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Abstract

This work aims to synthesize art history, historical memory, and Tokugawa-era Japanese politics with an art history approach and cultural analysis. It takes a more complete look at the politics of Tokugawa Ieyasu's death and the significance of memorial and religious architecture as political works. It examines the utilization of architecture as a way to elevate and legitimize the Tokugawa, demonstrating that policy was not the only way for the Tokugawa to solidify their legacy and suggesting that key figures like Ieyasu were more important to the religious and political structures of Tokugawa Japan in death than they were in life.

This paper begins by discussing the immediate political effects of Ieyasu's death and the establishment of the Nikko Toshogu before discussing the physical aspects of the shrine and comparing it with the Ise Shrine to establish the relationship between the shogun and the Emperor. Finally, it examines the mausoleum of Sūgen-in, Tokugawa Iemitsu's mother, in order to contextualize the shift of the architectural style of female mausoleums to emulate those of their male counterparts, showing a growing inclusivity towards women in establishing the legacy of the Tokugawa during the early Edo Period.

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Ziv Carmi | Gettysburg College '23

The Tokugawa Shogunate came to power after a century of chaos, known as the Sengoku or Warring States Period. For a century, Japanese warlords fought for hegemony, with three prominent figures emerging in the late sixteenth century: Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu. These three men would succeed in conquering or pacifying vast portions of the country, ultimately unifying it and ushering in a long period of peace.

While the Sengoku Period gave way to the stability of the Tokugawa (Edo) Period, its final years were quite bloody and chaotic. Nobunaga, known for his brutality and destructive war tactics, committed suicide after being betrayed and surrounded by his enemies, opting to die at his own hand rather than theirs. He was succeeded by Hideyoshi, whose natural death led to a succession crisis and the Battle of Sekigahara, where the success of Ieyasu's forces gave control to the Tokugawa. While this victory gave lasting control of Japan to Ieyasu, who became shogun in 1603, Hideyoshi's son would contest his power several years afterwards. This challenge to Tokugawa legitimacy resulted in

their campaign on Osaka Castle, culminating in the deaths of the entire Toyotomi family, ending their line and thus, their power.¹ With their enemies eliminated, the Tokugawa were able to establish a smooth line of succession.

Unlike his predecessors, Ieyasu was not succeeded by force nor was his reign ended by violence. He would retire in 1605 after two years as shogun, leaving his son Tokugawa Hidetada to serve in his stead. Despite this change in power, Ieyasu remained prominent in political decisions until his death in 1616. Like his father, Hidetada retired early, allowing his son, Tokugawa Iemitsu, inherit the shogunate in 1623.² These peaceful transfers of power, unlike the violent changes of power during the Sengoku Era, indicated a political stability, thus solidifying the power of the Tokugawa.

As the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu did much to ensure that his lineage remained enduring. He would be responsible for fully implementing the Sakoku (seclusion from foreign powers) policy, solidifying the bureaucracy, and successfully purging Japan of Christian influences, consolidating his family's power in the process. Arguably Iemitsu's largest undertaking would be his

¹ Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Voices of Early Modern Japan: Contemporary Accounts of Daily Life During the Age of the Shoguns* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 55-58.

² Vaporis, *Voices*, 64.

architectural projects. Starting with Kyoto with the Tokugawa family's Chiyoda Castle, he would sponsor a number of new public infrastructure projects during his reign. Most of these structures either highlighted the grandeur of Iemitsu or honored his predecessors. In particular, examples of the latter variety of architectural work were intended to show the powerful lineage of the reigning shogun, similar to how the Imperial family boasted their uninterrupted lineage from Amaterasu, the sun goddess. Indeed, many of these works existed to compare the Tokugawa shoguns to the emperor, legitimizing their political and religious authority.

One example of these works is the Tokugawa shrine complex at Nikkō. Primarily honoring the spirit of Tokugawa Ieyasu, posthumously renamed Toshō Daigongen, this area serves as both shrines to and mausoleums for the early Tokugawa rulers. Built in a Buddhist-inspired *Gongen-zukuri* style, the Nikkō Toshogu is quite different from the Imperial family's Ise shrine but holds a similar purpose: establishing the authority and legitimacy of the lineage represented.³ In fact, the construction of Nikkō, initially built by Iemitsu as a mausoleum for Ieyasu, demonstrates the power dynamics of the early Tokugawa period, indicating a

³ Joseph Cali and John Dougill, *Shinto Shrines: A Guide to the Sacred Sites of Japan's Ancient Religion* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 189.

struggle for authority in the new political order arising from the Sengoku era.

While other historians have discussed the role of the Toshogu in establishing Tokugawa power, this paper aims to take a more complete look at the politics of Ieyasu's death and the significance of memorial and religious architecture as political works and testaments to Tokugawa authority. It will examine the utilization of architecture as a way to elevate and legitimize the Tokugawa, demonstrating that policy was not the only way for them to solidify their legacy and suggesting that key figures like Ieyasu were more important to the religious and political structures of Tokugawa Japan in death than they were in life.

To create a holistic examination of Tokugawa era architecture and the role of death and legacy in Tokugawa politics, this paper will begin by discussing the immediate political effects of Ieyasu's death and the establishment of Toshogu, before discussing the physical aspects of the shrine and comparing it with the Ise Shrine of the Imperial Family. Finally, it will examine the mausoleum of Sūgen-in, Iemitsu's mother, to contextualize the shift of the architectural style of female mausoleums to emulate those of their male counterparts, showing a growing inclusivity towards women in establishing the legacy of the Tokugawa during the early Edo Period.

The Politics of Ieyasu's Death

During this period, it was fairly typical of political leaders to make themselves into larger-than-life symbols after their deaths. Both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi had deified themselves to establish their own religious authority. According to the Portuguese Jesuit missionary Luis Fróis, who personally knew Nobunaga and several of his retainers, a temple had been built next to Nobunaga's castle in Azuchi, where he ordered people to worship him as a deity.⁴ This differs significantly from his successors, who had arranged to be deified posthumously but remained "mortal" during their lifetimes. While Nobunaga's heir died with him, it is likely that his two successors aimed to establish a familial reign with a succession of power to their son, using their deaths to legitimize their heirs as the descendants of divine deities and thus bolstering their authority.

Ieyasu's choice to place the shrine at Nikkō was deliberate. Nikkō is one of the largest and most elaborate shrine-and-temple complexes in Japan. A sacred mountain long before Ieyasu's rise to power, the site was home to a series of temples used by a Buddhist cult starting in the late eighth century. When the

⁴ William Boot, "The Death of a Shogun: Deification in Early Modern Japan," in *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*, ed. John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 145.

Kamakura Shogunate, the first of Japan's three shogunates, rose to power in Kanto, Nikkō became a fairly prominent site due to both its location on the slopes of the mountain and its existing religious connotations.⁵ Indeed, over time, a city grew around the temples, which the Nikkō City Tourism Association described as a “sacred place where Shinto worship of the mountain god coexists with Buddhism,” suggesting that it was perhaps a fairly prominent site for pilgrimages.⁶ However, due to the chaos of the Sengoku period, the site was somewhat forgotten until Ieyasu's rule.⁷ This decision to draw upon an already established historical site clearly indicates a desire to establish a continuity between himself and other popular religious institutions, therefore positioning himself as the successor to these entities.

Ieyasu chose to be buried at Nikkō near the end of his life. According to his will, written when he fell ill in March 1616, he wished to “be buried at Kunozan in Tsuruga, and after a year has elapsed a Divine title is to be sought from the Emperor and I am to be removed to Nikkō.”⁸ While Ieyasu's last wishes seem fairly

⁵ UNESCO, “WHC Nomination Documentation: Shrines and Temples of Nikko,” December 4, 1999,

<https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/913.pdf>, 226.

⁶ Nikko City Tourism Association, “History and Culture,” accessed November 20, 2021. <https://www.visitnikko.jp/en/discover/history-and-culture/>

⁷ UNESCO. “WHC Nomination Documentation,” 226.

⁸ Tenkai, *Reminiscences of Jigen Daishi*, n.d, in *Shogun: The Life of Tokugawa Ieyasu*, by A.L. Sadler (Rutland: Tuttle Publishing, 1978), 264.

straightforward, there are several complications to the process of his will. In the three months between his sickness and death, especially in May 1616, Ieyasu consulted with many retainers and religious authorities as to what should happen posthumously. First, Ieyasu met with several of his chief retainers and requested a mausoleum to him being built on Kunōzan (present day Shizuoka).⁹ The next day, Ieyasu met with the Buddhist priests Tenkai and Sūden, who would later be important figures in the controversy following his death. This meeting reiterated and elaborated on the immediate posthumous rituals honoring Ieyasu, detailing his wishes:

Bury my body at Mount Kunō and have the funeral service at Zōjō Temple [the Tokugawa family's ancestral temple]. Place the Buddhist mortuary table at Daijū Temple in Mikawa. After a one-year period of mourning, build a small hall at Mount Nikkō and invite the deity. I will become the tutelary deity of the eight provinces of the Kantō.¹⁰

It is worth noting that this version of Ieyasu's will explicitly requests a "small hall" at Nikkō, which is a large departure from the Toshogu built in his name by Iemitsu in 1736. Finally, a third meeting occurred several weeks later. Ieyasu ordered a retainer to

⁹ Boot, "Death of a Shogun," 147.

¹⁰ Pitelka, "Apotheosis," 145.

bring him one of his swords. He ordered this servant to stab a prisoner condemned to death, and then declared the sword to be venerated as the physical aspect of his spirit. The account of this event indicates that this sword is still kept in Kunōzan rather than Nikkō, suggesting that initially, Ieyasu wished for his main shrine to be there. While historian William Boot challenges the authenticity of this anecdote and suggests that it might be apocryphal, especially since the current object of personification in the shrine is a mirror. If true, Boot writes that it shows how active Ieyasu's role in his deification was.¹¹ Indeed, all three meetings indicate his active involvement in his posthumous image.

As Ieyasu's illness grew worse, Hidetada began to prepare for his father's death. He summoned the priest Bonshun, a friend of Sūden and noted Shinto scholar, to deliberate and determine whether Ieyasu should be deified in the Buddhist or the Shinto manner. The intense debate between the two religious groups was a sign of just how politicized the shogun's immediate legacy would be. It seems that Bonshun was fairly persuasive, as a day later Hidetada decreed that Ieyasu would be worshipped according to the Shinto custom at Kunōzan.¹² Indeed, two days after his death,

¹¹ Boot, "Death of a Shogun," 148.

¹² Boot, "Death of a Shogun," 149.

Bonshun gave Ieyasu a Shinto funeral.¹³ Soon after, Hidetada and his brothers visited the shrine, indicating their approval of this process.

Despite the clear support of the shogunate for Ieyasu's funeral and burial in the Shinto manner, the controversy between the vying traditions grew. Immediately after Ieyasu's funeral, Tenkai, who was the abbot of the Tendai monasteries of Eastern Japan- including Edo- intervened, arguing that Ieyasu's body needed to be removed to Nikkō, a mountain that was under his jurisdiction.¹⁴ In other words, a debate over whether Ieyasu wished to be physically at Nikkō or just spiritually began between the various religious authorities. This argument was ultimately about power, particularly, whether or not each religious figure could claim that their domain held the body of Ieyasu, showing the power of his name in the immediate aftermath of his passing. Within a year of his death, as the first shrine at Nikkō was being constructed, Ieyasu had already become a powerful political symbol- arguably more important than in life. In the end, Tokugawa Hidetada chose to side with Tenkai, allowing Ieyasu's body to be moved and the former shogun to be deified as the

¹³ Atsuko Hirai, *Government by Mourning: Death and Political Integration in Japan, 1603-1912* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), 45.

¹⁴ Hirai, *Government by Mourning*, 45.

daigongen, a manifestation of the Buddha.¹⁵ Besides legitimizing the Tokugawa by establishing them as the descendants of the Buddha, it effectively resolved the dispute over the role of Buddhism within Shinto, or rather, to which extent Buddhist traditions could exist in Shinto culture. Indeed, the Toshogu is a Shinto shrine built in a Buddhist-inspired architectural style, showing the reconciliation of the two different cultures in Japanese tradition, and thus, twice the religious authority.

Furthermore, this decision shows a consolidation of Tokugawa power. Yoshida Shinto, which Boshun led, supported “purifying” the religion, believing that only the emperor as the descendant of Amaterasu, rather than the shogunate, had the right to rule. Establishing the Tokugawa as the descendants of the Buddha, a great religious figure, directly challenged the idea of the supremacy of the emperor, who was considered to be the descendant of a different deity, the sun goddess Amaterasu. Besides their political beliefs supporting decreasing the Tokugawa authority, the Yoshida clan had allied itself closely with the Toyotomi family prior to shifting their allegiances to the Tokugawa.¹⁶ By moving Ieyasu’s body away from their jurisdiction while building him a shrine in the Shinto tradition, the

¹⁵ Cali and Dougill, *Shinto Shrines*, 191-192.

¹⁶ Cali and Dougill, *Shinto Shrines*, 192.

Tokugawa effectively stripped them of their religious authority, eliminating the Yoshida as potential political rivals.

The deification process was clearly a debate on which religious sect would be seen as the predominant power and how Ieyasu would be seen after death. Even the naming of Ieyasu was political. There was a dispute over whether to call him the Buddhist title, “Gongen,” or the Shinto title, “Daimyojin,” with Hideyoshi’s adoption of “Daimyojin” in his own deification being a prominent argument against the latter.¹⁷ This decision to separate himself from Hideyoshi, and thus portray himself as a different kind of ruler than his political enemy, shows the Tokugawa’s wish to establish themselves as a new regime, one that could be stable and last for years compared to their predecessors.

The Establishment of Nikkō as a Religious and Political Center

While Ieyasu almost immediately became a symbol of political power after his death, Iemitsu elevated his status to an entirely new level several years later. Following his renovation of Nijo Castle in Kyoto and the mausoleum of Hidetada in Edo, Iemitsu would turn his attention to the shrine at Nikkō. Like all of his projects, Nikkō had great political implications; Iemitsu had

¹⁷ A.L. Sadler, *Shogun: The Life of Tokugawa Ieyasu* (Rutland: Tuttle Publishing, 1978), 264.

visited the shrine six times before and understood its significance. Shortly after the project's completion, Iemitsu used the new site to commemorate the twenty-first anniversary of Ieyasu's death.¹⁸ While this event might have been to display a Confucianist honor of ancestors, incorporating a third belief system into the legitimizing process, it was likely more intended to show off the grandeur of the new temple complex and, by extension, the wealth and power of the man who had sponsored it.

This new site solidified Ieyasu as the foundation of shogunal authority. Besides visits from shoguns at least once in their lifetime, Iemitsu also "encouraged" foreign ambassadors to visit the site. There are records of him telling the Ryukyuan, Korean, and Dutch embassies to visit the site (and presumably, to give gifts like the bell the Koreans gave in 1643 or the chandelier from the Dutch), which further served to expand the cult of Ieyasu.¹⁹ Indeed, these foreign pilgrimages showed commoners that Ieyasu was deified and respected even by foreigners, therefore further legitimizing his power and by extension, Tokugawa rule.

As one would imagine, Nikkō quickly became a favorite site for pilgrimage. People of all classes, including daimyo and samurai visited. Historian Morgan Pitelka wrote that "the presence

¹⁸ Pitelka, "Apotheosis," 149.

¹⁹ Pitelka, "Apotheosis," 151.

of a preexisting temple and shrine and a new shrine to Ieyasu [on Nikkō] meant that pilgrims could engage in a kind of spiritual one-stop shopping, praying to three divinities [Ieyasu, the pre-existing Buddhist deity, and the pre-existing mountain *kami*] rather than just one.”²⁰ Pitelka notes the story of a government official who went to Nikkō after falling out of favor with Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, indicating that a pilgrimage- and by extension, a recognition of Tsunayoshi’s power- was significant in negotiating the power dynamics of the Tokugawa bureaucracy.²¹ However, Boot argues that ministers visiting the shrine was not a common occurrence, indicating that perhaps events like the one described by Pitelka were fairly anomalous.²² Nonetheless, it is clear how significant the political value of Toshogu was to Tokugawa society.

Records show just how popular the site had become by 1655. In that year, so many people traveled to Nikkō that female pilgrims’ movements were regulated to avoid them staying overnight. The document *Stipulations for Mount Nikkō* said that “Women and nuns may not access the monks’ quarters. It goes without saying that they may not be given shelter. Pilgrimage

²⁰ Pitelka, “Apotheosis,” 161.

²¹ Pitelka, “Apotheosis,” 161.

²² Boot, “Death of a Shogun,” 161.

routes going through monks' quarters are an exception."²³ These regulations indicate that perhaps some unwanted interactions were occurring at the shrine, which of course would detract from the main purpose of a pilgrimage: worshiping the Tokugawa. However, Boot wrote that only the highest-ranking samurai were allowed to enter the temple. Also, he wrote that the 1728 collection of stories, *Ochiboshū*, argued whether those who were not members of the Tokugawa family were even allowed to pray to Ieyasu.²⁴ This establishes the paradoxical nature of the shrine, juxtaposing the selectivity and debate about who could pray to the shrine and the large amounts of people from all classes who made pilgrimages to Toshogu. It shows just how complex the political nature of the shrine was and how it had differing meanings and uses across the socio-political spectrum of Tokugawa Japan.

Nikkō as a Physical Structure

Reflecting Iemitsu's desire to show his wealth and power, Nikkō was one of the largest architectural constructions of the seventeenth century. This project was extremely expensive, costing 568,000 gold *ryō* (in the Tokugawa currency system where only silver coins were issued as currency by weight, this amount was

²³ Pitelka, "Apotheosis," 163.

²⁴ Boot, "Death of a Shogun," 161.

worth about 106.5 million grams of silver), 100 *kanme* of silver (about 375,000 grams of silver), and 1000 *koku* of rice (enough to feed 1,000 people for a year, about 5,120 American bushels) over a two-year construction period.²⁵ This money likely came from taxes levied from the various *daimyo* (regional lords) across Japan by the shogunate. Iemitsu's construction of Nikkō was the single most expensive architectural project in the first half of the seventeenth century.²⁶ After completion, this site would be one of the grandest in Japan, with the Toshogu structure at the center. This extreme price and amount of labor indicates the import of Ieyasu's legacy, as a large and grand shrine to him shows his power and that of Iemitsu, who was able to pay for such a large and spectacular structure.

Shinto shrines are incredibly common across Japan. To understand the structure of the Toshogu, it is necessary to understand some of the basic design of these architectural works. Most iconic of Shinto shrines is the *torii* gate, which provides a symbolic distinction between the secular world and the sacred area of the shrine. At its simplest, these gates are two vertical posts with

²⁵ Nikkō Toshogu Shamusho, *Tokugawa Iemitsu kō den*, in "Apotheosis: Ieyasu's Early Modern and Modern Afterlives," by Morgan Pitelka (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 148-149.

²⁶ Karen M Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power: Art and Early Tokugawa Authority* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 73-74.

two horizontal crossbars (the *myojin torii*) connecting them at the top. Due to its simplicity, these basic iterations are the most common.²⁷ These gates are usually wooden and painted red, although that can vary depending on the shrine. Other significant features include the *honden*, a sanctuary featuring an image of the *kami* (nature spirit) honored by the shrine and the *haiden*, the hall where ceremonies are held. Built in the Buddhist-inspired *Gongen-zukuri* style, Toshogu's *honden* is connected to the *haiden* by a stone-paved walkway, the *ishinoma*.²⁸ This style has a distinctive I-shaped floor plan and is famous for its many decorative carvings and motifs.²⁹ The merging of Buddhist and Shinto customs in the plans of the Toshogu show how Iemitsu wished to unify the various religious traditions into one singular structure, thus drawing on all of them to indicate that they unanimously supported the Tokugawa administration. This inner shrine sits atop a terrace accessed by a series of stairs and several gates, including a stone *torii* and the *Yomeimon* (inner gate).

The Toshogu *Yomeimon* is arguably the most famous structure at Nikkō. During the Edo period, commoners were barred

²⁷ Mark Cartwright, "Shinto," *World History Encyclopedia*, April 3, 2017, <https://www.worldhistory.org/Shinto/>.

²⁸ UNESCO, "WHC Nomination," 227.

²⁹ Cartwright, "Shinto Architecture."

See appendix for the floor plans of the Toshogu.

from entering past it, thus making it the end of their pilgrimages to the site. As such, in the words of Japanese art historian Karen Gerhart, it was “the shrine’s mouthpiece to the public,” necessitating a grandiose sight to impress the power of the Tokugawa onto commoners.³⁰ The *Yomeimon* is filled with colored carvings, including forty-two of the forty-eight humans depicted in the 5,173 carvings at Toshogu. These figures came from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, representing values such as virtue, good government, immortality, and longevity. The use of these established symbols were likely meant to show how virtuous Ieyasu was in life, continuing to elevate his legacy and those of his descendants. When examining the many carvings at the shrine, it is clear that these symbols were deliberately chosen to glorify the Tokugawa; other symbols include the dragon, the Chinese lion, a symbol of military and political authority, and flowers, birds, and fruits, which are all symbols of good fortune and utopia.³¹ In other words, these symbols were meant to show the public that the Tokugawa regime was virtuous and just, and thus bringing good fortune to Japan.

This relationship between the Tokugawa and the commoners is reinforced through some of the sculptures around

³⁰ Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power*, 74.

³¹ Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power*, 82.

the shrine. The famous *nemuri neko* (sleeping cat), carved by Hidari Jingoro, depicts a story of a cat asleep, noting that if it awakes, it will eat the sparrows nearby. This analogy can be interpreted as a warning to commoners (the sparrows): if they “wake” the Tokugawa government (the cat), they will be severely punished for it, so they should know their place and keep the peace.³² In other words, through this iconography, the Tokugawa made a clear declaration of political authority, reinforcing their many policies that pacified the *daimyo* and peasant classes and brought about the stability that kept their rule.

Toshogu and Ise: The Power of the Shogun versus the Power of the Emperor

One of the most common political issues of the Edo Period was the relationship between the emperor and the shogun. This relationship centered around the question of which figure held the true power, since the Emperor held divine legitimacy but the Tokugawa held administrative and military might. Through most of the Tokugawa Period, the imperial family was relegated to figurehead status in Kyoto while the Tokugawa ruled from Edo, although the Emperor still held checks on the shogun’s authority.

³² Cali and Dougill, *Shinto Shrines*, 190.

Analysis of their respective shrines show this complex dynamic between these two political figures.

One of the oldest and most famous of Shinto shrines is the Ise Jingu, the grand shrine to the sun goddess Amaterasu. Due to Amaterasu's connection to the imperial family, this shrine, first built in 4 BC, is also the ancestral shrine of the emperors.³³ While Ise is ancient, every twenty years, sixteen of the 125 buildings within the complex, as well as the famous Uji bridge and *torii* are rebuilt in the exact same design as the previous structures.³⁴ This rebuilding, meant to revitalize and renew the spirituality of the shrine, is done in the traditional manner, showing a reverence for the ancestors inherent in East Asian culture. Since Ise's reconstruction tradition is exact in replicating the original design, it is uniquely able to preserve the architecture of the shrine. This style, known as *Shinmei-zukuri*, is evocative of the wooden rice storehouses of the Yayoi period, c. 300 BC- c. 250 AD, consisting of a windowless rectangular building with a gabled roof and terrace on all four sides.³⁵

³³ Mark Cartwright, "Ise Grand Shrine," *World History Encyclopedia*. April 6, 2017, https://www.worldhistory.org/Ise_Grand_Shrine/

³⁴ Cartwright, "Ise Grand Shrine."

³⁵ Mark Cartwright, "Shinto Architecture," *World History Encyclopedia*, June 7, 2017, https://www.worldhistory.org/Shinto_Architecture/.

While there are not enough records to definitively compare pilgrimages to Ise with those to Nikkō, it is worth noting that during the Tokugawa period, mass pilgrimages to Ise occurred on a sixty-year cycle. These events drew millions of people from all across Japan, and, for most, was a once in a lifetime journey.³⁶ While the power of the emperor as the descendant of Amaterasu clearly remained, the establishment of Nikkō was most certainly meant to compete with Ise, establishing the Tokugawa as an entity as powerful as the emperor. However, this assertion of power did not mean that the Tokugawa had complete control. For example, Ieyasu's divine title had to be approved by the emperor, indicating a relative level of checks on the shogun's power.³⁷ The interaction between the imperial family and the Tokugawa can be exemplified within the existence of these shrines: the Tokugawa wished to be viewed as powerful of rulers as emperor, but, simultaneously, were faced with the necessity of imperial approval on their policy to preserve their legitimacy. These political circumstances required a tenuous balance between respecting imperial authority and demonstrating their own power.

The Mausoleum of Sūgen-in: Gender Roles in Architecture

³⁶ Hirai, *Government by Mourning*, 294.

³⁷ Sadler, *Shogun*, 264.

While Nikkō is the most famous of Iemitsu's architectural projects, several others merit recognition to properly contextualize the patronage of public works. While it might appear that these architectural projects relied solely on Ieyasu's legacy to establish the legitimacy of the Tokugawa, they were far larger in their scope.

One example is the mausoleum of Sūgen-in. The niece of Oda Nobunaga and sister-in-law of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Sūgen-in was the wife of Hidetada and mother of Iemitsu. Indeed, her connection to the other two large figures of the late Sengoku period helped legitimize Hidetada's reign as the second Tokugawa shogun.³⁸ After her death in 1626, she was buried in a mausoleum in Zōjōji, the Tokugawa ancestral temple in the center of Edo. This structure was likely overseen by Tadanaga, Iemitsu's younger brother, and was taken apart and relocated to Kenchōji to serve as a temple there after Iemitsu replaced the mausoleum in 1647, where it still stands today.³⁹ Significantly, it drew on the older *tamaya* tradition of *hōkei zukuri*, square single building temples rather than grander structures. This *tamaya* style was also used for the mausoleum of Saigō no Tsubone, Hidetada's mother, indicating that it was probably the most appropriate form for an

³⁸ Elizabeth Self, "Fit for a Shogun's Wife: The Two Seventeenth-Century Mausolea for Sūgen-in," *Japan Review* 31 (2017): 47. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44427699>.

³⁹ Self, "Fit for a Shogun's Wife," 49.

elite female's mausoleum at the time. However, Iemitsu determined that the original structure was not grand enough for his mother. In his attempts to distinguish the family of the defied Ieyasu from regular daimyos, he constructed a new building in 1647. This new one, similar to Toshogu, was in the *gongen* style with three floors, which until that point was used exclusively for shrines to deified military and political figures.⁴⁰

The reason for this rebuilding seems entirely political and to further legitimate Iemitsu. This legitimacy might be even in relation to his brother Tadanaga, who was initially favored by his parents for the position of shogun. Some historians have suggested that the commissioning of a new mausoleum less than twenty years after the first incarnation's construction was to erase Iemitsu's brother's memory in Edo, therefore legitimizing himself despite Tadanaga's suicide fifteen years prior.⁴¹ While it is possible that Iemitsu replaced his brother's building to delegitimize his legacy, however, it would be odd to wait so long after his death to do so. Given that this reconstruction occurred after several other architectural works, it could be a stronger possibility that it is simply another component of his patronage.

⁴⁰ Self, "Fit for a Shogun's Wife," 52-54.

⁴¹ Self, "Fit for a Shogun's Wife," 54-55.

Like Toshogu, the mausoleum is in three connected parts, with a *honden* fairly similar to the 1628 mausoleum. However, the *gongen* style made it much larger, allowing for the additions of two other shrines to later shogun's wives and mothers.⁴² This might have allowed for a longevity of the structure, indicating that there would always be more women to honor as the shogunal line continued. Interestingly enough, there are few differences between the structure of this mausoleum and the Taitoku-in mausoleum built for Hidetada (who, unlike his father and son, was not buried at Nikkō); both structures are of fairly similar scale and floor plans, differing primarily in their decoration.⁴³ This shows the significance Iemitsu put on Sūgen-in as a key figure in the Tokugawa line. By highlighting her as a significant figure, Iemitsu indicates that he was descended from two great figures (in addition to Ieyasu) and thus connected to all three unifiers, further demonstrating his legitimacy and capability.

Both of mausoleums to Hidetada and Sūgen-in, in addition to Toshogu and Iemitsu's own mausoleum at Nikkō, are in the *gongen* style, which had become firmly associated with the Tokugawa regime. This style, associated with grand projects and

⁴² Self, "Fit for a Shogun's Wife," 57.

⁴³ Self, "Fit for a Shogun's Wife," 60.

shrines, was a symbol of the wealth and power of the Tokugawa, once again providing them with more legitimacy.

Conclusion

Mausoleums served a significant role in establishing the legitimacy of the Tokugawa. By deifying Ieyasu, the administration of Tokugawa Iemitsu established political and religious authority nearly on the level of the emperor. This authority was exemplified in the Toshogu shrine. These mausoleums introduced a new style based on Buddhist ideals, one that became synonymous with grand works and the Tokugawa regime themselves.

By sponsoring these monuments, Iemitsu not only established his legitimacy but distinguished it from the imperial court. This distinction solidified the Tokugawa rule and clearly established their administration for several centuries. The deification of Ieyasu, a highly political process in itself, ultimately indicated that, like the emperor himself, the Tokugawa were also descended from divine beings, and thus, had a right to rule. While many of the figures honored by these monuments were extremely important in their lifetimes, it is arguable that they were even more influential in death through the creations of these buildings. Since most of them remain standing in Japanese society to this day and

have become large tourist attractions or, in Nikkō's case, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is clear that these monuments to the Tokugawa far outlived their administration and still serve as a reminder to their power and legitimacy.

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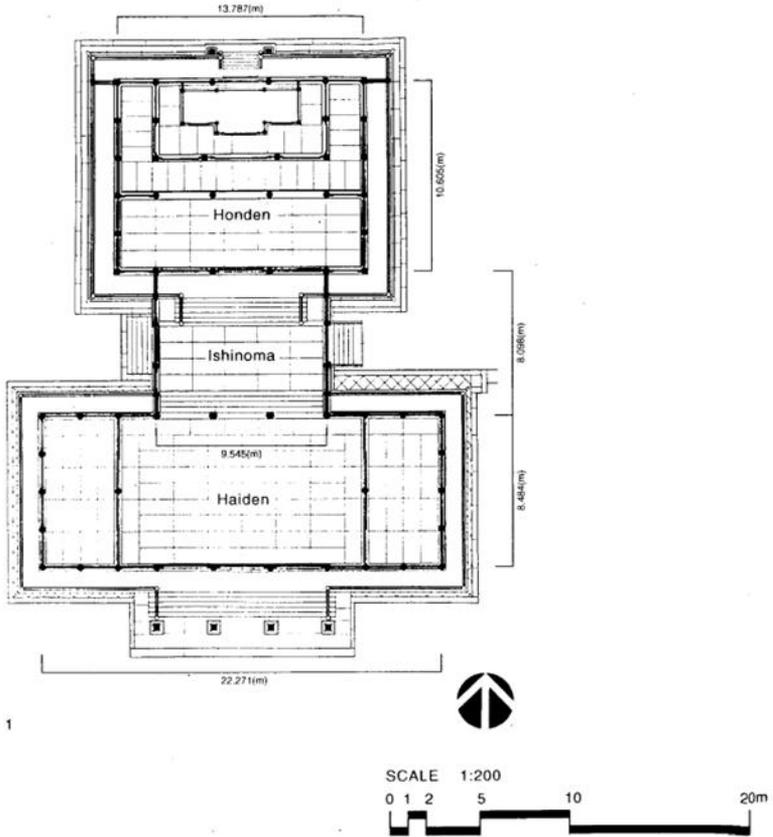
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Appendix



Floor Plans of Toshogu



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