

A Study of the Kangi Famine from the Perspective of Disaster History

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Abstract: *The early 13th-century Kangi Famine (1230–1231) was a complex ecological crisis of extreme cold and intertwined epidemics. By synthesizing paleoclimate data with documents like the Meigetsuki, this study reconstructs the famine's impact on Japan's dual polity and grassroots society. The disaster collapsed the traditional shoen order, forcing extreme survival strategies such as human trafficking. The crisis tested the state's "disaster resilience". While the Kyoto Court's reliance on traditional spiritual relief yielded minimal results, the Kamakura Shogunate demonstrated pragmatic crisis management through economic regulation and relief allocation. Crucially, the Shogunate institutionalized its post-disaster experience into the Goseibai Shikimoku legal framework. This transition from ad hoc measures to standardized law was not merely a reconstruction of order, but a decisive turning point in establishing the Shogunate's political legitimacy over grassroots society.*

Keywords: Kangi famine, Disaster history, Kamakura shogunate, Court-bakufu system.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Problem Statement

At the dawn of the 13th century, global climates entered a period of intense fluctuation. With the waning of the "Medieval Warm Period," East Asia was frequently beset by alternating extremes of hypothermia, drought, and flooding. Against this backdrop, the "Kangi Famine" (1230–1231) erupted, ravaging the entirety of Japan. According to the Meigetsuki (The Record of the Clear Moon), the midsummer of the second year of Kangi witnessed a bizarre atmospheric phenomenon where "vegetation withered and heavy snow fell" in Kyoto. The ensuing total crop failure led to a stratospheric rise in grain prices, leaving the streets teeming with displaced environmental refugees.

This catastrophe was not merely a harrowing humanitarian crisis; it represented a stress test for the dual polity—the co-existence of the Kamakura Shogunate and the Heian Imperial Court. In the progression of human civilization, large-scale disasters often act as catalysts for political transformation. For the Kamakura Shogunate, which was then in a phase of power restructuring following the Jōkyū War (1221), the ability to quell social chaos—ranging from vagrancy and land litigation to human trafficking—was directly tied to the substantial political legitimacy of warrior rule on a national scale. Thus, the Kangi Famine is not only an ecological event but also a profound subject of political and social history.

1.2 Literature Review

Research regarding the Kangi Famine has accumulated significant depth within Japanese academia. Early scholarship primarily focused on the perspective of institutional history. Led by scholars such as Miura Hiroyuki and Satō Shin'ichi, these studies explored the famine as a direct catalyst for the codification of the Goseibai Shikimoku (1232), emphasizing the role of legal frameworks in mitigating social unrest. In the mid-20th century, with the rise of socio-economic history, scholars like Ishii Susumu and Amino Yoshihiko shifted their focus to the lived realities of the lower classes. They provided

in-depth analyses of the social logic behind the legalization of "human trafficking" during the famine and its catalytic effect on the stabilization of medieval status systems (such as ge'nin and shōjū).

In recent years, the intervention of Environmental History has injected new vitality into the field. Scholars like Nakatsuka Takeshi have utilized scientific methods, such as oxygen isotope analysis, to precisely reconstruct the climatic anomalies of the Kangi era, pushing research from a singular political narrative toward a multidisciplinary synthesis. However, while existing studies have detailed the causes and consequences of the disaster, there remains a lack of quantitative and comparative analysis regarding the "disaster resilience" of the two governmental systems—the Court and the Shogunate—specifically concerning their strategic divergences and administrative efficacy. This gap provides the academic space for the present study.

1.3 Research Objectives and Significance

This thesis aims to situate the Kangi Famine within the holistic framework of "Disaster History," breaking through the limitations of purely institutional descriptions. Firstly, by integrating historical documents with natural science data, this study seeks to reconstruct the ecological chain of this compound disaster. Secondly, it aims to discern the pragmatic characteristics demonstrated by the Kamakura Shogunate in responding to this unprecedented crisis, contrasting these with the traditional relief measures of the Imperial Court. By doing so, it elucidates how disaster governance was transformed into capital for state-building. This research not only contributes to a deeper understanding of disaster response mechanisms in medieval Japan but also provides a quintessential case study of the social integration capabilities of pre-modern states under extreme environmental pressure.

2. Background and Reality of the Kangi Famine

2.1 Historical Background of the Kangi Famine

Japan in the early 13th century was undergoing a tumultuous

transition from a classical society to a medieval warrior-dominated society. Politically, following the Jōkyū War in 1221, the Kamakura Shogunate defeated the old establishment led by the Kyoto Imperial Court, initiating a massive expansion of warrior control into the western provinces. However, this restructuring of power did not immediately result in grassroots stability. As the traditional shōen (manor) system began to loosen, conflicts between estate lords and peasants became increasingly prominent. It was precisely at this critical juncture—characterized by a major reshuffling of the political landscape and a fragile social structure—that the Kangi Famine (1230–1231) erupted, presenting an unprecedented existential test for the newly dominant Kamakura Shogunate.

2.2 The Kangi Famine in Historical Records

2.2.1 Scope of the kangi famine

Unlike historical disasters in Japan that were confined to specific regions, the Kangi Famine was a quintessential wide-area compound disaster. According to cross-references between the Azuma Kagami and the Meigetsuki, this catastrophe not only devastated the political centers of Kyoto and Kamakura but also extended its destructive reach to the Kantō, Hokuriku, and even Kyūshū regions. Historical documents frequently use phrases such as “nationwide famine” (tenka kikin) and “universal exhaustion” (shikai konpei), indicating that its scope encompassed the vast majority of Japan’s agricultural territories at the time.

2.2.2 Conditions of the starving and casualties

The direct consequence of the famine was a catastrophic population decline and the collapse of social order. The court noble Fujiwara no Teika left shocking accounts in the Meigetsuki: the streets of Kyoto were littered with the starving, and the corpses of humans and livestock piled up like mountains, resulting in a tragic scene of “scattered, rotting corpses” with “no means for burial.” Driven by extreme food shortages, a massive number of lower-class commoners were reduced to vagrancy, abandoning their lands to beg in the cities. The situation even deteriorated to the point of cannibalism and widespread “human trafficking,” breaking basic ethical boundaries. This represented not merely extreme material deprivation, but a comprehensive collapse of medieval social ethics.

2.3 Causes of the Kangi Famine

Modern paleoclimatological research indicates that the Kangi Famine was not an isolated meteorological accident but was deeply rooted in global climate evolution. By the mid-13th century, the Earth was gradually exiting the “Medieval Warm Period,” and solar activity was entering a relatively subdued phase (a precursor to the Wolf Minimum). The reduction in solar irradiance led to an overall downward trend in temperatures across the Northern Hemisphere, providing the macroscopic physical conditions for the frequent outbreaks of extreme cold in East Asia.

Against the backdrop of weakened solar activity, a rare and extreme hypothermic event occurred in the second year of

Kangi (1230). The Meigetsuki explicitly records anomalies such as heavy snowfall and “winter-like cold” occurring multiple times during the sixth and seventh lunar months of that year. Modern scholars, including Nakatsuka Takeshi, have confirmed through oxygen isotope ratio analysis of tree rings that this period experienced anomalously high summer precipitation and a sudden drop in temperature. This fatal hypothermia during midsummer directly destroyed the rice crops during their crucial heading stage, leading to a total harvest failure that autumn.

In addition to long-cycle solar activity, short-cycle ocean-atmosphere coupling anomalies were core disaster-causing factors. The climatological community leans towards the hypothesis that a strong El Niño phenomenon occurred during the Kangi era. El Niño caused the Western Pacific Subtropical High to be anomalously weak, preventing the summer monsoon from pushing warm air over the Japanese archipelago. This was followed by a prolonged stagnation of cold air masses, creating a typical “cold summer” with heavy rainfall. This climate pattern perfectly aligns with the historical records of extreme cold, constituting the final natural barrier that crushed the agricultural ecology of early 13th-century Japan.

3. Specific Countermeasures During the Kangi Famine

3.1 Court Responses to Famine: Maintaining Ritual Order and the Limits of Spiritual Authority

In the wake of the Kangi Famine, the Kuge (court noble) society centered in Kyoto exhibited a governance logic rooted in the classical “Theory of Portents” (Saii-ron). Within this political framework, deeply influenced by Onmyōdō (divination) and Confucian ideologies regarding the “resonance between Heaven and humanity” (Tianren Ganying), the persistent anomalous hypothermia, midsummer snowfall, and total crop failure were viewed not merely as natural phenomena, but as severe celestial warnings against the “disorder of royal law” and the moral failings of the rulers.

Firstly, the Court’s perception of the crisis and its countermeasures were heavily concentrated on “symbolic relief.” According to detailed accounts in the Meigetsuki by Fujiwara no Teika, the extreme hypothermia and continuous torrential rains during the midsummer of the second year of Kangi (1230) led to a total failure of the early rice crop in the Kinki region, followed by hyperinflation in the Kyoto market. The price of one koku of rice surged from a few hundred mon in normal years to several thousand mon within a very short period, eventually leading to a state of absolute supply failure where “money was available but rice was not.” Faced with skyrocketing prices and extreme panic among the lower classes, the Court’s primary response was not to initiate modern logistical distribution or open granaries, but to conduct high-frequency, high-specification religious mobilizations. The Court frequently dispatched Hōbeishi (imperial envoys for offerings) to the Ise Grand Shrine and the twenty-two elite shrines to plead for divine protection. Furthermore, it mobilized high-ranking monks from prestigious state-protecting temples like Enryaku-ji and Tō-ji to perform “Recitations of the Great Wisdom Sutra,” the

“Five-Platform Rituals,” and esoteric rites for clear weather or rain.

Secondly, the maintenance of rituals during the extreme disaster evolved into a brutal consumption of resources and a form of political performance. In the first month of the third year of Kangi (1231), despite the famine spreading throughout the Kinki region and the streets of Kyoto being littered with the starving, the Court insisted on holding large-scale New Year Buddhist rites and official court ceremonies (Kuji) according to regulations. From the perspective of modern administrative logic, this behavior was an extremely impractical waste of resources; to maintain the sanctity of the rituals, the Court had to consume vast amounts of precious grain, cloth, and incense to provide for the participating monks and Shinto priests. However, within the political subconscious of the 13th-century Kuge (court noble) class, this held existential significance: the legitimacy of the Imperial Court was not built on material support for the grassroots, but on its monopoly status as the “center of civilization” and the “agent of the Way of Heaven.” By meticulously maintaining complex ritualistic displays amidst nationwide chaos, the Court sought to demonstrate to all of society, including the warriors, that the cosmic order of the Court remained firm and its spiritual authority was unshakable.

However, this strategy of over-reliance on “symbolic power” proved utterly feeble in resolving the physiological survival crisis at the grassroots level, and even exposed a structural “Achilles’ heel” in the Court’s governance system. The most fatal manifestation of this limitation lay in the Kuge class’s extreme fear of Kegare (ritual impurity brought by death and disease) and their subsequent spatial isolation. As displaced refugees flooded into Kyoto and died in the streets, the Kamo Riverbanks and major avenues were transformed into a living hell. Restricted by strict taboos against “contact with impurity” (Chokkegare), the court nobles, far from organizing the collection of bodies or providing relief, chose instead to shut their estate gates and even suspended some daily government affairs to avoid “contamination by the impurity of death”. This dual physical and psychological isolation resulted in the Court completely losing its ability to manage the public spaces of Kyoto.

In summary, the Imperial Court’s response model during the Kangi Famine was a weak struggle using “administrative sorcery” to mask a “dual paralysis of logistics and administration”. While they successfully maintained the perfect operation of sacrificial order within the high walls of the palace, they objectively abandoned the streets of Kyoto and the commoners in the disaster zones to hunger and plague. This provided an irrefutable practical basis for the subsequent Kamakura Shogunate to intervene forcefully with “pragmatism” and take over social order.

3.2 The Shogunate’s Famine Countermeasures: Pragmatic Intervention and the Legal Reconstruction of Jito Rights

In stark contrast to the Kyoto Court’s preoccupation with symbolic relief and spiritual defense, the Kamakura Shogunate’s disaster relief policies exhibited a fundamentally

different administrative character. The warrior leadership, headed by Regent Hōjō Yasutoki, discarded the classical “Theory of Portents” narrative and adopted forceful intervention policies that directly intervened in grain distribution and labor mobility. These interventions aimed not only to provide relief to disaster victims but, more importantly, to preserve the economic foundation and military mobilization capabilities of the warrior regime.

Hōjō Yasutoki astutely perceived that the secondary disasters triggered by the famine extended beyond mass starvation to include large-scale land loss and social unrest caused by debt defaults. In medieval Japan’s agricultural production system, Suiko (official or wealthy-farmer-led grain and seed lending of a usurious nature to commoners) served as a critical financial bond sustaining the cycles of spring plowing and autumn harvest. During disaster years, however, Suiko often devolved into a brutal tool for powerful elites to annex land and drive poor peasants to their deaths. In response, the Shogunate issued highly coercive debt remission and economic control orders. Through the Kantō Migyōsho (official shogunal documents) issued frequently between the second and third years of Kangi, the Shogunate explicitly capped interest rates on Suiko in disaster zones, even demanded the waiver of certain long-standing debts, and strictly ordered Jitō (stewards) to forgo their shares of annual tribute (nengu) in afflicted areas. More severely, the Shogunate established clear punitive mechanisms in its decrees: if a Jitō or wealthy individual ignored the reality of the disaster and forcibly collected usurious interest or tribute, leading to peasant desertion (Chōsan) or starvation within their territory, the Shogunate reserved the right to exercise administrative adjudication to strip them of their appointment rights. This high degree of restriction on private property rights and traditional seigneurial dominance held epoch-making historical significance. It signaled the warrior regime’s transformation from a mere “tax collector” into a “mediator of social conflict” and “guardian of public order”. Through this series of forceful economic regulations, the Shogunate effectively redefined the medieval contract of power and obligation: the Jitō possessed not only the privilege of taxation but was also forcefully mandated with a “proxy responsibility” to protect the survival of grassroots peasants during extreme crises.

Sporadic records in the Meigetsuki and Hyakurenshō also mention the emergence of cannibalism in the streets of Kyoto. Fujiwara no Teika expressed immense terror and loathing toward this, viewing it as the ultimate manifestation of the “Age of Mappō” (End of the Law). Analyzed from the perspective of modern disaster sociology, such extreme behavior signifies that the “mutual aid communities” based on Shinto-Buddhist faith, upon which medieval Japan had long relied, had completely collapsed. When human relations degraded into pure biological predation, the Court’s “ritual governance” had utterly failed. The Shogunate’s intervention at this juncture to permit “human trafficking” was essentially utilizing “controlled inhumanity” to combat “uncontrolled inhumanity”. By transforming people into “tradable labor assets,” the Shogunate provided the starving with a path that was cruelly pragmatic but at least allowed for physiological survival.

Against the special backdrop of the third year of Kangi, the buying and selling of human beings was not merely enslavement, but an act possessing the nature of a “relief contract”. The buyer (typically a Jitō or wealthy farmer) was obligated to provide basic rations to sustain the lives of the purchased individuals and their families. The Shogunate’s tolerance of this was based on the jurisprudential trade-off that the “right to life outweighs the right to personal liberty”. This policy led to a profound alteration in the status structure of medieval Japan: a massive number of independent farmers lost their independent land ownership and became dependent *genin* or *shōjū* attached to the warrior class. Although this transformation was accompanied by brutal oppression, from the perspective of disaster history, it indeed reintegrated scattered refugees back into the production system within a very short period, preventing society from descending completely into a state of chaotic, primitive violence.

3.3 Behavior of the Populace under Disaster: The Structural Transformation from Desertion to Akutō

The populace’s response to the disaster was not entirely passive. During the Kangi Famine, frequent incidents of peasant desertion erupted across various regions. Peasants abandoned their unsustainable farmlands and converged on Kyoto or commercial hubs. This demographic mobility not only shattered the territorial boundaries of the manors, but also compelled the Shogunate to reconsider the obligations to protect the peasantry.

In peripheral areas beyond the reach of official relief, the starving masses turned to armed force for self-preservation. Segments of the displaced population formed quasi-military organizations, attacking the granaries of wealthy farmers or intercepting grain shipments. These actions were collectively stigmatized by traditional rulers as Akutō. However, viewed through the lens of disaster sociology, this was a violent correction by the people against a collapsed wealth distribution system. The armed organizational capabilities and anti-contractual spirit forged by these groups during the catastrophe directly shook the foundations of the medieval manorial ownership system. In responding to these forces, the Shogunate gradually realized that simple military suppression could not sustain long-term order; social conflicts had to be defused by establishing a more transparent judicial adjudication system. This realization became the core practical driver for the subsequent formulation of the *Goseibai Shikimoku* (Formulary of Adjudications).

3.4 State Power Transformation Catalyzed by Disaster

In summary, the countermeasures adopted by both the Court and the Shogunate during the Kangi Famine clearly delineate the rising and falling trajectories of their respective powers. The Court’s response exhibited an “introverted” contraction, attempting to maintain psychological order through rituals; conversely, the warrior regime’s response demonstrated an “extroverted” expansion, embedding state power directly into every cell of the manorial (*shōen*) grassroots through legal intervention, personal control, and material management.

This “survival contract,” established against the backdrop of extreme famine, ultimately replaced the ancient “status

contract,” becoming the jurisprudential cornerstone of warrior politics for centuries to come.

4. Evaluation of the Kangi Famine Relief Policies and the Institutionalization of Warrior Rule

4.1 The Failure of the Court’s Relief Model and the Decline of “Spiritual Authority”

When evaluating the effectiveness of disaster relief, the objective historical results appear extremely cruel to the Kyoto court. The “ritualistic governance” and “administrative sorcery” (such as frequent rainmaking prayers and changing the era name to “Jōei”) adopted by the court during the Kangi era, while maintaining the dignity of classical etiquette within the court nobility, met with complete failure in addressing physiological hunger at the grassroots level.

First, the court lost the actual power to define public crises. Faced with mountains of starved corpses piled in the streets, the court’s response was sluggish and constrained by the religious taboos of “*kegare*” (impurity). According to later records in historical materials such as the *Meigetsuki*, the commoners of Kyoto expressed immense disappointment at the court’s inability to stabilize prices and its incompetence in collecting and burying corpses. The traditional theory of “resonance between heaven and humanity” backfired here: since the famine was heaven’s punishment for the rulers, and the court’s prayers were completely ineffective, this directly weakened the sacred legitimacy of the emperor and court nobles as “agents of the way of heaven” in popular psychology.

Second, there was a further loss of economic dominance. During the famine, because the court was unable to intervene in the logistics of the manors (*shōen*), massive amounts of local annual tribute were plundered by bandits or intercepted by the *jitō* (stewards). The court not only failed to provide relief to the disaster victims, but instead, falling into a food shortage crisis itself, had to rely on the *Rokuhara Tandai* established by the shogunate in Kyoto to maintain public order and distribute porridge. This rescue scenario, where the roles of host and guest were reversed, publicly exposed the systemic logistical and administrative incompetence of the court regime to the entire society.

4.2 Short-term Effects of the Warrior Intervention Policies: The Extreme Preservation of Productivity

In stark contrast to the Court’s failure, the pragmatic intervention policies implemented by the Kamakura Shogunate, led by Hōjō Yasutoki, objectively achieved the short-term disaster relief goal of “damage control,” despite being accompanied by immense moral controversy and class oppression.

First, mandatory debt remission and the control of *Suiko* (grain loans) stabilized the agricultural fundamentals. Through forceful administrative directives, the Shogunate restricted the extortionate exactions of the *jitō* (stewards) in the disaster zones, effectively curbing a nationwide mass desertion triggered by the debt-induced bankruptcy of

independent farmers. This policy, which constrained the jitō from “absolute dominators” into “managers with relief obligations,” prevented the total disintegration of the manorial economy during the famine and ensured the retention of a basic labor force and seed reserves for the spring plowing in the year following the disaster (the first year of Jōei, 1232).

Second, there was the brutal utility of the policy “tolerating human trafficking”. Although this policy downgraded a massive number of commoners into dependent genin or shōjū, causing a severe downward mobility in the social structure of medieval Japan, it acted as an extreme emergency evasion mechanism that successfully forced a binding between the dying refugees and the grain reserves of the wealthy class. Evaluated from the perspective of disaster demography, this cruel “survival contract” functioned as a primitive “food security net,” maximizing the preservation of the biological labor force upon which the warrior society relied for survival, and preventing the predicament of social productivity dropping to absolute zero.

4.3 The Political Legacy of the Famine: the Birth of the Goseibai Shikimoku and the Transition to the Rule of Law

The post-disaster management of the Kangi Famine directly catalyzed the birth of Japan’s first written warrior legal code—the Goseibai Shikimoku (also known as the Jōei Shikimoku), promulgated in 1232. At this moment, disaster history and legal history achieved a historic intersection. Post-famine society presented a fragmented, high-pressure state: massive amounts of land were sold cheaply or mortgaged during the famine, and the aftermath brought a flood of property rights lawsuits (such as disputes between the honjo/ryōke [proprietors/lords] and the jitō [stewards], as well as the renegeing of sales contracts). Meanwhile, refugees and Akutō (evil bands) who had armed themselves during the disaster frequently encroached upon the boundaries of traditional manors. Faced with a blizzard of lawsuits flooding into Kamakura, Hōjō Yasutoki profoundly realized that relying solely on the case-by-case, temporary Migyōsho (shogunal decrees) issued during the famine or the traditional Dōri (warrior customary law) was absolutely inadequate to handle the extremely complex conflicts of social interests in the post-disaster era.

Against this backdrop, the Goseibai Shikimoku emerged. Many core provisions of this code bore the profound imprint left by the Kangi Famine: Clarifying land boundaries and adjudication standards: Addressing the surge in territorial disputes post-disaster, the code established the principles of Chigyō (actual control) and a twenty-year statute of limitations for possession, which greatly improved the efficiency of adjudicating post-disaster property disputes and stabilized the reorganized land order. Regulating contracts and refugee settlement: Addressing the complex human trafficking and debt relations during the famine, the code provided statutory-level definitions and regulations for many “survival contracts” formed during the disaster, preventing unlimited annexation by the wealthy post-disaster and providing a legal basis for settling refugees.

Maintaining public order and suppressing the Akutō:

Addressing the violent grain-snatching groups spawned by the famine, the code explicitly laid out provisions to severely punish “robbery, theft, and night attacks,” providing a powerful legal weapon for rebuilding local public security post-disaster.

4.4 Disaster Response and the Ultimate Establishment of Shogunal Legitimacy

The Kangi Famine played a decisive “catalyst” role in the course of medieval Japanese history. In this existential crisis, the Kyoto Court’s “ritualistic governance” proved incapable of guaranteeing the baseline survival of society. In contrast, through forceful material intervention and social control, the Kamakura Shogunate not only successfully pulled Japan back from the brink of ecological collapse but also transformed the power experience accumulated during crisis management into normalized state law through post-disaster legal construction (the Goseibai Shikimoku).

Consequently, the Kamakura Shogunate was no longer merely a military faction that had seized power by force, but formally transitioned into a “legitimate state regime” capable of providing public order, ensuring social survival, and distributing land interests. The immense agony brought about by the Kangi Famine ultimately became the historical stepping stone for the institutionalization of the warrior rule of law.

5. Conclusion and Future Prospects

Under the broad perspective of disaster history, this thesis has re-examined the “Kangi Famine” (1230–1231) that erupted in the early 13th century. Research indicates that this disaster was not an isolated agricultural crop failure, but a compound ecological crisis triggered by the coupling of weakened solar activity and the El Niño phenomenon against the backdrop of the global climate transition toward the “Little Ice Age”. However, natural catastrophes are merely the prologue of history; their truly profound impact lies in the brutal extreme stress test they imposed on the “dual polity system” of medieval Japan. In this life-and-death trial, the Kyoto Court’s “ritualistic governance” thoroughly exposed the structural impotence of a classical dynasty in coping with extreme material scarcity. The Court attempted to maintain spiritual order through era name changes, rainmaking prayers, and taboo isolation, yet lost its sacred authority as the “agent of the Way of Heaven” in the face of mountains of starved corpses. Conversely, the Kamakura Shogunate, centered around Hōjō Yasutoki, demonstrated cold and highly efficient pragmatism. Through mandatory debt and annual tribute remissions (the transformation of tokusei), as well as jurisprudential compromises regarding the extreme survival tactic of “human trafficking,” the Shogunate essentially took over the state’s “biopower”. This intervention, at the expense of sacrificing a portion of the lower class’s freedom, ultimately held the bottom line of preventing the complete destruction of the warrior society’s labor force and means of production.

Large-scale natural disasters are not only destroyers but also catalysts for the evolution of state governance models. The massive population displacement, armed self-preservation (the dawn of the Akutō), and the post-disaster flood of

property rights disputes triggered by the Kangi Famine thoroughly tore apart the traditional manorial (shōen) contract networks. In order to digest these complex social conflicts spawned by the disaster, the Shogunate had to abandon temporary administrative directives and pivot toward establishing a normalized legal framework. The rapid promulgation of the Goseibai Shikimoku in 1232 was precisely the most direct and crucial political legacy of the Kangi Famine. This code crystallized the crisis management experience accumulated during the famine (such as the definition of land statutes of limitations, the regulation of jitō authority, and the handling of refugees and bandits) into statutory law. Therefore, we cannot view the birth of this code in isolation from the post-disaster ruins of the Kangi Famine. Disasters forced institutional innovation, and institutional innovation ultimately established the unshakable political legitimacy and judicial dominion of the Kamakura Shogunate throughout medieval Japan.

Although this thesis strives to conduct an in-depth exploration at the intersection of environmental history and political history, certain limitations still exist. First, constrained by the scarcity of quantitative historical data from the Middle Ages, this paper failed to accurately reconstruct the specific mortality rates and economic loss data of the Kangi Famine across various regions of the country, and some arguments still rely on qualitative descriptions from the perspective of Kyoto aristocrats, such as the Meigetsuki. Second, there is insufficient focus on the grassroots response mechanisms in peripheral regions (such as Kyushu and the northeastern Ōu region) during the famine. Future disaster history research may integrate cutting-edge archaeological excavation results (such as medieval mass grave sites) with local temple and shrine documents to further outline the authentic survival landscape of grassroots victims from the perspective of “microhistory”. Furthermore, conducting a horizontal comparison of the Kangi Famine with other disasters on the Eurasian continent during the same period (such as the Great Famine in 13th-century Europe or the extreme climate during the Jin-Song transition in China) from the perspective of global history will also be a highly promising academic direction.

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