotees, increasing by the day, who gather outside the hall when the *gyōja* makes his nightly walk to the well. From amongst these various supporters of the *kaihōgyō* practitioners, I will focus here on the lay organization known as the Kyōto Sokushō kō, usually referred to simply as Sokushō kō, of which the *gyōja*’s lay route-guides are members.

The Sokushō kō

As it is used today, the term *kō* 講 (or *kōsha* 講社) can refer to any kind of confraternity, be it religious, social, political, corporate, economic, or recreational. It was first used in Japan in the ninth century as a Buddhist term, referring

13. The seventy-fifth day, or in practice a day around the seventy-fifth day, is selected because of the symbolic value of the number: seventy-five consists in a tenfold multiplication of 7.5, the distance in *ri* covered during a one-day circumambulation of the mountain, which, in representing a bodhisattva practice, cannot contain the numeral eight. See note 4 above. Nowadays the *Kyōto kirimawari* is scheduled on the closest Sunday to the seventy-fifth day, so that lay, working people can also participate.

to a group of monks assembled in a temple to hear a discourse with ceremony in connection with a Buddhist sutra. The *kō* designated the discourse, the ceremony, as well as the audience, which eventually came to consist also of lay people. The term *kō* came to be used for all kinds of religious gatherings, and by the Edo period (1615–1868) for different types of secular associations as well.¹⁴ The Kyoto-based Sokushō *kō* is a religious confraternity devoted to the service of the *kaihōgyō* practitioners of Mt. Hiei.

The Sokushō *kō* appears to derive its name from a temple in the western foothills of Mt. Hira in Shiga Prefecture known as Katsuragawa Sokushō Myōōin 葛川息障明王院 (henceforth referred to as Myōōin or as Sokushō Myōōin), an important center of Tendai mountain asceticism since the Heian period (794–1185). The temple was established by the founding figure of the *kaihōgyō*, the Tendai monk Sōō 相応 (831–918), who performed ascetic practices in this area. When Fudō Myōō appeared to him in a waterfall, Sōō jumped in to embrace him, and, finding a log of a *katsura* tree, enshrined it. Tradition has it that from this log of *katsura* he carved three images of Fudō, worshipped today at Myōōin, the temple he established near the waterfall, at the Myōōdō of Mudōji, the temple he set up on Mt. Hiei, and at Isakiji 伊崎寺 in Shiga Prefecture.¹⁵

The name Sokushō Myōōin was first used for the Katsuragawa temple in the 5th month of the 1st Kenmu year (1334).¹⁶ The Myōō in question is Fudō, and he is characterized as *sokushō* 息障 “ending/stopping obstacles” in this new name proposed for the temple because it defines the Myōō’s vow, the document from 1334 tells us.¹⁷ The Sokushō *kō* would therefore be a religious association that, in the spirit of Fudō, brings an end to obstacles. Since the function of the group is to serve the *kaihōgyō* practitioners, their aim, in accordance with this name, is to eliminate, wherever and whenever possible (for they are not present through much of the *gyōja*’s circumambulations), obstacles that may present themselves in the way of the *gyōja*. Since the practitioner is very familiar with the mountain paths, but not with the city streets and alleys, the confraternity members (*kōin* 講員 or *kōshain* 講社員) show him the way. They guide him safely and quickly through the traffic; they walk ahead, asking people to move out of his way so that his brisk step is not slowed down;¹⁸ they direct devotees who wish to receive

14. On the history of Japanese *kō*, see SAKURAI 1962; in English, see ITŌ 1952 and BOUCHY 1987, especially 260–62.

15. On the life of Sōō, see KAGEYAMA 1960, 95–116 (KAGEYAMA 1975, 229–45); HIRAMATSU 1982, 13–25; and RHODES 1987, 186–90. On Isakiji, or in full Isakiji Sokushō Myōōin, see KAGEYAMA 1960, 121, note 2 (1975, 247, note 2); HEIBONSHA CHIHŌ SHIRYŌ SENTĀ 1991, 614ab; ŌTSU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 2004, 82, fig. 33; TERASHIMA 2004.

16. See MURAYAMA 1964, 167, “Katsuragawa bettō gean” 葛川別當解案 (Katsuragawa intendant’s explanatory proposal). Prior to this time, it had simply been called Myōōdō or Katsuragawa Myōōdō (TARASHIMA 1993, 18).

17. 欲呈額字息障明王院者, 此尊之誓約也 (MURAYAMA 1964, 167).

18. In this day and age of cameras and cell phones with video and photo capacity, the *kōin* are often busy requesting people not to take photos of the *gyōja*, for his circumambulations are a

the *gyōja*'s blessings in the form of *kaji* 加持 to kneel on the side of the road;¹⁹ they make the schedule for the practitioner's stops at the homes/businesses of devotees (who are also members of the Kyōto Sokushō kō) on or very near to his circumambulation route; they give constant directions to the devotees following the *gyōja* so that they do not inadvertently disrupt his practice in any way and so that they too are kept well and safe.²⁰ In other words, they perform countless tasks in the service of the *gyōja*, trying to eliminate, in the spirit of Fudō, obstacles in the *gyōja*'s way.

The Sokushō kō is traditionally believed to have existed since the beginning of the *kaihōgyō*.²¹ Many *gyōja* would have had lay devotees to serve and support them in whichever form and to whatever extent may have been possible, but when exactly devotees first organized themselves into a religious association is unclear. It is also quite possible that "Sokushō kō" was not the first name they used, and that there may have been more than one group serving the *kaihōgyō* practitioners. As regards the association that called itself Sokushō kō, if its name derives from the name of the Katsuragawa temple Sokushō Myōōin, which, as we have seen, was first used in 1334, the Sokushō kō would not have existed before this time. Furthermore, in view of the fact that *kōin* have a role in the *gyōja*'s circumambulations of Kyoto rather than in the mountain *kaihōgyō*, and that a document of 1378 indicates that the practice consisted of seven hundred days of walking, hence not including the one-hundred-day *Kyōto ōmawari*, it is reasonable to suggest that the Sokushō kō belongs to a time—and perhaps a considerable time—following 1378.

Many of the *kōin* were from the Nishijin district of Kyoto, and the association in the form we know it today may have originated amongst them.²² The Sokushō kō had its own banner, which Mitsunaga Kakudō recalls seeing in an old commemorative photograph: with the large banner stretched out, an *ajari*²³

religious practice, which is not to be photographed. The only circumstance under which photos or video-taping is permitted, is by special permission requested in advance and granted directly by the *gyōja* himself.

19. On *kaji*, esoteric empowerment used also for healing, see WINFIELD 2005. The *kaihōgyō* practitioners most commonly administer *kaji* by placing their rosaries on people's heads. Apparently in the past lay folk were not permitted to ask the *gyōja* directly for *kaji*, so the confraternity members functioned as intermediaries between them and the practitioner (HONDA 1960, 23).

20. Until Enami 叡南 (Utsumi 内海) Shunshō's 俊照 time (*sennichi kaihōgyō* completed in 1979) when the *kaihōgyō* began to receive considerable media attention, only the confraternity members followed the *gyōja* through Kyoto. With the "*kaihōgyō* boom" regular devotees also joined the procession.

21. MITSUNAGA Chōdō 1981, 24 and 1986, 145; HONDA 1960, 16, 23. MITSUNAGA Kakudō, 1996, 171–73, who briefly discusses the Sokushō kō, does not address the question of its origins. There is, in fact, almost no information available in print on this religious association.

22. Until the early Shōwa period (1926–1989), the Myōōdō devotees were people of wealth and status, like the Nishijin weavers who could afford to be donors (MITSUNAGA Kakudō, 1996, 173).

23. Once he has successfully completed the *dōiri*, the *gyōja* is called *ajari*, from the Sanskrit *ācārya*, "teacher" or "master." His full title is *tōgyōman ajari* 当行滿阿闍梨, "the *ajari* who has com-

in the center was surrounded by men in *hakama* 袴 (divided or undivided skirt) bearing their family crest, women in formal kimono (*tomesode* 留袖), and children in aprons over splashed-pattern kimono. The members functioned both as route-guides and escorts (*keigo* 警護), guiding and protecting the *gyōja* during his circumambulations of Kyoto.²⁴

There is also another Sokushō kō which is based in Sakamoto, on the east side of Mt. Hiei, and known as the Tairoku Sokushō kō 台麓息障講, the Sokushō kō in the foothills (麓) of the Tendai (台) headquarters of Mt. Hiei. The members of this confraternity serve not only the *kaihōgyō* practitioners, but also assist in various events at Enryakuji. They used to maintain the *gyōja* paths and to function as porters, carrying whatever was required in the service of the practitioners. Today they take on the role of attendants (*gubu*) during the *gyōja*'s circumambulations of Kyoto. Sakamoto, as the town that developed at the gate of Enryakuji monastic complex (*monzen machi* 門前町), is an obvious location for a service-based confraternity focused on the needs of the monks of Mt. Hiei.²⁵ Since their services were not specific to the *gyōja*'s circumambulations of Kyoto, their existence is not chronologically tied up to the inclusion of the *Kyōto ōmawari* in the *kaihōgyō*. Their name, however, is clearly connected with the Katsuragawa Sokushō Myōōin, so called since 1334. In relation to the Kyōto Sokushō kō, it is unclear which name, whether the Kyōto Sokushō kō or the Sakamoto Tairoku Sokushō kō, was patterned on which, so as to differentiate one Sokushō kō from the other.²⁶

pleted this practice,” and following his completion of the *sennichi kaihōgyō*, he is elevated to *dai gyōman dai ajari* 大行滿大阿闍梨, “great *ajari* who has completed the great practice.”

24. According to the president of the Kyōto Sokushō kō, the members used to carry swords.

25. While the Kyōto Sokushō kō membership is largely individual, in that it is often not passed down from one generation to the next within families, the Sakamoto Tairoku Sokushō kō membership is indeed family based, for the function passes from father to son (MITSUNAGA Kakudō 1996, 172, 179). A surviving document dated Meiji 42 (1909) records the Tairoku Sokushō kō's purpose, its rules, and a long list of its members' functions, such as president and treasurers, together with the names of all the individuals who held these functions for a three-year period. This document belonged to the father of Kageyama Haruki, who was a member of the Tairoku Sokushō kō, and a copy of it was kindly shown to me by Terashima Norihito, curator at the Otsu City Museum of History (Ōtsu-shi Rekishi Hakubutsukan). Today, as one of the long-time Tairoku Sokushō kō members informed me, there are about thirty members, all male, with functions limited to the president and to one treasurer.

26. As I recently witnessed, there are likewise Sokushō *kōin* connected with Isakiji (see above). I was told by one of the Kyōto Sokushō kō members, furthermore, that Myōōin also has Sokushō *kōin* of its own, but this claim was denied by others and I have not, at this point, been able to establish whether a Katsuragawa Sokushō kō might have existed in the past. A study of the Tairoku and of the other Sokushō kō must be left for another occasion. In the present article, when I refer to “the Sokushō kō,” as the Kyōto Sokushō kō is often simply called, I mean only the Sokushō kō of Kyoto.



FIGURE 2. Three members of the Kyōto Sokushō kō, Kyōto kirimawari, June 2005.

The Kōin's Costume

The costume worn by the Kyōto Sokushō kō members provides approximately datable indications, although not for the origins of the group, at least for its present look. The costume for men consists of a white robe (*hakui* 白衣), a pure white robe (*jōi* 淨衣) inscribed with the Sanskrit syllable (*shuji* 種子 “seed” syllable) representing Fudō, a divided skirt (*kiribakama* 切り袴) with white and black stripes (*kokura* 小倉 pattern), white hand and leg coverings (*tekkō* 手甲; *kyahan* 脚絆), and a flat, round sedge hat with the character for mountain (*yama* 山), referring to Mt. Hiei, written on the front of it (*ichimonjigasa* 一文字笠). The members wear their confraternity's *kesa* 袈裟 (strip of Buddhist robe)²⁷ and carry a Tendai rosary in their left hand. Although their footwear today consists of white socks and white running shoes, they used to wear straw sandals (*waraji* 草鞋) with Japanese-style socks (*tabi* 足袋) until the 1950s, and then traditional carpenter's shoes (*jika tabi* 地下足袋).

With the exception of the hand and leg coverings and the footwear, which have a long history, the members' items of clothing all belong to the Edo period (Torimoto Yukiyo, personal communication). In the *Jidai Matsuri* 時代祭 of Kyoto, a very similar uniform is worn by soldiers (*heishi* 兵士) carrying swords—just as the confraternity members used to—and guns (FUJIOKA

27. The term *kesa* refers to three kinds of robes worn by Buddhist priests. A strip of these garments, also called *kesa*, is worn both by clergy and laity around the neck on ceremonial occasions or during the performance of practices. On the different *kesa* worn by the Kyōto Sokushō kō members, see page 131.



FIGURE 3. *Ichimonjigasa*.



FIGURE 4. Sanskrit syllable for Fudō on pure white robe (*jōi*).



FIGURE 5. Hand coverings and rosary.

1995, 21, figs. 9–10). Unlike the *kōin*, their clothing is made of dark colors and they do not wear the same hat. The *ichimonjigasa* is worn by a few other figures in the Jidai Matsuri, including the archery administrator (*yumibugyō* 弓奉行), the head of the inspectors (*metsukegashira* 目附頭), and the bow and gun carriers (*yumimochi* 弓持; *teppōmochi* 鉄砲持) (FUJIOKA 1995, 50–51, figs. 42–45; see also 33, fig. 27). In other words, the uniform is connected with doing battle. As to why it should have been chosen by the confraternity members, the reasons may be both practical and ideological. It is clearly a convenient form of dress in terms of mobility, and hence also very useful for the *kōin* who engage in lengthy stretches of walking. The *ichimonjigasa* was probably likewise included in the uniform because of the protection it affords from

rain, snow, and sun, and because its flat shape does not impinge on the wearer's range of vision in the way some other hats do. In terms of ideology, the battle-connected uniform, I would suggest, is particularly suitable for Sokushō kō members, who, in the spirit of Fudō's vow, seek to end the obstacles (*sokushō*) that may present themselves in the *gyōja*'s way. Whether or not the uniform was chosen or gradually developed with this point in mind, however, is entirely unknown. At any rate, once the form of dress was established, it was modified so as to imbue it with appropriate symbolism. The clothing was made white, like that of the *gyōja*'s costume.²⁸ White is associated with death, for it is the color of the death shroud, and might be interpreted as the confraternity member's symbolic death to the everyday world in his complete dedication to the service of the *gyōja*, to the point of death itself if need be. White is also the color of laymen's clothing (HÖBŌGIRIN 1929–2003, fasc. 3, 217 “Byakue”). The *kōin*'s costume, furthermore, was inscribed with characters appropriate to his purpose: the Sanskrit syllable for Fudō was written on the back of his pure white robe (*jōi*), and the mountain character/symbol referring to Mt. Hiei was drawn on the front of his hat. Today a *kōin* usually asks the priest in rotation (*rinban* 輪番) of the Myōōdō of Mudōji or another *ajari* to calligraph the seed syllable on his white robe, while he draws the mountain symbol on his hat himself. When the *gyōja* walks behind the *kōin* acting as route-guide, he sees the syllable symbolizing his principal deity Fudō on the confraternity member's robe, and people seeing the procession note the mountain character, signalling the approach of the *gyōja*. Even the clothing of the *kōin*, therefore, is designed in the service of the *gyōja*, functioning as a point of focus both for the monk, as well as for the city dwellers, for whose benefit he circumambulates Kyoto (*ketagyō*).

The current clothing for men thus points to the Edo period, by which time the *Kyōto ōmawari*, central to the services of the Sokushō kō, had been included in the *kaihōgyō* (see above). The present uniform, however, does not necessarily reveal the origins of the confraternity, for there may also have been a previous uniform or a period without uniform. We do not know, furthermore, when the current Edo-looking costume was first established, whether in the Edo period itself or shortly thereafter. Toriimoto Yukiyo (personal communication) conjectures that the uniform existed in the Meiji period (1868–1912) and that an adapted Edo look may have been adopted so as to invest the confraternity's costume with a period character that might strike a balance with the *gyōja*'s period dress, which points to the Heian era onwards.

The uniform for women is clearly very late. It consists of a white robe (*hakui*) with the Sanskrit syllable for Fudō on it, white pantaloons gathered below the knees (*monpe* もんぺ), white hand and leg coverings, white socks and white running shoes. The revealing item is the *monpe*, which dates from the time of

28. On the *gyōja*'s clothing, see HIRAMATSU 1982, 48–50.

wwii. It was only after this period, as we shall see below, that women joined the Sokushō kō and began to walk with the *gyōja*.

Structure of the Confraternity

The Kyōto Sokushō kō consists of members without particular rank and members with the three ranks of *sendatsu* 先達, *dai sendatsu* 大先達, and *dai dai sendatsu* 大々先達. It is the *kōin* who hold *sendatsu* ranks who act as route-guides for the *gyōja*.

There are two basic types of service that confraternity members perform, and since people generally specialize in one of the two, this leads to two kinds of members: those who walk with the practitioner and those who provide his food during his circumambulations of Kyoto. It is the walking *kōin* who are recognized as Sokushō kō members; in fact, it is not as well known that the devotees who receive the *gyōja* in their homes/offices during his circumambulations are also *kōin*, who are required to join the confraternity in order to be able to receive the *gyōja*. Only the walking members done the confraternity's costume²⁹ and engage in the practices required to attain the different *sendatsu* ranks. They are certainly the most active and the most visible of the two types of *kōin*, and hence my study focuses primarily on them. They are also the ones who take up positions of responsibility in the administration of the confraternity: one of them, a long-time member, assumes the function of the president of the Sokushō kō (*kō shachō* 講社長), while another acts as the treasurer (*kaikai* 会計).

I will begin by discussing how a person may enter the confraternity and some of the considerations involved in acceptance of a new member. This will be followed by an explanation of the *sendatsu* ranks and how they are attained. I will then address the functions of the president and of the treasurer of the group.

Members

Those who wish to become members of the Kyōto Sokushō kō can speak directly to a *dai* or *dai dai sendatsu*, who, as a senior *kōin*, has the authority to accept or reject the person. The decision is based on whether the individual has faith in Fudō Myōō and is ready to serve humbly (*geza hōshi* 下座奉仕 “obeisance-on-one's-knees service”) the *kaihōgyō* practitioners of Mt. Hiei. The commitment to work actively in the service of the *gyōja* is expected to be long-term. For those who join with the intention of walking with the practitioners, physical stamina is also an issue. The *Kyōto ōmawari* is a particularly intense period of commitment, for the members are expected to walk around Kyoto with the monk as often as possible over the one hundred days, keeping up with the monk's pace so that the

29. I have, however, seen a few of the male members who do not engage in walking wearing the *jōi*.

set distance is covered within the established time. Walking, furthermore, takes place not only during the day, but also throughout much of the night (12:30AM–5:00AM), and it is the working members who take the night shift so that they can go straight to work in the morning.³⁰ The *kōin*'s residence, therefore, is also an issue because consistent and frequent participation, especially during the one-hundred-day *Kyōto ōmawari*, is only possible for people living in or near Kyoto. For those who receive the *gyōja* in their homes and serve him food, furthermore, residence in Kyoto is of course a necessity. That is why this Sokushō kō is based in Kyoto and why in the past all members were Kyoto residents. In fact, it was said that one's family had to have resided in Kyoto for at least three generations (HONDA 1960, 23; MITSUNAGA Chōdō 1981, 24). With improvements in transportation means, rules have slowly become less strict, and in the last thirty years people from further way, including Mie, Osaka, and Nara, have joined. No foreigners have ever been, or have ever asked to be, members, as far as I am aware.

Both men and women can now become *kōin* and eventually *sendatsu*, but only the men have a formal function to perform. Mt. Hiei was officially opened to women in 1872, but it was not until after WWII that they began to enter the Kyōto Sokushō kō and to follow the *gyōja* in his circumambulations of Kyoto. Despite the inclusion of women in the *kō*, the confraternity today remains a world where primarily the men are visible. Women members may be asked to help in one way or another, but always in a more inconspicuous manner. Though they may hold the rank of *dai* or *dai dai sendatsu*, they cannot function as route-guides for the *gyōja*. Even if there is a shortage of men *sendatsu*, women who hold this rank are not asked to step in, but instead a male *kōin* who does not yet hold the rank of *sendatsu* is nevertheless asked to function as a route-guide. Just as *gyōja* are exclusively men, so are their lay guides.

Sendatsu

A *sendatsu* 先達 is one who advances ahead (*saki ni tassuru* 先に達する), and hence who precedes in understanding and/or achievement in any field, be it scholarship, art, religious practice, and so on.³¹ His precedence, therefore, makes him a leader and a guide for others. From the late Heian period, the term *sendatsu* came to indicate a religious person who, having acquired merit through training, guided pilgrims to specific shrines/temples and to sacred

30. The *Kyōto ōmawari*, involving the circumambulation of both Mt. Hiei and Kyoto, is performed on one day clockwise, starting from Mudōji and finishing in Kyoto, and on the next day counter-clockwise, starting from Kyoto and finishing at Mudōji. On the first day the walk around Kyoto is done during the daytime and on the following day at night. The working members who do the night walks, therefore, do not walk every night, but every other night.

31. I have briefly discussed the *sendatsu* systems of the *kaihōgyō* practitioners and of the lay devotees who serve them in LUDVIK 2005.

mountains, especially to Kumano. In the Shugendō sects, whose internal organization was preeminently modeled on that of the Kumano Sanzan (EARHART 1970, 23), it also came to refer to ranks within the religious order, based on the number of times the *yamabushi* had entered specific mountains (*nyūbu* 入峰) for ascetic practices and on other qualifications, and to high-ranking officials (EARHART 1970, 31, 169; SWANSON 1981, 62–63; MIYAKE 1987). As leaders of pilgrimage groups, *sendatsu* provide both practical information as well as guidance in methods of worship, and also narrate the legends of the site(s). Shikoku has experienced a modern “*sendatsu* boom” (parallel to the “*junrei* boom” 巡礼ブーム) with the formal establishment of a *sendatsu* system by the organization of the Shikoku pilgrimage temples (Reijōkai 霊場会) in 1965.³² As in Shugendō, *sendatsu* ranks are primarily based on the number of pilgrimages performed, but with the great difference that there are no restrictions on the means whereby the pilgrimage is performed: whereas the *yamabushi* must walk, the Shikoku pilgrims aiming at *sendatsu* ranks may ride buses and taxis.

The *kaihōgyō* practitioners of Mt. Hiei likewise have a system of *sendatsu*, which is based on the number of times a *gyōja* attends the annual Katsuragawa *geango* 葛川夏安居,³³ a summer retreat held from 16 to 20 July at Katsuragawa Sokushō Myōōin. As in the Shugendō *nyūbu*, the temple is reached by foot, and the retreat is referred to as *nyūji* 入寺 “entering the temple.” The Tendai *kaihōgyō* is also called *hokurei no shugen* 北嶺の修験 “*Shugen* of the northern peaks,” centered on Mounts Hiei and Hira, in contrast with the *nanzan shugen* 南山修験 “*Shugen* of the southern peaks,” centered on Yoshino, Omine, and Kumano, and started, according to tradition, by En no Gyōja 役行者.³⁴ The founding figure of the *kaihōgyō*, as we have seen, was the Tendai monk Sōō, who leaped into a waterfall in the western foothills of Mt. Hira to embrace Fudō. In the Katsuragawa *geango* the *gyōja* reenact Sōō’s leap into the waterfall by a jump onto a spinning

32. By 2000 there were more than seven thousand *sendatsu* (READER 2005, 174). On the modern *sendatsu* system of Shikoku, see READER 1993; READER 2005, 171–79.

33. The characters *ango* 安居 literally mean “tranquil dwelling” and refer to the Indian rainy season retreat, during which Buddhist monks stayed put for three months of study and meditation (ODA 1917, 45b; NAKAMURA 1981, 23b; SOOTHILL and HODOUS 1937, 211b). The *geango* is the summer retreat. As indicated by Ryōkai’s *Shokoku ikken hijiri monogatari* (see KODERA 1979, 284), there used to be two seven-day retreats at Katsuragawa, the Renge-e 蓮華会 (Lotus Flower Ceremony) during the sixth month and the Hokke-e 法華会 (*Lotus Sutra* Ceremony) during the tenth month, but only the Renge-e is now held and takes place from 16 to 20 July. The earliest detailed record we have of a retreat by *gyōja* at Katsuragawa is from 1335, in the *Katsuragawa gyōja yōjin* 葛川行者用心 [Precautions for the practitioners of Katsuragawa] kept at Myōōin (KAGEYAMA 1960, 132–33; KAGEYAMA 1975, 255–56). KAGEYAMA (1960, 132; 1975, 255) also points to a very early record of a retreat at Katsuragawa by lay believers in 1181. On seclusions at Katsuragawa by lay people, see also ŌTSU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 2004, 85–86.

34. TAKE 1987, 157. The term *shugen* is defined as the practice or mastery of *gen*, the power attained through the performance of ascetic practices (see EARHART 1970, 170). On the Tendai *kaihōgyō* and Shugendō, see, for instance, MURAYAMA 1978 and GORAI 1982.

drum (*taiko mawashi* 太鼓回し),³⁵ appropriately made of old *katsura* wood, and worship at the waterfall in question.

The *gyōja* walk in procession, based on rank, from Sakamoto to the site of the *geango*, following in Sōō's footsteps: at the back are the *shingyō* 新行, the monks who have just completed one hundred days of *kaihōgyō* and hence participate in the *geango* for the first time; in front of them are the *shindatsu* 新達 who have taken part in the *geango* two to seven times; in front of them the *sendatsu* 先達 (eight to fourteen times), the *dai sendatsu* 大先達 (fifteen to twenty-four times), and the *dai dai sendatsu* 大々先達 (twenty-five or more times).³⁶ The *geango* participants hold daily worship sessions both at Myōōin as well as at the adjoining Jishu Jinja 地主神社. The popular *taiko mawashi* takes place on the night of the eighteenth and is attended by many lay people. Following this festival, on the nineteenth the monks proceed to the waterfall for worship.³⁷ The walk back to Sakamoto is on the twentieth.

The *sendatsu* system of the Kyōto Sokushō *kōin* is modelled on that of the *kaihōgyō* practitioners whom they serve. The different *sendatsu* ranks are likewise attained on the basis of the number of attendances at their annual retreat at Katsuragawa held on 18–19 July, which occurs in parallel with the *gyōja*'s simultaneous *geango* at the same site. The *kōin* are not there for the service of the *gyōja*, but to perform their own separate practice (*gyō* 行), which is nevertheless intertwined with that of the *gyōja*.³⁸ A record of the *kōin* taking part in the retreat is kept today by the priest (*jōjū* 常住)³⁹ of Myōōin and by the Sokushō *kō*

35. The villagers and other lay people call it the *taiko mawashi* “drum-turning,” but for the *gyōja* it is “drum-mounting” (*taiko nori* 太鼓乗り).

36. The *gyōja*'s ranks of *sendatsu*, *dai sendatsu*, and *dai dai sendatsu* listed here are not to be confused with the lay *sendatsu* ranks of the Sokushō *kō* modeled on them and discussed in the next paragraph. The ranks of the *gyōja* can be identified by the color of the string laced into the sleeves of their pure white robe (*jōi*): for the *shindatsu* it is white; for the *sendatsu* and the *dai sendatsu*, it is purple; and for the *dai dai sendatsu*, vermilion (*shu* 朱). Monks are not required to attend every year, and most of the ones attending today have in fact only performed a one-hundred-day *kaihōgyō*. Attendance has considerably increased over the years because the *shingyō* did not always participate in the *geango*, and probably also because of the popularity of the *kaihōgyō*. Nowadays there are about fifty participants. The names of *gyōja* secluded (*sanrō* 参籠) each year at Myōōin for the *geango* are inscribed on *sanrō fuda* 参籠札 in the shape of large wooden slabs, an enormous number of which survive, with the earliest one from 1204. On the *sanrō fuda* see KAGEYAMA 1978, 267–69; ŌTSU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 2004, 12, 41, 43–47, 84–86.

37. On the worship at the waterfall, see FUJITA 1997, 81–82.

38. The confraternity members do not act as route-guides for the *gyōja* on their walks to/from the *geango* site. There are, however, others present to guide the *gyōja*: from Shōkeji 勝華寺 in the village of Tochū 途中 to Hanaore Tōge 花折峠, the *gyōja* are guided by a member of the Miyagaki Zenbei 宮垣善衛 family; and from Hanaore Tōge to Bōmura 坊村, where Myōōin is located, by a member of the Jōki house 常喜宅 and a member of the Jōman house 常満宅, who traditionally take care of the *gyōja* on retreats at Katsuragawa and who are also the village leaders.

39. The *jōjū* is the monk who, as the function indicates, resides at the temple. As the person in charge of Myōōin, he guides the people staying or living there and oversees the performance of retreats and ceremonies. In practice today his residence at the temple is limited to retreat and ritual

as well. On the eighteenth the confraternity members walk from the village of Tochū in Shiga Prefecture to Myōōin (fifteen kilometers).⁴⁰ Tochū is the place from which Sōō is believed to have been guided toward Katsuragawa by a man called Miyagaki Zenbei, who gathered one thousand people to build a road up to Hanaore Tōge for Sōō. On his way back, according to Miyagaki family tradition, Sōō gave this man an image of Fudō made from the remaining *katsura* wood after carving the three images of Fudō. This image is enshrined in the Miyagaki house just below a temple called Shōkeji.⁴¹ Although the lay participants today walk from Shōkeji to Myōōin, some forty years ago, before there was a bus line from Kyoto to Tochū, they would walk forty kilometers from Demachiyana in northeastern Kyoto, leaving at 1:00 AM on the eighteenth. Then as now, they worship at temples and shrines along the way, and reach Myōōin during the morning. They attend a *tendoku* 転読 (ritual turning and reading by flipping through accordion-like texts) service of the *Daihannyagyō* 大般若經 performed by the *gyōja* in the afternoon, and then the *taiko mawashi* at night. In the past the *kōin* also leaped onto the drum, and they still retain the right to do so, but now there are so many *gyōja* attending and so few of them actually leap that the lay participants no longer do so. The next morning, on the nineteenth, the *kōin* follow the *gyōja* procession to the waterfall. While the *gyōja* descend down to the waterfall, they remain above, waiting. When the *gyōja* climb back up from the waterfall, the entire procession returns to the temple, and the *gyōja* give people *kaji*. The *kōin* then walk back to Tochū, and from there make their way home.

Essentially, the confraternity members spend a little less than twenty-four hours on site during the retreat. Like the *gyōja*, they have three levels of *sendatsu*: ten Katsuragawa retreats are required to attain the rank of *sendatsu*; fifteen retreats for the *dai sendatsu*; and twenty-five retreats for the *dai dai sendatsu*. Advancement in rank is conferred during the *geango*, immediately following the *tendoku* service on the afternoon of the eighteenth. The individual is called forward into the inner section of the Myōōin hall, where the *gyōja* have been engaged in *tendoku*, and a document prepared by the priest of Myōōin formalizing the advancement is read by the priest himself and then given to the individual. This is a moment of great joy and pride for recipients, whose expressions I can only describe, based on the two advancements I have witnessed, as beaming. The new *sendatsu* also receive an *ingō* 院号 (honorary Buddhist name) from the

times. In theory the position is held for three years, but tenure is in fact sometimes longer, if a qualified candidate cannot immediately be found, as in the case of Mitsunaga Kakudō, who held it for five years.

40. For elderly members who cannot walk, it is possible to take the bus or drive all the way to the retreat site, but they are required to stop for worship at Shōkeji in Tochū on the way, and there to reconsider if they will walk or ride. For the return trip, it is naturally preferable to make the journey back to Tochū on foot, so that they may walk at least one way, but for some in their eighties this is not an option.

41. On Miyagaki family tradition and on Shōkeji, see KAGEYAMA 1960, 134, 151, note 2.

Myōōin priest.⁴² The *dai* and *dai dai sendatsu* are given new *kesa* reflecting their respective ranks. From the first to the fourteenth retreat, the *kōin* wear a black *kesa*, the official Kyōto Sokushō kō *kesa*, which they receive from the president of the confraternity upon joining; during the fifteenth retreat, when they advance to *dai sendatsu*, they receive a white *kesa*, a Fudō *kesa*, from the Myōōin priest; and during the twenty-fifth retreat, the *dai dai sendatsu* are given a particularly long gold-colored *kesa*, also known as a Fudō *kesa* and likewise bestowed by the Myōōin priest. The recipients of these *kesa* and of the *ingō*, in turn, make an appropriate monetary donation.⁴³ Since not all *kōin* attend the retreat, there may be very long-standing members who are not necessarily *sendatsu*.

In addition to the Katsuragawa retreat, Hagami Shōchō 葉上照澄, who completed his *sennichi kaihōgyō* in 1953, wrote that confraternity members should circumambulate Mt. Hiei once a year. For each year of a *gyōja*'s practice, they should perform one day of walking, so that the *kōin*'s seven days of *kaihōgyō* would correspond to the *gyōja*'s seven years of the *sennichi kaihōgyō* (HONDA 1960, 18–19). A confraternity member would request to follow a *gyōja* on one of his circumambulations, and in this manner would fulfill his one day of *kaihōgyō*. This practice has not been maintained, primarily so as not to slow down the monk in his circumambulations, especially as the *kōin* grew older. A Sokushō kō *santō junpai* 三塔巡拜 (three-pagodas pilgrimage) of Mt. Hiei,⁴⁴ consisting of a one-day *kaihōgyō* for the members, was also performed a few times, but never on a regular basis.

President

One of the male senior members is the president (*shachō*) of the Kyōto Sokushō kō. The *kō shachō* is selected by the priest of the Myōōdō of Mudōji, and holds the position for life, or for as long as he is in sufficiently good health. The current president, Mr. N., has been in the position since 1989 and was named by Enami (Utsumi) Shunshō. His parents were Kyōto Sokushō kō members and he himself joined fifty-two years ago, in 1954, when he was still a university student. He is currently a *dai sendatsu*. The president is the contact person for the Myōōdō

42. This name is given to people who make exceptional contributions to temples, in this case the Myōōdō of Mudōji on Mt. Hiei where most of the *kaihōgyō* practitioners are based, and to members of families who have traditionally received *ingō*. Consisting of two characters followed by *in* 院, the *ingō* constitutes the first part of the posthumous precept name (see COVELL 2005, 167–69).

43. The amount of the donation was first established by the current president of the confraternity, when he became the *kō shachō* in 1989: ¥8000 for the new members, ¥30,000 for the new *sendatsu*, ¥50,000 for rise to *dai sendatsu*, and ¥70,000 for the *dai dai sendatsu*.

44. The three pagodas are the three precincts of Mt. Hiei: Tōtō 東塔, “eastern pagoda,” centering on the Konponchūdō 根本中堂; Saitō 西塔, “western pagoda,” centering on the Shakadō 釈迦堂; and Yokawa 横川, “side river,” centering on the Yokawachūdō 横川中堂. A *santō junpai* for lay people was subsequently instituted by Enami Shunshō and continued by his successors at the Myōōdō.

and Myōōin priests, and for devotees. His duties are administrative as well as ceremonial. He calls the yearly meetings of the confraternity, determines how yearly dues are to be used,⁴⁵ assigns tasks to members, receives and responds to requests from the Myōōdō and Myōōin priests and from devotees, informs the Myōōin priest of *kōin* who are to become *sendatsu*, *dai sendatsu*, or *dai dai sendatsu* at the next Katsuragawa retreat, and so on. His ceremonial duties include walking at the front of the procession or of the *gyōja* during certain occasions, such as at the beginning and the end of the *dōiri* and of the annual eight-thousand-stick fire ritual (see below), as well as at the *gyōja*'s prayer ceremony in the Kyoto Imperial Palace (*dosoku sandai* 土足参内) following the completion of his *sennichi kaihōgyō*.

Treasurer

The treasurer is responsible for collecting and keeping a record of yearly membership dues and of expenditures, consisting almost entirely of donations. The confraternity's seal is kept by the treasurer, who stamps the membership-dues form of every member, certifying payment received for each given year. The last treasurer, a male member, held his function for about twenty years. He was succeeded in 2005 by a younger male member who works in the accounting profession and who, for the first time ever, has introduced the use of the computer for keeping the confraternity's accounts.

Duties

Most of the duties to be performed in the service of the *gyōja*, as noted above, fall on the men of the Sokushō kō. On the second Sunday of January, members gather at Sekizanden-in to receive *kaji* from the priest of the Myōōdō. The *kōin* hold a meeting during the same month to discuss the coming events of that year, what requires to be done and who can do it:

- There are *Kyōto kirimawari* during the summer, the number depending on how many *gyōja* are performing the *kaihōgyō* and in which year of the practice they happen to be. In addition to duties on circumambulation days, there are preparations to be made. One month ahead the president sends out postcards to inform all the *kōin* of the upcoming *kirimawari*, so that those who wish to receive the *gyōja* in their homes/businesses can sign up. In consultation with the *gyōja*, he then sets the schedule of stops for the circumambulation. Furthermore, approximately ten days before the *kirimawari*, the president and another member go to pay their

45. The yearly due is ¥5000, and the sum is used for donations to be given at the Katsuragawa retreat, for the Sokushō kō's ceremony for the release of fish at Sekizanden-in 赤山禪院 in northeastern Kyoto, and so on.

respects at temples/shrines where longer stops are made and request their cooperation. For reasons of traffic safety, moreover, they also go to the police stations of the areas through which the procession passes in order to inform them that approximately one hundred people will be walking along the set route. This is, however, a recent practice, necessitated by traffic conditions. I have never seen police appear or accompany the procession, though, as is the case for large-scale festivals for instance.

- Every five-to-ten years there is a one-hundred-day *Kyōto ōmawari*, an extremely busy time for the *kōin*. Prior preparations of the same kind as for the *kirimawari*, but on a larger scale, are required. To inform the police, for instance, the president and the other member also go to pay their respects at the city's central police headquarters.
- On the second Sunday of July, following the one-hundred-day *kaihōgyō* period (28 March–5 July) and prior to the Katsuragawa *geango* (16–20 July), the *kōin* sponsor and organize a ceremony for the release of beings (*hōjōe* 放生會), in this case fish. The *Kyōto Sokushō kō hōjōe* is conducted by the priest of the *Myōōdō* of *Mudōji* at *Sekizanzen-in*, and attended by *gyōja*, *kōin*, and by other lay devotees.
- On 2 November, marking the death anniversary (*meinichi* 命日) of the founder of the *kaihōgyō Sōō* (*Konryū Daishi* 建立大師), the priest of the *Myōōdō* holds a *Konryū Daishi ogakki hōyō* 建立大師御月忌法要 (monthly memorial service for *Konryū Daishi*) in the *Myōōdō*,⁴⁶ followed by a *hasenmai dai goma ku hōyō* 八千枚大護摩供法要 (eight-thousand-stick great fire offering service) spread over twenty-four hours (2–3 November) in the *Gomadō* of *Mudōji*.⁴⁷ A large number of devotees attend both services, and hence for the fire ritual a temporary wooden structure is set up in front of the *Gomadō* for them, meals and tea are provided, and futons are also made available in other temple halls so that people can have a rest. Devotees do not write their own *goma* sticks (*goma ki* 護摩木), but rather fill out forms, and the *Sokushō kō* members then copy people's names, ages, and wishes onto the sticks, so that the writing is easily readable for the *ajari*. The number of sticks is not actually eight thousand, but usually over twenty thousand. Many devotees send in their forms ahead, and the *kōin* are then busy for weeks before this fire ceremony writing out the sticks, for at most they can complete about two hundred sticks in one day. Both male and female *kōin* help out in writing the sticks, although it is the men who

46. According to Toriimoto (private communication), under the influence of similarity of sound, several years ago the *gakki hōyō* came to be called *gaki hōyō* 餓鬼法要 (service for hungry ghosts).

47. This turns into the *jūmanmai dai goma ku* 十万枚大護摩供 (one-hundred-thousand-stick great fire offering) some years following a monk's completion of the *sennichi kaihōgyō*.

are visibly present at the counters during the *goma*. The male *kōin* sell and write the *goma* sticks, make announcements, and direct people.

- Between April and October, the priest of the Myōōdō takes groups of lay people on the *santō junpai* of Mt. Hiei, a night walk along the *gyōja's kaihōgyō* route. Participants arrive in the late afternoon on a set Saturday, and following scripture-recitation and dinner, have a rest until midnight. The walk begins at 1:00AM and the group is usually back at the Myōōdō between 7:00AM to 8:00AM. While it is not the express duty of the Sokushō *kō* members to help out in the *santō junpai*, the priest of the Myōōdō does ask one or two *kōin* to do so. They assist in preparations and clean-up, and walk at the back of the line during the pilgrimage, making sure that no one is left behind. If anyone is having trouble keeping up, they stay back with the person, proceeding at his/her pace and guiding the individual safely back to the temple.

Current Membership

There are currently about one hundred *kōin*, more than two thirds of whom are women, but not all of them are active members, either because of age, health, or other issues. Some join in order to be able to receive the *gyōja* in their homes during the *irimawari* and the *ōmawari*, and do not partake in any other *kōin* activities. There are twenty *sendatsu*, seven men and thirteen women, in the confraternity. Of the twenty *sendatsu*, there are six *dai dai sendatsu* (two men and four women), nine *dai sendatsu* (four men and five women), and five *sendatsu* (one man and four women). Two striking features stand out in the current membership: the large number of women and the senior age of many of the *kōin*.

The predominance of women, despite their inconspicuous presence, can be accounted for by the fact that until quite recently, unless there was a family business, many city women did not work. Once they had raised their children, they were relatively free to engage in their own activities. Although four or five of the current female members joined in their thirties, most entered in their forties and fifties, once their children were grown. About half of the women today are employed. Because the demands on female *kōin*, furthermore, have always been lesser than those on men, who are required to shoulder most of the responsibilities, it is not as heavy a commitment, which I suspect makes it easier to join.

Since men, in turn, are busy with work until retirement, most of the current male members joined in their fifties or later. About four of the members, however, joined in their twenties. One of the men told me he joined when he was young, but because of work, he was not able to remain active for a good many years, and as retirement approached, he resumed participation again. The current president Mr. N. has been actively involved for over fifty years. Another long-term and extremely energetic member is Mr. T., a *dai dai sendatsu* who

joined the Kyōto Sokushō kō forty-two years ago. As an example of lifelong commitment to the service of the *gyōja*, I would like to introduce briefly Mr. T.

He was born in the Nishijin district of Kyoto in 1941 and first heard of the *taiko mawashi* festival at Myōōin from his paternal grandfather, who was a *dai sendatsu* in the Kyōto Sokushō kō. His father was not involved with the confraternity. In his early twenties, Mr. T. went with his grandfather to see the festival for the first time and so enjoyed it that he returned to take part in it again in the years that followed. He joined the Kyōto Sokushō kō in 1964, not because his grandfather had been a member, but simply because he felt it was something to be done. He has served six *ajari* so far during their *sennichi kaihōgyō*: Mitsunaga Chōdō 光永澄道 (*sennichi kaihōgyō* completed in 1970), Enami (Utsumi) Shunshō (1979), Sakai Yūsai (first *sennichi kaihōgyō* completed in 1980 and second one in 1987), Mitsunaga Kakudō (1990), Uehara Gyōshō (1994), and Fujinami Genshin (2003). Right through to Uehara Gyōshō's time he worked in a company near Osaka while performing his Sokushō kō duties during the *Kyōto ōmawari*. Keeping a particularly intense schedule, he generally walked about thirty of the one hundred days. On weekdays, and hence workdays, he would return home from the office around 8:00PM to 9:00PM, bathe, eat, rest, get dressed, and walk with the *ajari* from 1:00AM to 5:00AM. He would then return home, bathe, eat, and leave for work by 7:30AM. That night, since there would be no night walk through the city, he could get a full night's sleep, but the following night he would be walking again. On weekends, he would walk both days and nights. During Fujinami Genshin's time, Mr. T. had just retired and hence walked ninety-eight days and nights, and on the two days on which he was not able to walk, he appeared at one of the *ajari*'s stops. At sixty-five years old, he continues to walk and work tirelessly in the service of the *gyōja*, displaying a truly formidable amount of energy and dedication. These days he spends three days a week helping out at the Myōōdō.

Motivation and Benefits

People generally come to join the Kyōto Sokushō kō via a connection with the Myōōdō of Mudōji, where they likely attend fire ceremonies centered on Fudō Myōō, performed daily by the priest in rotation, who in most cases has already completed his *sennichi kaihōgyō*. Family members may have brought or led them to go there. As Mitsunaga Kakudō explains, there are also cases where people come across old family belongings, including a photo of Sokushō kō members or of the confraternity's *kesa*, while rearranging their homes, and as a result end up going to the Myōōdō (MITSUNAGA Kakudō 1996, 172). Through contact with the *ajari* and those around him, they inevitably come to learn more about the one-thousand-day practice. In some instances, it is an *ajari* who suggests they join the Sokushō kō. Motivated by faith, either in Fudō or in the *ajari* who is

believed to be a living Fudō, and by a certain awe for the intensive *kaihōgyō* practice and the individuals who undertake it, they join. Members often define their attitude as *zuiki* 随喜, a Buddhist term meaning rejoicement in another person's practice of good actions—in this instance the *gyōja's* *kaihōgyō*—and also admiration of these good acts.⁴⁸

As for motivations including personal challenge, self-discovery, or spiritual advancement, while they may have their place in the practice of pilgrimage (READER 2005, 83–85), they are not considered acceptable approaches in the Sokushō kō. The purpose of the confraternity is to serve the *gyōja*, and hence individuals interested in joining for reasons such as their own personal practice or spiritual growth, are simply not needed here, the president told me. Even the annual Katsuragawa retreat is not to be performed as each person's *gyō*, but rather as the group's communal practice. For an individual to take part in the retreat in a manner that does not strictly conform to the established rules of behaviour and hierarchy as defined by the members' *sendatsu* ranks, is felt by some to be a nuisance (*meiwaku*) to the entire group's practice and, if deemed necessary, expressed in no uncertain terms. This is likewise the case for other activities, such the *Kyōto kirimawari* or *ōmawari*, where it is not a matter of the confraternity's practice, but, even more seriously, of the *gyōja's* practice. New members, consequently, are not treated with silk gloves, and there have been cases where young newcomers have chosen, for a complex of reasons, not to remain in the confraternity.

For members who wish to receive the *gyōja* in their homes, the motivation is often a desire to have the monk(s) pray for their ancestors at their home *butsudan* (buddhist altar), the confraternity's president explained to me. Hence they offer the service of providing food, accompanied by a donation, and in exchange receive the benefit of prayers for their ancestors by someone whom they believe to have spiritual power.

Members who wish to walk with the *gyōja* seek to serve him in his actual circumambulations, and thereby participate in his practice itself. Ideally, an attitude of true *zuiki* implies unmotivated rejoicement and awe at the *gyōja's* practice, but it is in fact believed that the *kōin* reap all kinds of benefits from serving, and even from being in the presence of, the *gyōja*. By virtue of being Sokushō kō members, they have the right to get physically closer to the practitioner. In the set order of the processions through Kyoto, a male *kōin* holding one of the ranks of *sendatsu* leads the *gyōja*, who is followed by a few young monks, then by other Sokushō kō members, and lastly by believers. The place of the *kōin* within the procession represents not only the sought-after spiritual benefit of closeness to the practitioner, but also social status and recognition within the *gyōja's*

48. NAKAMURA 1981, 808c. For additional meanings see also ODA 1917, 1010b and SOOTHILL and HODOUS 1937, 452b.

entourage, distinguishing them from other devotees and identifying them as the Kyōto Sokushō kō. The confraternity may no longer have a banner, but its members certainly have a sense of identity, belonging, and pride. As a rule, regular devotees are not allowed to walk in front of the *kōin*, a privilege that is closely guarded by the female members. As necessitated by their duties, male *kōin* tend to circulate in the procession, some remaining at the back, while women, who do not have specific duties while walking, invariably take up their position behind the young monks following the *gyōja*: their reserved place within the procession is one instance in which the women can assert themselves. Within this social circle, confraternity members in general are treated with particular respect, especially so the men, who are seen carrying out functions. The directions of male *kōin* are followed by others, and at the *gyōja*'s stops in devotees' homes/businesses, the men are also invited inside, while female *kōin*, the Tai-roku Sokushō kō members, and the rest of the procession are served drinks and snacks outside. The increasingly advanced age of the very active male *kōin* is undoubtedly also a consideration when they are offered a quieter, more comfortable place to rest at these stops.

Not only is proximity to the *gyōja* sought after, but his straw sandals, which he changes as needed, are a much coveted item. The awe in which the *gyōja* and his practice are viewed, in other words, extends also to his belongings. The straw sandals he has walked in, which can be given to *kōin* or to other devotees, are believed to be infused with the power of his practice: they are hung at the entrance of people's homes for protection and are considered to have great healing powers for serious illness, if placed under one's pillow overnight.

In addition to this-worldly merits reaped from the presence and service to the *gyōja* and even from his belongings, *kōin* acquire benefits for themselves and their ancestors in the next world: as noted above, not only do the *gyōja* pray at the *butsudan* of confraternity members, but participants at the annual Katsuragawa retreat receive an *ingō* upon attaining the rank of *sendatsu*. Benefits to be gained by *kōin*, however, are not readily discussed, although, as I was told, there are many. On the contrary, they are downplayed, as the ideal attitude of *zuiki* is emphasized.

Future of the Sokushō kō

Given the advanced age of most of the active members, the question of the future of the confraternity naturally arises. When I asked the president about this issue, he expressed concern. No form of PR is used to publicize the group or to ask people to join. In the past, as noted above, some of the *ajari* have suggested to specific devotees to become members. The president pointed to this same method to find future recruits. While people in the past joined to serve the *gyōja*, this method turns the tables, as it is the *gyōja* themselves who ask or

recommend that believers become *kōin*. The tradition of the *gyōja* steps in to uphold the tradition of the *kōin*, with which it is intertwined in a mutually supportive relationship.

Long-time members are also involved in their own endeavors to sustain their confraternity. I did notice an attempt at greater visibility during the *kirimawari* of 2005, when, at the end of the day, the president made a short speech before everyone dispersed. A devotee also told me she had been approached by one of the old-time members, who suggested she might join the Sokushō kō. Clearly the wheels are in motion, and given that Hoshino Endō's *ōmawari* is approaching, younger male members will be needed to help out.

The rules of the confraternity have already changed considerably over time, with the inclusion of women and of residents from outside of Kyoto, with the shortening of the walk to/from the retreat site because of the establishment of a bus line to Tochū, and so on. At this point, there are no indications that I am aware of to suggest that women might be given a greater role in the future. If such a move should be made, however, the decision would have to come from an *ajari*, specifically the priest of the Myōōdō.

Although rules have changed or become more lax, there is a sense within the confraternity, among men and women alike, that the existing regulations and habits should be strictly maintained to keep tradition, especially with the arrival of occasional new members. A gentler, more protective approach in educating newcomers, furthermore, is entirely out of the question, the president suggested. Adjustments are not to be made to attract or maintain more, and younger, *kōin*. As if strengthened by this conviction, the president displayed an air of quiet confidence that his confraternity, believed to have its origins with the beginning of the arduous *kaihōgyō* practice, would somehow, with the support of the *gyōja*, continue to exist.

Given that most of what we know of the Sokushō kō does not appear in written sources and that long-time members are growing older, it is particularly important to gather and record oral traditions. If we do not write down what people recall of the past, accounts of their own lifelong involvement in the Kyōto Sokushō kō, the confraternity's current structure, practices and activities, what we know or still have access to today may be lost to future generations of scholars, devotees, and anyone else who may be interested in this aspect of the past. My study represents a first attempt at gathering and recording the information I have been able to find on the Kyōto Sokushō kō, which might be added to and deepened through further research.

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