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BUILDING WARRIOR LEGITIMACY IN MEDIEVAL KYOTO

Matthew Stavros

Introduction

Cultural historians have long pointed to a dramatic transformation in the dominant style of elite residential architecture that took place during the period of Ashikaga domination of Kyoto (1336–c. 1467). The standard narrative traces the decline of the classical-era orthodox building style of shinden-zukuri 寝殿造 and its replacement by shoin-zukuri 書院造, the precursor to traditional-style, modern Japanese architecture. Through their forceful displacement of court culture and avid adoption of continental aesthetics, the Ashikaga shoguns are thought to have facilitated this transformation, which reached maturity about the middle of the fifteenth century. Today, shoin-style architecture is so strongly associated with medieval warriors that it is often referred to it as “warrior-style” (buke-zukuri 武家造), and it is broadly assumed that Ashikaga patronage contributed to the undermining of classical building styles in the imperial capital.

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1 For readability, imperial calendar years have been excluded from the body of the text.

In this article, I seek to demonstrate that the Ashikaga shoguns, rather than rejecting traditional building styles, in fact embraced and celebrated them. Doing so functioned to authenticate their status as members of the imperial hierarchy. I will also argue that the emergence of shoin-style architecture was related more to the development of new modes of social and political intercourse than to the introduction of alternative, namely “warrior”, aesthetic sensibilities. Furthermore, it will be suggested, albeit only in passing, that the notion that there existed a discrete “warrior” aesthetic in medieval Kyoto might be anachronistic.

Elite palaces built according to shinden principles of style and layout were conceived of as the prescribed venues for a highly ritualised form of imperial statecraft based on Ritsuryo 律令 laws and codes. The Ritsuryō system, like shinden style itself, had been adopted and adapted from China in the mid-eighth century. From about the tenth century, however, as the pre-eminence of the emperor and the court waned, an alternative form of political intercourse emerged, one based on negotiated consensus between powerful, private interest groups. These groups, appearing in textual sources as kenmon 權門, were comprised of aristocratic families, temples, retired emperors and, later, warriors. Kenmon-centered politics were far less ritualized than those of the classical era and, because the principle endured that shinden-style structures were the exclusive venues of Ritsuryō statecraft, the development of new forms of political intercourse necessitated the articulation of alternate architectural venues. It was out of these non-shinden/non-Ritsuryō trends that shoin style gradually emerged.

After seizing control of the capital in 1336, the Ashikaga, as an emerging kenmon in their own right, adopted the new architectural style, building within the grounds of their palacial residences what might be called “proto-shoin-style” structures. At the same time, however, they assiduously maintained shinden style. Therefore, while the Ashikaga were the successors to an emerging trend toward the articulation of shoin style, they were by no means its pioneers.

This study begins with a general introduction to shinden-style architecture. Knowledge of the classical model’s appearance and idealised role as an infrastructural component of Ritsuryō statecraft is critical to understanding its significance as a powerful indicator of status in the capital. The second section investigates systematically the structural characteristics of each of the successive Ashikaga shogunal residences built in Kyoto leading up to the late-fifteenth century, the period when most commentators agree shoin style reached its maturity and shinden style all but disappeared. Integrating texts, pictorial sources and archaeological data (much of which have only recently become available) makes it possible to demonstrate that early Ashikaga shoguns dedicated tremendous resources to building and maintaining shinden-style structures in spite of powerful countervailing forces.
architectural trends. Strong shoguns like Yoshimitsu 義満 and Yoshinori 義教, in fact, very likely forestalled the trend toward shinden obsolescence by continuing to build palace structures in the classical style then using them to hold Ritsuryō rituals that were remarkably traditional for their time. By maintaining shinden style and faithfully observing Ritsuryō customs, Ashikaga shoguns authenticated their status as vested members of the imperial hierarchy. Most striking about this finding is how it necessitates a reconsideration of warriors as a force of change in the medieval capital. By demonstrating the lengths to which they went to preserve classical-era building styles, this article suggests more broadly that the Ashikaga shoguns might rightly be considered powerful guardians of traditional capital norms.4

In light of the findings of this research, the question remains: Why did shinden style eventually disappear from the residences of both the civil and warrior elites by the end of the fifteenth century? The answer, somewhat ironically, is related to the distillation of the fundamental principles of shinden functionality. By the early-fifteenth century, the Ashikaga shoguns were directing enormous resources toward the maintenance of Ritsuryō customs and shinden-style architecture. At the same time, however, sōin style was proliferating, facilitating an increasingly wide variety of activities ranging from formal meetings and imperial visits to entertainment and everyday life. With sōin-style structures accommodating almost all non-Ritsuryō activities, shinden structures could revert to their original, albeit overly idealised, role as the exclusive venue of traditional state ritual and ceremony. While this development was, to a certain extent, an affirmation of the shinden style's importance, circumstances became such that any significant disruption to the already weakened Ritsuryō order might trigger the disappearance of its corresponding architectural component. The Ōnin War (Onin no ran 応仁の乱), which ravaged Kyoto for more than a decade after 1467, had exactly this effect. The intermittent violence and the fires it spawned threw the capital’s residents into survival mode. The elaborate formalities of the then antiquated Ritsuryō system could no longer be easily maintained. Ritsuryō rituals lapsed and with financial strain being felt at all levels of society, funds for the building of shinden-style structures disappeared. To make matters worse, the one political figure who might have possessed the resources and leadership necessary to stem shinden obsolescence, the shogun Yoshimasa 義政, was entirely uninterested in political affairs, whether imperial or shogunal. The style of his retirement villa at Higashiyama (Higashiyama-dō no 東山殿), where not a single shinden-style structure was built, was indicative of the shogun’s almost total abandonment of the court and classical forms of political pageantry.5 These and other factors that contributed to the disappearance of shinden style will be discussed in the last section of this article.


The earliest form of shinden-style architecture in Japan was based on the ritual state shrines (Jap. kyūden 宮殿) of the Tang 唐 capital of Chang'an 長安. Its adoption by the Japanese imperial family in the eighth century was part of an ambitious project to import a range of Chinese political, cultural and religious institutions. The style was initially implemented in the building of the imperial palace in Nara 奈良 as well as many state-sponsored Buddhist temples. Despite shinden style being unsuitable as residential architecture, its adoption was related to the ruling elite’s objective of codifying a ritualised form of statecraft based on the Tang-inspired Ritsuryō codes. It was envisioned that the emperor would justify and perpetuate his virtuous rule through an almost continuous repertoire of carefully scripted ceremonies. These ceremonies included regular bestowals of rank as well as a diverse range of religious rituals and annual observances. More than three hundred in all, these annual observances (known as nenjūgyōji 年中行事) took place according to strict rules of precedence and pageantry that prescribed everything from clothing and gestures to architecture and interior décor. Starting with the imperial palace, shinden-style complexes were a key part of the formalised paraphernalia of classical authority. This fundamental correspondence between form and function, according to William Coaldrake, “reveals the adoption of an official architectural vocabulary based on Tang usage,
and makes an equation between government by virtue, a fundamental Confucian tenet, and appropriate physical form. On the relationship between Ritsuryō government and *shinden* style, Coaldrake observes that "it is the same type of equation that we accept exists between democratic governments and Greek Classical architecture."\(^8\)

*Shinden-zukuri* refers both to a building style and a prescribed layout plan. An overview of the genre’s characteristic features should begin with a consideration of layout. In general, the earliest fully mature *shinden*-style palaces were complexes consisting of as many as fifteen discrete structures arranged symmetrically along a north-south axis and enclosed within a rectangular earthen wall. At the center, traditionally standing to the north of a garden or pond, was the central palatial structure called *shinden* (lit. sleeping palace, 寝殿). Serving both as the primary ritual venue and the main residential quarters of the master of the house, the south-facing *shinden* was connected to surrounding subsidiary structures via a network of covered corridors (*tōrō*).

Perhaps the most striking structural trait of *shinden*-style architecture was the absence of fixed interior walls, and, as a result, the non-existence of rooms. Reticulating wooden shutters (*shitomido* 落戸) served to close buildings off from the outside, but inner chambers remained open, partitioned only by folding screens, curtains, or bamboo blinds. Such temporary fixtures were used on an occasional basis to accommodate specific activities such as eating, sleeping, or the holding of particular events or rituals. Once their purpose was served, they were either rearranged or stowed.\(^9\) It would be incorrect, therefore, to think in terms of the existence of "living rooms" or "bedrooms" within early *shinden*-style palaces. Interior space was definitively non-function-specific. This key defining characteristic was related to the notion of preserving the original *kyūden* architectural ideal to the point where any alterations made to accommodate non-Ritsuryō functions were to be minimal and, most important, temporary. This tendency helps to explain the overall austerity of *shinden*-style interiors. The general absence of furniture (including beds, chairs, tables and desks) is notable. Straw *tatami* 脱 mats were used on occasion to facilitate sitting or reclining but otherwise the wooden plank floors remained bare throughout. Without walls or any variations in floor level, large wooden pillars were the only permanent structural elements that interrupted interior space.\(^10\) Finally, it should be noted that there were no hanging ceilings or windows in *shinden*-style structures. Much more could be said about mensuration principles and exterior design but this information is not immediately pertinent to the current discussion (see Figure 2 overleaf).

*Shinden* style proliferated in the ninth century after the capital was moved from Nara to Kyoto and members of the nobility began to mimic the forms of the imperial palace in the building of their own urban residences.

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This broad adoption of *shinden* style was related to the civil aristocracy's increased employment of state rituals as a means for demonstrating their membership in the Ritsuryō system. Possessing the necessary architectural apparatuses endowed the élite with the physical infrastructure to hold those rituals. But from the outset there was in Japan a significant gulf between *shinden* style's idealised function and the way the structures were actually used. To be sure, élite palaces, including the imperial palace itself, were much more than sterile venues of state ritual. They were also fully functional personal residences. Circumstances necessitated their accommodation of private worship, entertainment and house business, as well as the more mundane necessities of everyday life such as sleeping, eating and washing. Modification of the original, and largely impractical, model was as inevitable as it was immediate.

By the end of the Heian period (794–1185), the size of *shinden*-style complexes had shrunk dramatically. A general trend emerged whereby many non-essential structures were either pared down or eliminated altogether. Nobles' halls (*kugyōza* 公卿座), opposing halls (*tainoya* 対屋) and carriage houses (*kurumayado* 車宿) were often among the first to disappear. By the twelfth century, only the imperial palace maintained symmetrical entrance corridors (*chūmon-rō* 中門廊). At the same time,
However, we see the emergence of new structures such as fishing pavilions (*tsuridono* 船殿) and private temples (*jibutsudo* 持仏堂). These were used to accommodate informal activities not native to the *shinden* model, and their appearance was indicative of profound social and political change. One element of that change was the emergence of warriors as a political force in the capital.

*Ashikaga Shogunal Palaces in Kyoto: Maintaining the Shinden Model*

Successive Ashikaga shoguns who occupied Kyoto from 1336 until about the outbreak of the Ōnin war in 1467 carefully maintained *shinden-*style architectural models at their palatial residences. These structures served as venues within which the shogunal leadership could conduct rituals that, as noted, substantiated their membership in the Ritsuryō system. But the Ashikaga came to power in Kyoto during a period of *kenmon* -centered politics. As a result, they also willingly and wisely adopted those newer architectural forms that functioned as venues for this alternative mode of social and political interaction, which had been emerging from at least as early as the tenth century. Therefore, while the Ashikaga did, without doubt, build structures within their palace compounds that can be considered “proto-

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sōnin style”, they were by no means the style’s pioneers, nor were they its sole promoters. In this light, the problem with calling sōnin style “warrior style” is obvious. The sections that follow systematically investigate the architectural composition of each of the major Ashikaga shogunal residences built in Kyoto between 1336 and 1467. The case will be made that in the building of both shinden- and non-shinden-style structures, the Ashikaga were responding to precedent rather than carving out new notions of élite living.

The Earliest Residences

Despite his appointment as shogun in 1338, we have no evidence that Ashikaga Takauji 足利尊氏 maintained a permanent domicile in Kyoto until as late as 1344. The palace built in the northern district of Kamigyō 上京 that year burned down in 1349, was rebuilt, then burned down again in 1351. Following the last fire, Takauji remained itinerant until the end of 1353, when he finally moved into a new palace adjacent to the Ashikaga mortuary temple of Tōjī in Shimogō 下京. He died in 1358. Therefore, the seven years between 1344 and 1351 during which Takauji lived in Kamigyō was a period of relative sedentariness. Despite a paucity of textual and pictorial evidence, what can be gleaned from extant sources about this Kamigyō palace indicates clearly that the central shinden was built according to traditional shinden-style protocol.

A diagram of the structure’s ground plan (Figure 3) is included in Mon’yō-ki 門葉記, a record of rituals performed at the residences of the Kyoto élite by monks from the imperial cloister temple of Shōren-in 青蓮院. As depicted, the building was five bays (ken間) wide and four bays deep. Reticulating wooden shutters opened outward on the southern (front) and western sides of the edifice. An entrance

Figure 3

Diagram of the central shinden at Takauji’s Kamigyō residence as it appeared in 1346. From Mon’yō-ki vol.11, p.605
corridor (chūmon-rō) extended to the south from the western side. All pillars were round, and interior space was partitioned only by a series of curtains which, in this case, probably demarcated the ritual area. The structure possessed no permanent interior walls.

By the period when this diagram was drawn, many members of the élite had begun introducing stationary walls into their central shinden to create rooms on the northern faces (the back). These rooms appear in documents as “tsune-gosho 常御所, meaning “regular palace”, a name indicative of their function as private, non-Ritsu-ryō living space. This diagram and its accompanying text confirm that Takauji did not follow the trend of fashioning a tsune-gosho on the north side of his central shinden. Instead, he adhered to a more traditional, classical-era model. In fact, the only non-shinden-style structure on the property for which there is any reliable documentation was a small Buddhist reliquary (shariden 舍利殿), which was apparently the centerpiece of a small private temple 持仏堂 (jibutsudo). Since private temples began being integrated into élite Kyoto residences from as early as the tenth century, this deviation from the orthodox shinden-style plan can hardly be considered innovative.16

The Sanjō-bōmon palace (Sanjō-bōmon-dono 三条坊門殿), built by Ashikaga Tadayoshi 真言 and located in the capital’s southern district of Shimogoyō, was the first headquarters of the Ashikaga shogunate in Kyoto.17 Textual accounts describing this site make specific reference to architectural and stylistic elements typical of a shinden-style residential complex. Among them are: a south-facing shinden, an opposing hall, the use of reticulating shutters, a cusped-gable roof (kara-bafu 唐破風), and a hurdle veranda (sunoko-en 箬子園) that opened onto a carriage dock (kurumadome 車止). Similar features are found at the adjacent Ashikaga mortuary temple of Tōjijī, detailed information about which comes to us from Tōjijī ezu 等持寺絵図, a color illustration of the property dated to about 1356.18 Tōjijī’s Buddha hall (butsuden 仏殿) possessed two elaborate entrance corridors. As Nakamura Masao 中村昌生 has pointed out, while such a characteristic would have been typical of a temple or élite residence built in the eighth or ninth century, Tadayoshi’s implementation of dual corridors in the mid-fourteenth century was as lavish a stylistic flourish as it was reminiscent of a bygone era.19 By this period, due to a general trend toward shrinkage and abbreviation of shinden-style complexes, most élite residences possessed only one entrance corridor; many had none at all.20

Of all Ashikaga shogunal residences, none is as enigmatic as the second Sanjō-bōmon palace built in 1365 by the second shogun, Yoshia kira 義親. The several texts that refer to the palace-headquarters mention only its location—on the block in Shimogoyō immediately southeast of the original Sanjō-bōmon palace—and the facing of its front gate toward the west.21 Very little else can be determined about the site. Following Yoshimitsu’s
death in 1408, however, Yoshimochi 義持, the fourth shogun, rebuilt the Sanjō-bōmon palace, converting it into a residential headquarters for which we have exceptionally good records. We shall, therefore, revisit this site after first considering Yoshimitsu’s several Kyoto residences.

Albeit limited, the available sources describing the palaces of Takuji, Tadayoshi and Yoshiakira demonstrate clearly that their builders consistently adhered to modes of shinden-style construction and layout that were exceptionally traditional for their time.

Yoshimitsu’s Muromachi-dono

In the spring of 1381, Yoshimitsu received his first cousin, the emperor Goen’yū 後円融, at his newly completed residence, the Muromachi-dono 室町殿. An anonymous witness to the events of the day composed a detailed, albeit breathless, account of the grounds and its several structures. Sakayukuhana 歌川の花苑 describes a central shinden, an inner gate (chūmon 中門), eastern and northern opposing halls, a circular corridor (sukiwata-dono kairo 透渡殿回廊) and a fishing pavilion. The splendor of the scene, reports the diarist in language typical of the age, was “surprising to the eyes”. The account gives special attention to the central shinden and garden, where the emperor was received and several formal rituals were performed:

The ridges of the shinden, with their three and four-leaved decorations, are all newly built .... Peripheral chambers [hisashi 邊] are surrounded by a hurdle veranda [hashinosunoko はしのすのこ]; reticulating shutters open wide to a front garden. There is a pond larger than a whole city block into which flows water drawn from the Kamo 河.

This account of the Muromachi-dono has long been read as a testament to the palace’s adherence to shinden-style protocols. Indeed the existence of a central shinden augmented by opposing halls, a circular corridor, and an inner gate alone demonstrates that careful attention was paid to classical-era models. Yoshimitsu’s adherence to this mode of material pageantry has been interpreted as relating to the shogun’s intent to cast himself as a man of status and refinement on a par with members of the court nobility. An assumption is made that a “warrior” such as Yoshimitsu would have been expected to build in the “warrior style” of shoin-zukuri. This logic, however, is flawed in several ways. First, it is problematic to categorize Yoshimitsu strictly as a “warrior”. By the time of his move to Kamigyō, he had attained the court rank of Chief Councillor of State (gon-dainagon 勲大納言) and, as such, was a fully vested member of the Ritsuryō hierarchy. Second, as pointed out above, members of the Ashikaga leadership had been building palaces in the shinden style since at least the founding of the shogunate in 1336. Finally, and most important, shoin style did not emerge as a discrete architectural genre until about the
second decade of the fifteenth century. Any assumption that Yoshimitsu should have built in that style is clearly anachronistic.

But there is a more fundamental problem. The scholarship of cultural historians that treats Yoshimitsu’s use of shinden style exhibits a certain naïveté about the style’s fundamental significance. Its relevance derived not from its conformity to notions of what constituted “fine living”. Rather, it was its status as the prescribed venue for Ritsuryō statecraft that made it special and important. The existence of shinden-style structures at the homes of members of the élite, noble and warrior alike, endowed those individuals with the architectural infrastructure necessary to conduct rituals that, in turn, authenticated their membership in the hierarchy. Yoshimitsu’s use of shinden style, therefore, should be read more as the result of his intent to fulfill the specific ritualistic demands of his station within the Ritsuryō system than an attempt to impress the Kamigyo élite.

The distinction being made is subtle yet ultimately of great significance. The building of the palace coincided with Yoshimitsu’s assertion of political independence from the custodianship of his childhood caretaker, the regent Hosokawa Yoriyuki 細川頼之, and his recent court promotion to Chief Councillor. The several shinden-style structures at Muromachi functioned as a stage—physical, not metaphorical—upon which Yoshimitsu could comport himself publicly in the manner of a ranking court official. It was in these structures that he held, for example, a grand haiga 拝賀 ceremony in the seventh month of 1379 by which he formally conveyed his gratitude to the emperor for the promotion. Other prominent Ritsuryō-style events included the formal hosting of emperor Goen’yū in 1381 and another haiga marking Yoshimitsu’s subsequent promotion to Grand Chancellor of State (Dafō-daijin 太政大臣) in 1394. In each case, great care was taken to ensure that protocol adhered to the strictest rules of Ritsuryō pageantry and precedence. Having the proper architectural venue was vital to fulfilling expectations of status.

The structures at Muromachi that did not fit the shinden-style model have received more scholarly scrutiny than those that did. In particular, research has focused on the kaisbo 会所, or “meeting place”, that reportedly stood to the northeast of the central shinden. The first of many to be built at an Ashikaga shogunal palace, the kaisbo was the type of structure in which the arts of the succeeding Higashiyama era (c. 1483–90) blossomed. H. Paul Varley has pointed out that the evolution of this new setting was so significant that historians often discuss the later period in terms of “kaisbo culture”. The reason for this, Varley claims, is that several of the most important forms of Muromachi art and culture, such as linked-verse (renge 鏡歌) and the tea ceremony, were premised on intimate social intercourse for which the kaisbo and, from the late fifteenth century on, the sōin 書院 served as settings. In terms of form and function, the kaisbo model was the antecedent of sōin style.
Yoshimitsu moved permanently to Kitayama following the death of his wife in the fifth month of 1399.

For a chronology of Yoshimochi’s activities at Muromachi see Shiryō sanran [Documentary chorological appendix] (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1923-63). Emperor Gokomatsu 后小松 lived within the Muromachi-dono shinden between Oei 8 (1401)/2/29 and Oei 9 (1402)/11/19 because of repairs being done at the imperial palace. See documents in Dai Nihonshirya, vol.7, no 4, from p.914, and Ashikaga-ke kan’i-ki.

See H. Paul Varley, “Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama”.

Far too little information is available on the Muromachi-dono’s kaisho to examine that structure’s significance adequately. There is, however, one critical aspect of its history that should not be overlooked: it was probably not built by Yoshimitsu. The kaisho at Muromachi first appears in documents from 1401, the year after Yoshimitsu moved to his retirement villa at Kitayama 北山, leaving both the palace and the post of shogun to his son, Yoshimochi 義持. The kaisho was Yoshimochi’s preferred venue for all social and political activities throughout the period. Indeed we have no evidence that he used the sbinden at all prior to Yoshimitsu’s death in 1408. His apparent avoidance of the sbinden might have been related to the perceived need to conduct business in a discreet, unofficial way so as to avoid the risk of upstaging Yoshimitsu, who continued to wield significant influence from Kitayama. For Yoshimochi, the kaisho constituted an ideal alternative venue for socio-political conduct and his avid use of the structure might help to explain the subsequent proliferation of the style. Whatever the case may be, the observation that Yoshimitsu probably did not build the kaisho at the Muromachi-dono throws into question the notion that he was a zealous proponent of new architectural aesthetics. We have no evidence, in fact, that Yoshimitsu maintained any structures at Muromachi that departed from the shinden-style norm. The same cannot be said about his retirement villa at Kitayama but, as the following section will show, deviations from shinden-style there were part of a protracted trend that had been transforming élite residences for over a century.

The Kitayama Villa

Yoshimitsu is well known for his lavish patronage of the arts at Kitayama. The Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku shiriden 金閣舎利殿), which remained standing at the site until its destruction by arson in 1950, was emblematic of “Kitayama culture”, a term used to describe emerging forms of painting, performance, poetry and tea consumption that were promoted and advanced at Kitayama between about 1399 and 1408. The Golden Pavilion’s implementation of both shinden and shoin architectural styles is often read as indicative of the way Yoshimitsu facilitated a transition in architectural aesthetics from the former to the latter. And the kaisho or “meeting place” within which Yoshimitsu so famously entertained the emperor in 1408 is regularly pointed to as the inspiration for the proliferation of that type of building in later shogunal palaces. But for all of Kitayama’s contributions to the most celebrated features of the period’s culture, there were deeply conservative elements to the site that are too often overlooked. For Yoshimitsu, the move to Kitayama was not a rejection of Kyoto politics and the villa itself was by no means a place where he meant to lose himself entirely in the cultural and religious pursuits for which the site is most well known. On the contrary, Kitayama was, first
and foremost, a venue designed to empower its owner to comport himself in the manner of a retired emperor.\(^{34}\) In fact, as I will argue, it had been physically engineered explicitly for that purpose. This section examines the architectural composition of Kitayama and demonstrates how its constituent components functioned not only to confirm Yoshimitsu’s status as a member of the imperial hierarchy in general but more specifically to signify his attainment of a rank equivalent to that of retired emperor.

The greater Kitayama villa comprised not one but three independent shinden-style complexes. These were: the “Northern Palace” (kita no dai 北第), which was used mainly for ceremonial purposes; the “Southern Palace” (minami no dai 南第), where Yoshimitsu and his wife, Hino Yasuko 野津康子, resided with their retinue; and an additional complex further to the south within which lived Fujiwara Nakako 藤原仲子, the grandmother of Emperor Gokomatsu (who was also the sister of Yoshimitsu’s mother, Ki Yoshiko 紀良子).\(^{35}\) Most texts make only fleeting mention of the latter two complexes and none include specific details about their appearance.\(^{36}\) Archaeological findings, however, provide somewhat more information, which suggests generally that the ground plans of both followed patterns typical of shinden style.\(^{37}\)

We know far more about the Northern Palace. Textual accounts consistently indicate the site’s importance as a venue for public ceremony and Ritsuryō ritual. Traditional “annual observances” and Shingon 真言 rituals for the protection of the state (gokoku butsuji 護国仏事) took place there regularly.\(^{38}\) It was where in 1407 Yoshimitsu’s wife began the prescribed set of rituals (judai girei 入内儀礼) related to her being formally made surrogate mother of Emperor Gokomatsu.\(^{39}\) In 1408, when Gokomatsu visited Kitayama, the central shinden was used to hold a series of Ritsuryō ceremonies in which Yoshimitsu ceremonially received the emperor and accepted his tacit agreement to swiftly promote his second son, Yoshitsugu 義嗣. The shinden was also used to lodge the emperor throughout his nineteen-day stay.\(^{40}\)

Finally, and perhaps most dramatically, the Northern Palace was used to conduct international diplomacy. It was there where Yoshimitsu received and entertained envoys from both the Ming and Chosŏn courts on at least six occasions between 1402 and 1407.\(^{41}\) Textual sources are explicit about the lengths to which Yoshimitsu went to ensure strict adherence to Ritsuryō precedent in each case. In preparation for the most important visit by Ming ambassadors in 1402, for example, the abbot of Daigoji temple 醍醐寺, Mansai 満清, was taken on as a protocol advisor for the planning of everything from the approach and seating arrangements to décor and

\(^{34}\) On Yoshimitsu’s imperial aspirations, see Imatani Akira, Muronmachi no ōden—Ashikaga Yoshimitsu no ōken sandatsu keikaku [Ashikaga Yoshimitsu’s plan to usurp imperial authority] (Tokyo: Chûkô Shinsho, no.978, 1990) and his “Not for Lack of Will or Wile: Yoshimitsu’s Failure to Supplant the Imperial Lineage,” Journal of Japanese

\(^{35}\) Fujiwara Nakako appears in documents as Sükennen-in 嵐賢門院.

\(^{36}\) The texts in which we find the most substantial descriptions of the Kitayama property are: Kitayama-dono gyōkō-ki [Record of the Imperial Procession to the Kitayama Palace], (Gunsho ruiji, vol.3, pp.523–43); Koryaku [Journal of Ichijō Tsunetsugu 一条経樹], excerpted variously in Dai Nibon shiryō; Mansai (Daigoji zasu Mansai), Mansai jugō nikki [Journal of Abbot Mansai] 2 vols., (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruiji Kansei-kai, 1928); and Nortokki kyō-ki [Journal of Yamashina Noritoki], 2 vols. (Shiseki shūran, Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruiji Kansei-kai, 1970–71). Mon'yō-ki also includes several important diagrams as well as descriptive text.

\(^{37}\) Kyōto-shi maizō bunkazai kenkyū-jo (Zaidan hōjin), ed., Tokubetsu shiseki, tokubetsu meibō Rokunonji (Kinkaku-ji) teien, bōsan bōhan shisetsu kōji ni tonomai hakkutsu chōsa [Excavation at Kinkaku temple on the occasion of anti-disaster and anti-crime renovations] (Kyoto: Rokunonji, 1997). It should be noted that an excavation of the site is ongoing. New and important discoveries are being made regularly.


\(^{39}\) See entries for Ōei 14 (1407)/3/5–23 in Koryaku, in Dai Nibon shiryō vol.7, no.8, pp.822–6.

\(^{40}\) Gokomatsu was at Kitayama from Ōei 15 (1408)/3/8 to 3/28. See Kitayama-dono gyōkō-ki, and Nortokki kyō-ki, vol.2, pp.216–36.

clothing. Every detail was planned meticulously and choreographed to follow precedent set by “former sovereigns” (senkō 先皇).\footnote{Mansaijugō nikki, vol.2, pp.583-4.} Matters of precedent were critical to members of the imperial hierarchy, for whom familiarity with and attention to the “grammar” of imperial pageantry were markers of status. Maintaining a proper architectural venue was one of several performative necessities. Texts confirm the existence at the Northern Palace of all the fundamental elements of a shinden-style complex, including a four-legged gate (yotsu ashi mon 四脚門), a central gate, an entrance corridor, an opposing hall, and a central shinden.
Detailed descriptions of the central **shinden** refer to a hurdle veranda, a south-facing staircase, and the use of curtains, folding screens and bamboo blinds to partition interior space.\(^{43}\) Each of these traits was characteristic of early **shinden** style. Archaeological data collected over the course of seven excavations conducted between 1988 and 1993 make it possible to reconstruct the ground plan of these structures (see Figure 4).\(^{44}\) Most striking about the plan is its traditionalism in an age of change.

The composition of the central **shinden** departed from classical-era models in three subtle yet significant ways. First, it was seven bays in width; second, it incorporated rectangular pillars; and third, it possessed interior rooms (**bikae-shitsu**控室) on the north side of the structure, which were used alternately as private living quarters and places to accommodate servants or guests on formal occasions.\(^{45}\) A standard central **shinden** built at the home of a member of the Kyoto elite would typically have been five bays wide and three bays deep. Seven-bay **shinden** were reserved exclusively for retired emperors.\(^{46}\) The **shinden** at Kitayama was, therefore, an unambiguous physical demonstration of Yoshimitsu’s intent to comport himself as a retired emperor. The other two variations apparent at the Northern Palace have been cited as proof that Yoshimitsu was a force for change in **shinden**-style architecture and that the structures at Kitayama, both **shinden**- and non-**shinden**-style alike, were instrumental in the articulation of **sboin** style.\(^{47}\) Rectangular pillars and rooms, after all, are among the hallmarks of **sboin** style. But consideration of the broader historical context within which Kitayama was built reveals that the apparent deviations from the classical model belonged to a trend that had been transforming elite residences for several centuries.\(^{48}\)

The temporary partitioning of interior **shinden** space through the use of folding screens, curtains and bamboo shades emerged as early as the eighth century. The rooms that were created in this fashion were customarily outfitted (**shitsurai**室礼) to accommodate specific non-Ritsuryō functions such as social affairs and private business as well as eating, sleeping and bathing. Early on, this practice of temporarily accoutering interior spaces was limited to secondary structures such as corridors or “fountain pavilions” (**izumidono** 泉殿). In time, however, the need to accommodate new and increasingly frequent non-Ritsuryō functions, as well as the emergence of a heightened sense of the importance of dedicated living space over ritual space, contributed to the creation of permanent interior rooms. When, in the twelfth century, elite complexes began to shrink and the importance placed on Ritsuryō customs waned, even the central **shinden** itself was partitioned up with stationary walls and sliding doors. Creating these rooms, often appearing in documents as **tsune-gosho**, or “regular palaces”, on the northern sides of their **shinden** enabled the elite to hold poetry contests, drinking parties and any number of other private...
Figure 5
The emergence of rooms and rectangular pillars in the architecture of the Kyoto elite

A. Sōjō Yoshiyasu residence, c. 1228. (Mon’yō-ki 12:7).

B. Fujiwara Teika residence, c. 1230. (Ōta Seiroku, "Fujiwara Teika no teitaku ni tsuite").


D. Imadegawa horio central shinden, c. 1303. (Mon’yō-ki 11:186).

E. Central shinden of the Okazaki-bō Sanemori-in, c. 1319. (Mon’yō-ki 12:199).

F. Saionji Kitayama palace, c. 1285. (From Kishira kō-ki.)
functions in a way that minimised their impact upon the south-facing parts of those structures, spaces that remained reserved for traditional rituals. Diagrams A-F included in Figure 5 provide representative examples of elite homes that used walls and doors to create private interior spaces. The trend was apparent at least as early as 1228 at the residence of the court-appointed abbot, Sōjō Yoshiyasu 僧正光業 (diagram A). It appears also that Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家, the celebrated man of letters, had introduced permanent walls even into the front part of his shinden (B). The shinden depicted in diagrams C and D were both clearly divided into southern (front) and northern (back) parts through the implementation of sliding and even a swinging door. Diagrams E and F are indicative of how elaborate interior partitioning had become by the mid-fourteenth century. Of particular interest is the indication in diagram A of rectangular pillars. These were more suited than their round counterparts to accommodating the tracks and fixtures of sliding panels. This structural modification, while apparently not widespread in the medieval era, was to become a hallmark of shoin-style architecture of the later era.

Yoshimitsu’s departures from classical-era shinden models at Kitayama, therefore, belonged to a long-term trend whereby the élite were creating spaces within their residences specifically for private, non-Ritsuryō functions. The same trend explains the development of the kaisho and “minor palace” (sbō-gosho 小御所), structures for which Kitayama and “Kitayama culture” are perhaps best known. But in this respect too, Yoshimitsu was more following a trend than setting one. In fact, both the kaisho and “minor palace” at Kitayama were artifacts of the site’s previous incarnation as the retreat villa of the Saionji 西園寺. That family of high nobility had used it throughout the thirteenth century to host the emperor and other distinguished guests in a manner not unlike that for which Yoshimitsu is so well known. Even Yoshimitsu’s famed admiration for and implementation of Chinese arts and crafts (known generally as karamono 唐物) can be interpreted as mimicry of the Saionji. In this light, it becomes necessary to rethink Yoshimitsu’s legacy as an anachronism promoter of new cultural and aesthetic sensibilities.

Yoshimochi and Yoshinori’s Sanjō-bōmon Palace

Following Yoshimitsu’s sudden and suspicious death in 1408, his son, the shogun Yoshimochi, moved from Muromachi to the Kitayama villa. Almost immediately, however, he set into motion plans to rebuild the Sanjō-bōmon palace, the former shogunal headquarters in Shimogyō. Completed in 1409, the newly reconstructed Sanjō-bōmon palace was used successively by shoguns Yoshimochi, Yoshikazu 義就 and Yoshinori until 1431, when Yoshinori rebuilt the Muromachi-dono and moved back to Kamigyō. The 22 years during which the Sanjō-bōmon palace functioned (without interruption) as the shogunal headquarters was the

49 Ibid., p.282.
50 The Saionji fixation on continental culture is well documented. Family heads continued to trade directly with the Song court even after official state relations were severed late in the Heian period. In 1142, Saionji Kintsune 西園寺公経 commissioned the building of a shinden out of cypress to be dismantled and sent to the Song emperor. Delighted with the gift, the emperor reciprocated by sending many karamono treasures that Kintsune displayed within his “minor palace”. See Rokuon, p.13.
51 On the location, size and orientation of Yoshiakira’s “new” Sanjō-bōmon palace, see entries from Daigeki-shi natsu-ki [Summer record of the outer court scribe] in Nochikagami [The latter mirror], ed. Narijima Yoshitsugu, in Kokushitaikei (shintei zoho) [National History Compilation], ed., Kuroita Katsumi (Tokyo: Kokushi Taiki Kankō-kai, 1932), vol.1, p.700.
Even after Yoshimitsu had moved away from the palace at Muromachi, contemporary authors continued to refer to the shogun and all successive shoguns as “The Lord of Muromachi” (Muromachi-dono).

I will now examine the Sanjō-bōmon palace of Yoshimochi and Yoshinori (shogun Yoshikazu died as a child, while Yoshimochi was still alive). Again we find traditional, shinden-style architecture being used to conduct Ritsuryō-style rituals. The non-shinden-style structures will also be discussed to suggest that the expansion of their usefulness contributed to a reversion in the functionality of the shinden-style structures to an exceptionally prototypical, idealistic, model.

The Sanjō-bōmon complex resembled the Muromachi-dono and the Kitayama villa in that it was composed of two distinct compounds, one consisting of traditional shinden-style structures and the other of several non-shinden-style structures. The former features prominently in documents that describe a succession of high-profile Ritsuryō-style events held between 1410 and 1430. The following are representative:

1411/11/28 Haiga held to mark Yoshimochi’s promotion to the imperial post of Great Minister of the Center (naidaijin 内大臣).
1412/9/27 Yoshimochi hosts retired Emperor Gokomatsu.
1429/3/9 Yoshinori’s coming of age ceremony (genpuku 元服) at which he earned the right to wear the clothing of a member of the high nobility.
1429/3/15 Ceremony held to mark Yoshinori’s being made shogun. On the following twenty-ninth day, another ritual was held in the shinden to mark his promotion to the imperial rank of Chief Councillor of State, junior third rank.
1430/7/25 Haiga held to mark Yoshinori’s promotion to the imperial post of Great Minister of the Right (udaijin 右大臣).

Accounts of these events consistently describe a central shinden flanked to the west by a nobles’ hall and a vassals’ hall (zuishin-sho 随身所). An entrance corridor extended to the south, opening onto a carriage house. East of the shinden was a large, nine-bay opposing hall. High nobility entered the property from the west through a four-legged gate, an architectural element reserved exclusively for the residences of the highest ranking members of the imperial hierarchy, great minister (daijin 大臣) or higher. All the fundamental elements of a shinden-style complex were present.

The central shinden was different from the one Yoshimitsu had built at Kitayama in two important ways. First, it was five bays wide instead of seven, an indication that the new shogun was not interested in comporting himself as a retired emperor. Second, there were no permanent rooms
on the north side of the structure. This latter departure from the widespread trend of creating rooms on the north sides of shinden was probably due to the proliferation and maturation of non-shinden-style structures at the site. The Sanjō-bōmon palace boasted a freestanding “regular palace”, a sbō-gosho (minor palace), a Kannon hall, stables, and two kaisho (meeting places). These structures could accommodate all the non-Ritsuryō activities that took place at the headquarters-residence. It had become unnecessary to create rooms within the central shinden.

Descriptions of the two kaisho have figured prominently in studies tracing the emergence of shoin-style architecture. These studies imply consistently that shoin style has its roots in warrior culture, which, they suggest, possessed aesthetic sensibilities fundamentally different from those of the court and imperial aristocracy. There is at least one fundamental problem with this view, namely that the earliest kaisho in Kyoto were not located at the homes of warriors. In fact, Kawakami Mitsugu has found no less than five freestanding kaisho in use at the homes of court nobles and temple clergy between 1379 and 1422. The kaisho was indeed the precursor to shoin style but it was not an architectural element indigenous nor exclusive to warrior palaces.

Despite its significance to the cultural history of the period, further discussion of the kaisho is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I will consider the Sanjō-bōmon palace’s regular palace and minor palace. These two freestanding structures functioned as the dedicated residential facilities for several successive shoguns and their wives. They were private, personal spaces used for eating, sleeping and bathing. Occasionally they functioned as waiting rooms for guests attending formal events at the central shinden or one of the three kaisho. The new Sanjō-bōmon complex was the earliest confirmed case where we find dedicated residential structures at an Ashikaga shogunal palace. As far as can be discerned from extant documents, all previous shoguns had lived within their respective central shinden, probably in most cases within tsune-gosho fashioned on the northern sides of those structures. The creation of freestanding structures specifically dedicated to living space was a development of critical significance because it extricated private space from the shinden entirely.

The changes being discussed should be understood as part of a general trend toward the creation of increasingly function-specific space within élite Japanese residences. In about the tenth century, members of the Kyoto élite began building private temples (jibutsudo) in their residential compounds to accommodate private Buddhist rituals. Later, the fountain pavilion (izumi-dono) and meeting place (kaisho) were introduced for entertainment and other private, non-Ritsuryō functions. The necessities of...
Another edifice that emerged at this time and closely resembled the tsune-gosho and shō-gosho was the hiro-gosho 弘御所. See Kawamoto Shigeo's “Hiro-gosho ni tsuite” [On the hiro-gosho, in Nihon kenchiku gakkai ronbun bōkoku-shū [Association of Japanese Architectural Historians, occasional papers] (Tokyo: Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai), no.320 (October 1982).

private, daily life were eventually accommodated through the creation of the regular palace (tsune-gosho), which again, in its early form, was little more than a room fashioned on the north side of the central shinden. Finally, as we see in the case of Sanjō-bōmon, living space eventually seceded from the shinden entirely with the creation of the freestanding tsune-gosho and the shō-gosho. This trend toward the creation of increasingly function-specific space should not be understood as an abandonment of shinden style. On the contrary, it was a validation of its original significance. Rather than being a rejection of the classical-era model, the appearance of tsune-gosho and shō-gosho at the Sanjō-bōmon palace restored that site's shinden-style structures to their classical-era functional ideal as the exclusive venue for Ritsuryō-style rituals and statecraft. Indeed, the documentary record confirms that the structures were used exclusively for those purposes.

The irony, of course, is that even the earliest shinden-style complexes had not lived up to the form-function ideal of the Tang state shrines on which they were based. In Japan, shinden-style complexes were not purely the altars of Ritsuryō government. From the outset, they were also the personal residences of the capital élite. In that latter capacity, they accommodated a plethora of functions that had little or nothing to do with the Ritsuryō political system. The functional ideal, nevertheless, remained a powerful trope, which helps to explain the efforts by the élite to keep all modifications to original structural forms to a bare minimum. At first, as noted, only temporary fixtures such as curtains and screens were used to create interior rooms. Later, when walls were implemented to make permanent rooms, these rooms were relegated to the back (the north) side of the structures. Finally, as noted, non-Ritsuryō events and functions began leaving the shinden complex altogether to occupy their own dedicated venues.

To summarise, non-state religious practices were the first to leave the shinden with the emergence of private temples; play and entertainment were next with the creation of kaisho; finally, daily life itself left the shinden with the development of freestanding tsune-gosho and shō-gosho. This evolution is generally read as part of the broader trend that led to the articulation of shoin-style architecture. While this view is accurate, the remarkable explosion of proto-shoin-style structures at the Sanjō-bōmon palace cannot be interpreted as a rejection of shinden style. On the contrary, it was an affirmation. All accounts confirm that the shinden-style structures at that palace were not only well maintained but that they also played a central role in the political lives of both Yoshimochi and Yoshinori as the venues that empowered them to continuously authenticate their places within the Ritsuryō hierarchy.
Yoshinori's Muromachi-dono

Ashikaga Yoshinori was appointed shogun in 1429 at the age of 35. As Yoshimitsu's youngest son, Yoshinori was never meant to become shogun. The post was reserved for Yoshimochi's son, Yoshikazu. But when Yoshikazu died in 1425, Yoshinori was called "back to the world" from the imperial cloister temple of Shōren-in where he had lived as a Shingon priest since his youth. Being the first Ashikaga shogun since Yoshiakira to assume the post as a mature adult, Yoshinori became one of the most powerful leaders in Ashikaga history, second only perhaps to his father, Yoshimitsu.

Yoshinori maintained his residence at the Sanjō-bōmon palace until 1431 when the sudden and almost simultaneous deaths of his daughter and Yoshimochi's wife put into motion plans to rebuild and eventually relocate to the Muromachi-dono in Kamigyō. Despite initial problems securing funds for the project, Yoshinori made the official move to Muromachi late in 1431.

The newly rebuilt Muromachi-dono was similar to the previous two Ashikaga shogunal palaces in the way it maintained a core shinden-style complex while also possessing several non-shinden-style structures. Among the former were three kaisho, a tsune-gosho, and a sho-gosho. Each exhibited the hallmark traits of shoin-style architecture, indicative of the extent to which that building mode had reached maturity by this time.

Contemporary observers were quick to point out the excessiveness of Yoshinori's construction of as many as three kaisho. It was within these structures that the so-called yoraii-form of shogunal administration blossomed and matured. Meetings of the yoraii 寄合, or "council of

until leaving the priesthood to become shogun, Yoshinori was known as Gien 義円.

Yoshinori has been called both a "dictator" and a "monarch-like shogun". See Kenneth Grossberg, Japan's Renaissance: The Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, reissued by Cornell University East Asia Program, 2000). Donald Keene calls Yoshinori's tenure as shogun a "reign of terror"

/ in his Yoshimasa and the Silver Pavilion, p.19.  

The move to Muromachi-dono was decided at a meeting held on Eikyō 3 (1431)/7/28 with all major vassals (daimyō 大名) present. See Mansai jugō nikki, vol.2, p. 273.

On the campaign to collect funds from vassals, see ibid., p.274.

See, for example, ibid., pp.503–4, 526, 646 and onward; Kannō gyo-ki, vol.2, pp. 154–5, 206, 253–4. The discovery of Muromachi-dono gyōkō on-kazari-ki [Record of decorations used during the imperial procession to the Muromachi palace] has greatly enlightened studies on the origins of shoin-style. For discussion, see Miyakami Shigetaka, "Kaisho kara chanoyu zashiki e" [From the kaisho to the tea room], in Sadō jukin [The tea brocade collection], vol.7: Zashiki to roji (1) (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1984), pp.46–92, and Nakamura Toshinori, Machiya no chashitsu (Chadō bunka sensho series) (Tokyo: Tankō-sha, 1981), pp.25–8.
shogunal retainers", were characterised by their informality and the absence of ritualised political pageantry. It was exactly these kinds of activities for which shoin-style architecture had been conceived. The proliferation of non-Ritsuryō structures at the Muromachi-dono was indicative of the tremendous financial resources the shogunate commanded. But the spectacle was quantitative, not qualitative. By this time, kaisho and similar proto-shoin-style structures had become commonplace at the homes of both the aristocratic and temple élites, who—like the shogun—needed venues to facilitate politically important and increasingly frequent non-Ritsuryō functions.67

The shinden-style structures at Yoshinori’s Muromachi-dono are described in textual and pictorial accounts of several key Ritsuryō-style events held at the site.68 We find a general adherence to traditional composition, décor and function. Figure 7, an illustration drawn by monks from Shōren-in temple, depicts the central shinden as it appeared in 1440. Most notable is the structure’s width of seven bays, a trait that suggests Yoshinori, like Yoshimitsu, had been interested in adopting the trappings of a retired emperor. The move to Kamigyō itself was an emulation of Yoshimitsu, as was the nurturing of diplomatic relations with the Ming court after the previous shogun had severed formal ties with China in about 1408.

The diagram further indicates that the central shinden was partitioned into northern and southern sections by a series of walls and sliding doors. As mentioned, this was not an uncommon architectural trait during the period. Many members of the élite built rooms on the north sides of their shindens to create living spaces and to accommodate private functions. The documentary record shows, however, that the three “back facing” rooms at Yoshinori’s shinden were not living spaces at all. Rather, they

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67 Kawakami Mitsugu, “Kai sho ni tsuite (son o 1)”.

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Figure 7
Diagram of the central shinden at Yoshinori’s Muromachi-dono as it appeared in 1440. From Mono’yō-ki, vol. 12, p. 528
functioned respectively as a guard house, a storage room and a place to lodge guests occasionally.69 Like Yoshimochi before him, Yoshinori had removed living space from the shinden entirely through the building of a freestanding “minor palace” (sō-gosho) at the site.

The southern half of the shinden was dedicated for use as ritual space. It was there that the shogun held, for example, the formal celebrations (taikyō 大饗) that marked his successive promotions, first to the post of Great Minister of the Center, and then later to Great Minister of the Left.70 Figure 7 was drawn on the occasion of a Shingon ritual held in 1440. Documents are explicit about how on each of these occasions ritual spaces were decorated in strict accordance with “noble” precedent (kuge girei ni shitagaubeku 可従公家儀礼).71 In fact, in the case of the first taikyō, specific orders were given to imitate a ceremony held in 1288 for Takatsukasa Kanetada 鷹司兼忠 when that nobleman was granted the same court post. Because the Takatsukasa palace did not possess a proper shinden, the day’s formalities took place at the headquarters residence of the Konoe 近衛 family.72

Later, when Ashikaga Yoshimasa was promoted to Great Minister of the Center in 1458, the shogun’s aides produced a diagram of the Muromachi-dono as it appeared on the occasion of Yoshinori’s 1432 taikyō (Figure 8). The illustration was produced to ensure that precedent was followed. Its accuracy is confirmed by how well it matches textual accounts of the event. The existence of a full contingent of traditional structures is nota-

69 See the explanation by Kawakami Mitsugu in his Nihon chisei jūtaku no kenkyū, p.367.
71 This phrase is found in Mansai jugō nikki, vol.2, p.407.
72 See Ōta Seiroku, Shinden-zukuri no kenkyū, p.710.
Figure 9

Diagram of the Konoe 近衛 palace in 1288. From Ōta Seiroku, Shinden-zukuri no kenkyū, p.710

73 On the 5th day and the 19th day of the 6th month. For a compelling account of the preparations for and reception of a Ming envoy, see Mansai jugō nikki, vol.2, pp.583–93. A Choson embassy was also received on Eikyō 12 (1440)/2/19.

...ble, including a central *shinden*, a nobles' hall, an opposing hall, an entrance corridor with a gate, a carriage house, a vassals' hall, and a four-legged gate. The most striking aspect of the illustration is how closely it resembles a diagram of the Konoe residence dating from 1288 (Figure 9). Enough variations are apparent—such as the central *shinden*’s seven bays—to be confident that the latter illustration is not merely a copy of the former. In the final analysis, Yoshimasa planned his 1458 Muromachi-dono to closely resemble that of Yoshinori (completed in 1431), which was in fact built as a replica of the Konoe family residence (c. 1288). Discovering this architectural genealogy reveals a conscious and sustained effort on the part of Ashikaga shoguns to adhere to traditional *shinden*-style building models despite the proliferation of non-*shinden*-style.

It is significant that Yoshinori’s central *shinden* and its secondary structures appear only infrequently in the documentary record. Apart from the few occasions noted above, the only other times they were used was when Yoshinori received envoys from the Ming court on two occasions in 1434. The infrequency of use reflects the extent to which the non-*shinden*-style structures had come to accommodate all but the most essential Ritsuryō-style observances. But the existence of a full contingent of *shinden*-style structures built to be used on only a few occasions within the course of a decade emphasises the resolve of the shogun to maintain the architectural trappings of Ritsuryō statecraft, despite the emerging dominance of a strain of politics that had little or nothing to do with either the Ritsuryō order or its architectural analogue.

Yoshimasa’s Palaces and the Effects of the Ōnin War

Ashikaga Yoshimasa was elected shogun in 1443 at the age of eight. At the time of his nomination, Yoshimasa was in residence at the Kamigyō home of nobleman Karasumaru Suketō 烏丸資任, a palace that appears
In documents as the Karasuma-dono 烏丸殿. Whereas it would have been standard protocol for the young shogun to move to the Muromachi-dono to assume his new role, the former headquarters was deemed unfit. Ghost sightings and reports of "strange sounds" coming from the vacant property led to the conclusion that the grounds were haunted. This led to the decision to build an entirely new shogunal headquarters just southeast of the Muromachi-dono. The former Kamigyo palace was to be abandoned, with (initially) only one of its minor structures being moved to the new site. Construction was put on hold in 1443 when building resources were diverted to the reconstruction of the emperor's residence, which had been destroyed in a recent fire. As a result, Yoshimasa remained at the Karasuma-dono for sixteen more years.

In order to make Karasuma better suited to the functions of a shogunal headquarters, the decision was eventually made to dismantle and move to the property a significant number of the structures left idle at Muromachi. Progress on the transfer was slow until Yoshimasa's formal investiture as shogun in 1449. At that point, it became necessary for the property to be made capable of accommodating traditional court ceremonies appropriate someone of shogunal status. Accordingly, the central shinden was the first among the several structures to be transferred from Muromachi. This was the same shinden built by Yoshinori in 1431 (which was, incidentally, to be the last proper shinden built by an Ashikaga shogun). Almost immediately after it was reconstituted in the third month, Yoshimasa used the structure to hold a batiga by which he marked his promotion to shogun. Prominent members of the court and the great warrior houses, as well as abbots of the capital's most important temples, were invited to partake in what was a highly scripted and public pronouncement of Ritsuryō status, performed in strict accordance with precedent and custom.

Eventually, almost all of the Muromachi-dono's original structures were transplanted to Karasuma. In the end, the transplantation was so complete and done with such meticulousness that descriptions of the site on the occasion of Yoshimasa's promotion to Great Minister of the Right in 1456 are almost indistinguishable from those of Yoshinori's Muromachi-dono. The imitation was, of course, by design. As discussed above, Yoshimasa specifically ordered that a diagram of Yoshinori's Muromachi-dono be produced to facilitate a replication of the corresponding ritual he held at the former palace in 1432. Considering the care put into conforming to architectural precedent, it is striking that the shinden-style complex was used so infrequently: only twice in nine years! Clearly, Yoshimasa was far more interested in the arts and leisure than in the affairs of state or its ceremonial trappings.

Just as the Karasuma-dono was reaching completion in 1458, Yoshimasa decided to choreograph a triumphant return to the Muromachi-dono.
The fire occurred on the 13th day of the 11th month. See Munetaka kyō-ki [Journal of Funabashi Munetaka], in Dai Nihon shiryou, vol. 8, no. 9, pp. 106–7. Thereupon all moved to live with Yoshimasa at Kokawa-dono, where he had been in residence since 1471. Owing to the small size of the palace, however, they moved out again the next day.

83 The Onryōken nichirokub Chō roku (1458)/11/27 records Yoshimasa surveying the vacant grounds of the Muromachi-dono for the first time. He is accompanied by members of the civil and military élites. The diarist records the grumbling of several shogunal vassals who had been assigned the cost of reconstruction. See Tamamura Takeji and Katsuno Takanobu, eds., Onryōken nichirokubu [Daily chronicle of the Onryō office], 5 vols. (Kyoto: Shiseki Kankō-kai, 1953–54), vol. 1, p. 196.

84 Gohanazono and Gotsuchimikado first took refuge at Muromachi on Ōnin 1 (1467)/1/18, only to return temporarily to their respective palaces on the 21st. See Munetaka kyō-ki [Journal of Funabashi Munetaka], in Dai Nihon shiryou, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 49.

85 The fire occurred on the 13th day of the 11th month. See Sanjūnishi Sanetakki [Journal of Sanjōnishi Sanetaka] and other sources quoted in Dai Nihon shiryou vol. 8, no. 9, pp. 106–8. Thereupon all moved to live with Yoshimasa at Kokawa-dono, where he had been in residence since 1471. Owing to the small size of the palace, however, they moved out again the next day.


 Needless to say, the vassals for whom the construction of Karasuma-dono had been a profound financial burden were deeply displeased.81 By no means, however, were their complaints against the shogun limited to this one matter. Yoshimasa’s general neglect of government and overall detachment from public affairs save those of the gentle arts had earned him the contempt of many prominent military houses as well as members of the imperial court. He was fast becoming a politically detached aesthete, a role for which he was scorned in his own time and exalted in ours.82

The Muromachi-dono was restored to its original state over the course of the next five years. After almost three decades, three shoguns and two complete transplantations, the reconstituted Muromachi-dono looked very much as it had in 1431 when first rebuilt by Yoshinori.

The decline of Ritsuryō rituals had not deterred Yoshimasa from maintaining the shinden-style structures at Muromachi. His motivations for doing so, however, are unclear. Whereas previous shoguns had done so for the sake of holding Ritsuryō-style events on a regular basis, there is no documentary evidence that Yoshimasa held any functions at Muromachi that would have necessitated the use of shinden-style architecture until as late as 1464, six years after he rebuilt the complex. In that year, the newly retired Emperor Gohanazono made an official visit to the Muromachi-dono, where he was ceremonially received at the central shinden. Throughout his stay, however, Gohanazono was lodged and entertained within the fountain pavilion.83 The next time the shinden appears in documents is in 1467, when the outbreak of the Ōnin War caused both Gohanazono and the Emperor Gotsuchimikado 後土御門 to seek refuge at the shogunal palace.84 The emperor occupied the central shinden while the retired emperor stayed in the fountain pavilion. The emperor’s father, Fushiminomiya Sadafusa 伏見宮貞成 (a nobleman who enjoyed the honorary title of retired emperor [dajo tenno 太上天皇] despite never having served as emperor), also moved to the shogunal palace where he, together with the other two imperial guests, remained until it was destroyed by fire in 1476.85 Owing perhaps to overcrowding, Yoshimasa and his family moved to Kokawa-dono 小川殿 in 1471.86

Yoshimasa remained aloof from the fighting, despite his responsibility for the tensions that led to the outbreak of the war. Instead, it seems the shogun was preoccupied with domestic unrest closer to home. A quarrel with his politically-inclined wife, Hino Tomiko 日野富子, precipitated Yoshimasa’s removal to the residence of one of his chief vassals, Hosokawa Katsumoto 細川勝元. Having refused to declare the Kokawa palace the official Ashikaga familial headquarters (bonjo 本所), Yoshimasa built no shinden-style structures there. None were necessary because it would have been improper for him to hold Ritsuryō-style rituals anywhere other than at his official residence. In 1472, Yoshimasa took the tonsure and
passed the post of shogun on to his son, Yoshinao 義尚. The Muromachi-
dono burned down four years later. Never again was an Ashikaga shogunal
castle to possess a proper shinden or any structures typical of shinden
style. Yoshimasa retired to the Higashiyama villa in 1483 where not a
single shinden-style structure was built. In the succeeding period, that
complex became the prototype for sbotin-style palaces.87

Conclusion

By the fourteenth century, non-shinden-style architecture was flourish-
ing at the homes of the Kyoto elite. New varieties of edifice such as the meet-
ing place and the regular palace were facilitating a form of kenmon-centered
social and political intercourse that, because of idealized notions of
functional purity, could not easily be accommodated at shinden-style
venues. As the frequency and perceived importance of Ritsuryō-style
ritual waned among the civil aristocracy and high clergy, shinden-style
complexes were pared down in most cases and completely eliminated in
others. In the Ashikaga shoguns, however, traditional imperial architecture
found a formidable ally. Not only did successive shoguns maintain the
fundamental elements of shinden style, they went to great lengths to
adhere to exceptionally old-fashioned forms and uses. By maintaining
shinden style and faithfully observing Ritsuryō customs, the Ashikaga
continuously affirmed and authenticated their status as vested members
of the Ritsuryō system.

The Ashikaga shoguns' assiduous maintenance of shinden style could
have been indicative of the shogunate's vision of itself as a traditional
entity, the last bastion of orthodox capital norms. With financial resources
far surpassing any other single interest group, the shogunate may have seen
itself as the protector of the forms and symbols of a bygone era. There can
be little doubt that the attention lavished upon shoguns such as Yoshimitsu
and Yoshinori by the emperor and court nobility was at least somewhat
related to their tactful maintenance of Ritsuryō customs. The emperor's
decision to take refuge at the Muromachi-dono upon the outbreak of the
Ōnin War, for example, might have been related to his desire to be close to
his sworn protector in a time of danger. More practically, however, it was
the site's possession of the essential elements of a shinden-style palace
that made it a suitable candidate for extended imperial residence in the
first place. The existence there of a central shinden enabled the emperor
to maintain his ceremonial duties as head of the Ritsuryō state.

Such assiduous and perhaps obsessive attention to imperial styles and
norms might be read as indicative of a sense of inadequacy. The job of
The proper clothing, incense and decorations for enthronement rituals were also expensive but it was the architecture that constituted the greatest cost and financial hurdle.

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shogun was an imperially sanctioned post and all shoguns of the Ashikaga regime possessed official court ranks. In law and in custom, ranking shogunal officers were fully vested members of the Ritsuryō system. Nevertheless, contemporaries rarely failed to discriminate between “warriors” and “courtiers” and there can be little doubt that the signifiers used to do so carried with them certain judgements about relative status. In their staunch traditionalism, therefore, could the Ashikaga shoguns have been overcompensating?

The political rupture that caused the Ōnin War wreaked havoc on all the capital’s institutions, not least of which was the imperial system. In wartime, Ritsuryō rituals lost almost entirely whatever degree of significance they had maintained until then. Many members of the high aristocracy fled the capital. The emperor and others who stayed behind suspended almost all ceremonial activities. Suddenly, the need to simply maintain the bare necessities of life outweighed the perceived importance of protocol and precedence. The enthronement ceremonies of the next two emperors, Gokashiwabara 後柏原 and Gonara 後奈良, were postponed twenty years and ten years respectively because of financial hardships. What this suspension meant in real terms was that sufficient funds were not available to assemble the material elements necessary to hold a proper enthronement ceremony. Not least among these was a proper central shinden within which the prescribed rituals would take place.

The one political figure who might have possessed the financial resources and leadership potential to sponsor imperial rituals (and in the process stem shinden obsolescence), the shogun Yoshimasa, was entirely uninterested in political affairs, imperial and shogunal alike. His negligence profoundly damaged the shogunate, which, at that time, might have been the strongest bulwark of traditional capital and imperial architectural forms.