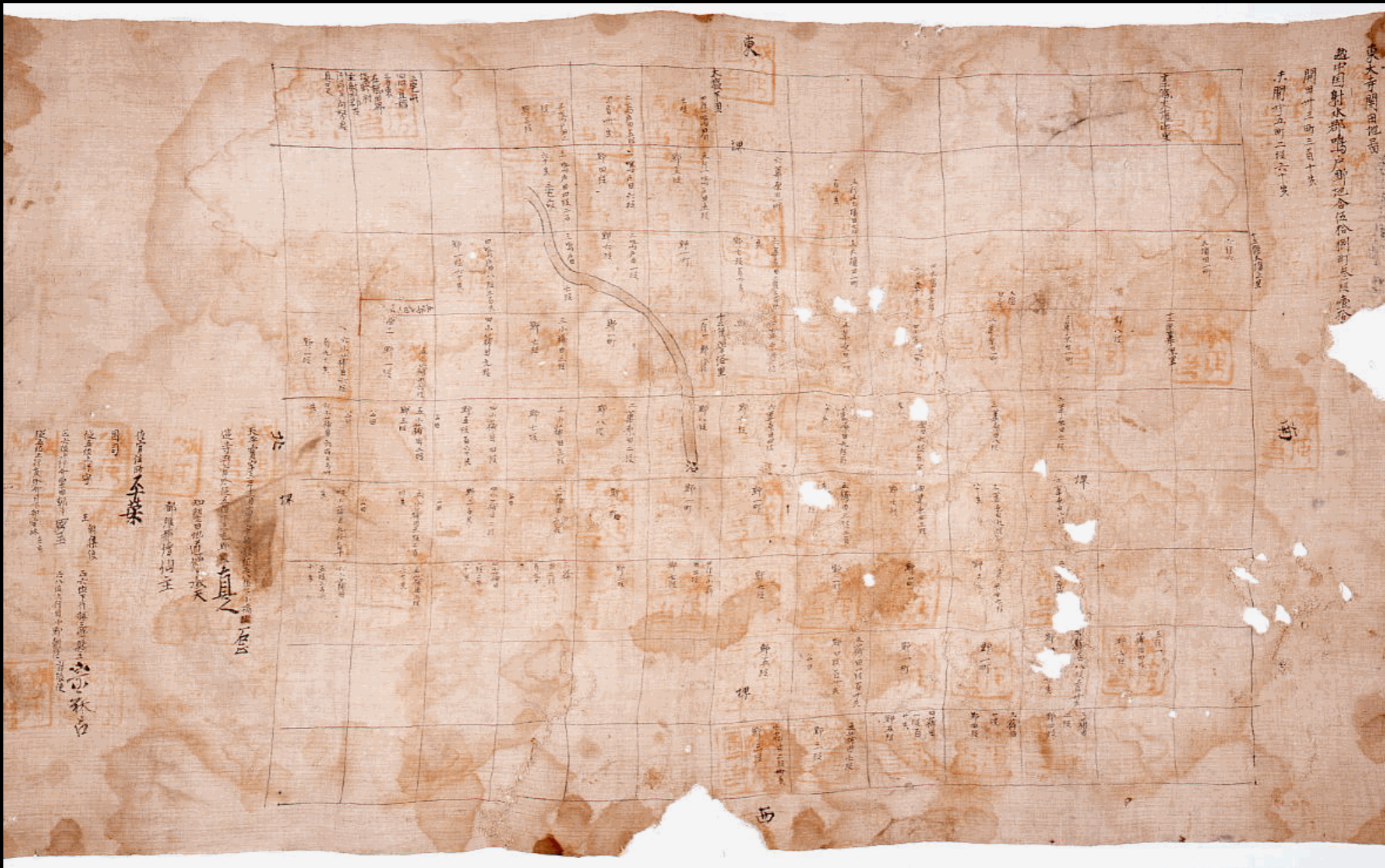


Court Culture and Spirituality

21H.154, Session 5

A Map of a Todaiji, Shōen

(759)



Key Shōen Dynamics

JE, Ch. 16, “The Shōen System,” pp. 167-177.

“three-way competition for control of lands and the profits that could be derived from them among wealthy peasants and the other elite provincial residents, provincial governors, and the great houses and religious institutions (kenmon)” (173)

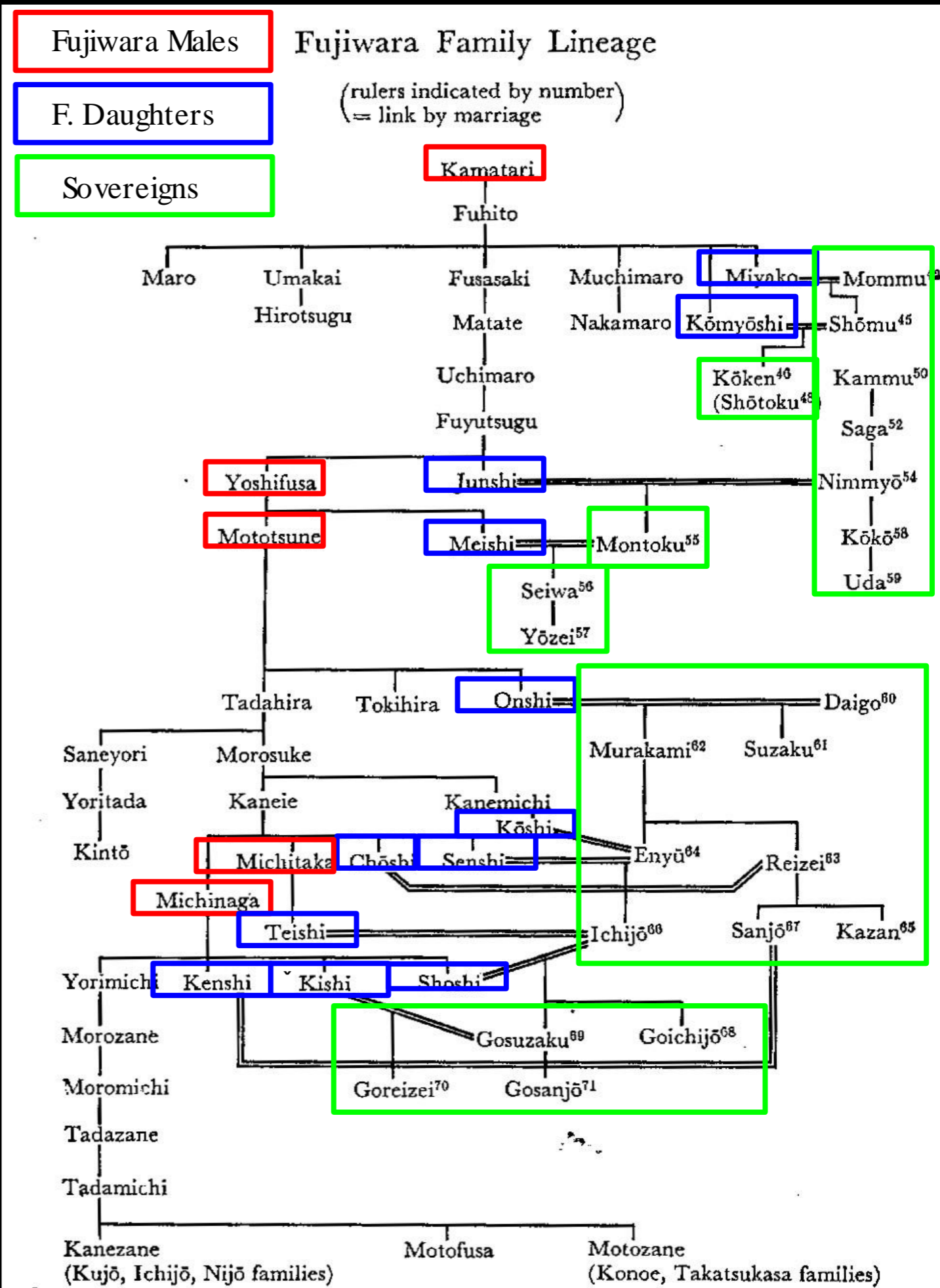
“...seesawing game of shifting alliances, interests, and balances of power that transformed both public and private landholding” (174), e.g. provincial governors as competitors AND allies to *shōen* people

Fujiwara Era (Kamatari descendants)

- Fujiwara no Yoshifusa (804-872)
 - 850: emperor's uncle and father-in-law
 - 858: regent (*sesshō*) to 9-years-old Seiwa
- Fujiwara no Mototsune (836-891)
 - Yoshifusa's son
 - 876: regent to 8-years-old Yōzei
 - Creation of regency for adult emperors (*kanpaku*)
- Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1027):
“...this world is indeed mine.”



Fujiwara Connections



Murasaki Shikibu

- Few details about life
- Born ca. 978
- Father: gov. of Echigo (1004)
- ca. 1005, enter service of Empress Shōshi (Emp. Ichijō consort and Fujiwara no Michinaga daughter)

This image is in the public domain. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).



Sei Shōnagon

This image is in the public domain. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

- 966-1026
- Murasaki contemporary
- Kiyohara clan
- 993, enters service of Empress Teishi
(another Ichijō consort;
daughter of regent
Fujiwara no Michitaka)



Historical Insights

- Gender relations
- Class and hierarchy
- Court politics/celebrity/values
- Spirituality
- Art and culture
- Environment

Heian Buddhism

- Close relationship with the elites
- Sign of anti-elitist, individualist shift
- Two key figures: Saichō and Kūkai

Saichō (767-822)

- Ordained at Tōdaiji in 785
- Builds Enryakuji on Mt. Hiei
- Key location: N.E. of Kyoto
- Alternative to Nara sects
- Founder of Tendai sect
 - Universal Buddha
 - Lotus Sutra



Kūkai (774-835)

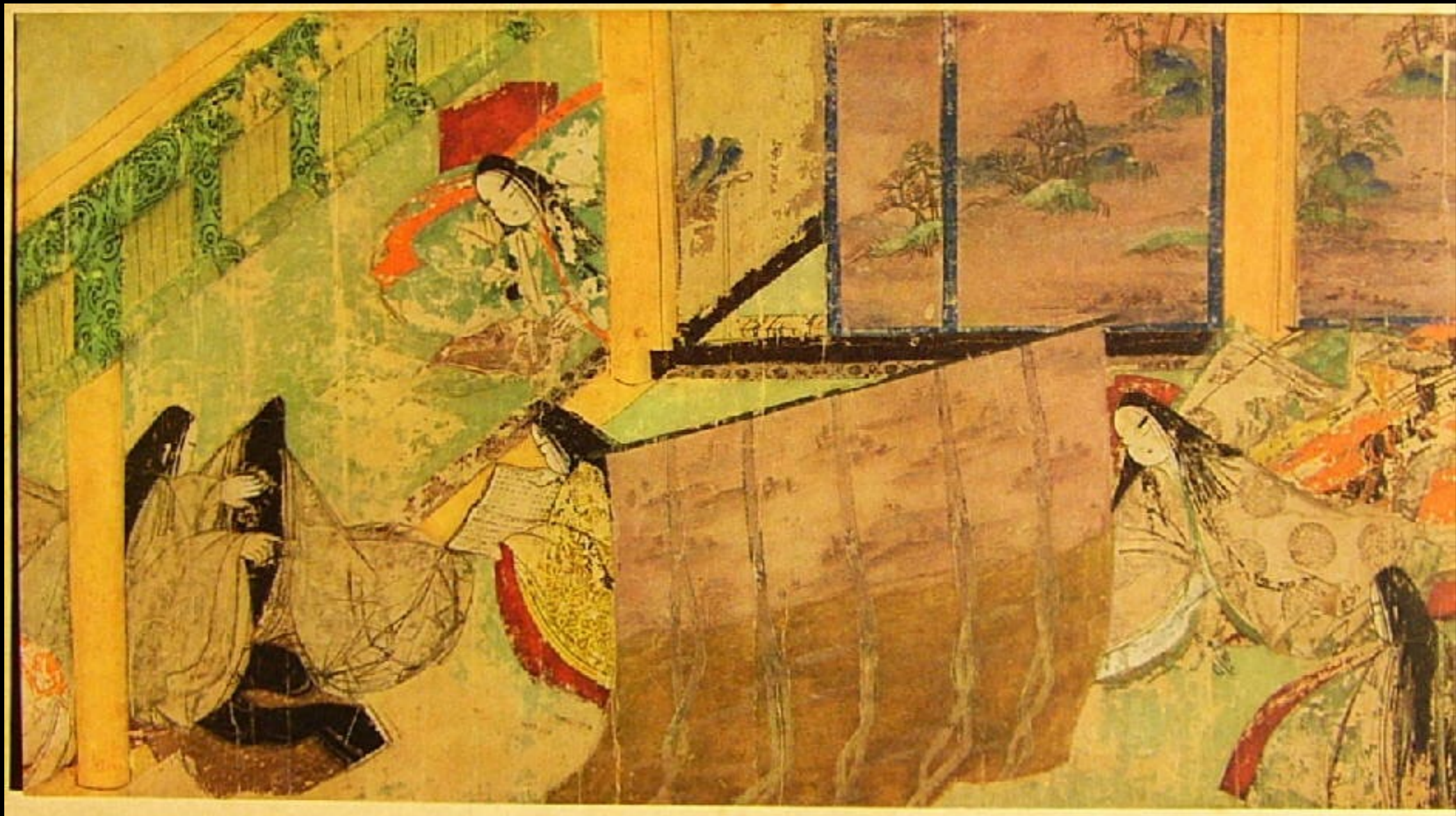
- Sent to China in 804 (along with Saichō)
- Encounter with esoteric Buddhism: creates Shingon (“true word”) sect
 - Three mysteries: Speech, Body, and Mind
- Away from capital: Mt. Kōya
- Went to “sleep” in 835...still sleeping...



Image courtesy of ColBase: [国立博物館所蔵品統合検索システム \(Integrated Collections Database of the National Museums, Japan\)](#) on Wikimedia Commons. License CC BY.

Kūkai/Shingon and Culture

- Emphasis on mandala=new genre:
yamatoe (“Yamato pictures”)



This image is in the public domain. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Kana かな Syllabary

- Chinese characters/ideographs: difficulties
- Kūkai credited with 2 *kana* systems:
 - *hiragana* ひらがな & *katakana* カタカナ
- New literary genres:
 - *waka* (“Japanese poetry”): 5-7-5-7-7 syllable poems
 - *Kokinshū* compiled in 905
 - Diaries and *monogatari* (romance, war, short stories)
 - folk lore: *Konjaku monogatari* (*Tales from the Past*)

Signs for Future Change ?

- Buddhism: still elitist
 - Tendai and Shingon as part of rulership
 - Wealth and power



© Source unknown. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

21H.154 / 21G.554 Inventing the Samurai
Fall 2022

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.