

**Framing a Foreign God:  
The Tamamushi Shrine and the Opportunities of Buddhism in Early Japan**

by

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## **Abstract**

The beginning of Buddhism in Japan has long been narrated through a list of pivotal events recounted in later historical records. Centered on the court as the driving force behind the promulgation of Buddhism, such accounts often gloss over the multitude of micro-narratives and social actors involved. This dissertation charts an alternative framework by reassessing textual records in the light of material evidence from the 6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, with specific focus on the Tamamushi Shrine. Commissioned during the reign of Suiko (554-628; r. 593-628), the shrine has often been interpreted either as a private devotional object for the female ruler or a model for transferring architectural knowledge from continental Asia to Japan. However, a close examination of the shrine calls into questions such readings and challenges art-historical discourses that presume that the spread of Buddhist art in East Asia was spatiotemporally unilinear and continuous. Through reference to the stylistic and iconographic eclecticism evident in the Tamamushi Shrine, this study argues that Buddhism was reconfigured along with other religious practices in early Japan to align with Suiko's political visions. Furthermore, the technical intricacies underlying the shrine's production also call attention to the social aspirations of the immigrant professionals involved, and the largely decentralized pattern of Buddhist diffusion in this period. Taken together, by delineating the multitude of cultural undercurrents embedded in the Tamamushi Shrine, this dissertation reframes Buddhist art as a nexus through which religious worldviews, political visions, and social relationships were negotiated and expressed in early Japan.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

During the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a monk named Kenshin 顯真 (fl. ca. 1227-1254) was ordered to take stock of the holdings of the Hōryūji Temple 法隆寺. Upon entering its Golden Hall, the monk encountered an architectural shrine (Figs. 1.1-1.4) that was believed to be commissioned by the Great Ruler Suiko 推古 (554-628; r. 593-628).<sup>1</sup> In his inventory record, Kenshin notes the insertion of wing cases of *tamamushi* 玉虫 (“jeweled beetles”; *Chrysochroa fulgidissima*) underneath the shrine’s metal openwork (Fig. 1.5). This becomes the source of the

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<sup>1</sup> Except when citing primary sources, throughout this dissertation I refer to Suiko as “the Great Ruler” (*ōkimi* 大王) rather than “emperor” (*tennō* 天皇). As Kumagai Kimio argues, rulers of ancient Japan were called *kimi* 君, and the title *ōkimi* was adopted by Yūryaku 雄略 (r. 456-479) around the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century to signify his power over other regional lords. See Kumagai Kimio 熊谷公男, *Ōkimi kara tennō e* 大王から天皇へ (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2008), 13. Based on evidence from wooden tablets (*mokkan* 木簡) excavated from the site of Asuka Pond 飛鳥池遺跡, it is believed that the title *tennō* only became official during the reign of Tenmu 天武 (r. 673-686). See Nishino Seiichi 西野誠一, “Tennōgō no seiritsu nendai 天皇号の成立年代,” *Kanazawa Daigaku Bungakubu Nihon Shigaku Kenkyūshitsu kiyō* 金沢大学文学部日本史学研究室紀要 1 (2005): 21-32; and Chari Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjūkoku Shūchō Mandara and Prince Shōtoku’s Afterlives* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 94-95. Moreover, as Joan R. Piggott argues, the translation of *tennō* as “emperor” is problematic because it presupposes the existence of an empire founded on military conquest. Yet even by the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Yamato court did not have the armed forces to accomplish that. As such, it is more accurate to translate *tennō* as “heavenly sovereign.” See Joan R. Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 8-9 and 91-92. It should also be noted in 8<sup>th</sup>-century legal codes, the characters 天皇 were pronounced as *sumera mikoto* スメラミコト rather than *tennō*. See Charles Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia: 221 BC-AD 907* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), 198. For the Daoist implication in the title *tennō* in both continental and Japanese contexts, see Herman Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty, 650-800* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009), 154-156.

artifact's current name: the Tamamushi Shrine (Tamamushi no zushi 玉虫厨子).<sup>2</sup> Dated to the Asuka period (ca. 538 or 552-710), the shrine has been frequently deployed to herald the beginning of Buddhism in Japan and to illustrate the diffusion of Buddhist art along the Silk Road.<sup>3</sup> Owing to such modern projections, the Tamamushi Shrine has received relatively scant attention in the many contentious debates surrounding other edifices and artifacts of Hōryūji, earning the shrine the moniker “the eye of the storm.”<sup>4</sup>

That the Tamamushi Shrine epitomizes the seamless transmission of Buddhist art from India to Japan is predicated on a medium-specific reading that prioritizes iconographic similarities over observable differences in form and context. For instance, numerous studies on the shrine focus exclusively on the iconographic program of the lacquer paintings (Figs. 1.6-1.13) and their connection to mural paintings in cave temples along the Silk Road. Yet, such reading pales when faced with the formal and conceptual ingenuities of the shrine, especially in terms of the doublings of forms and compositions among its pictorial, sculptural, and architectural components. Oscillating the boundary across media, the Tamamushi Shrine

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<sup>2</sup> Fujita Tsuneyo, ed. 藤田経世, *Kōkan bijutsu shiryō: jūinhen 2* 校刊美術史料：寺院篇下 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1999), 33. See also Akai Tatsurō 赤井達郎, et. al. eds., *Shiryō nihon bijutsushi* 資料日本美術史 (Kyoto: Kyoto Shōhokusha, 1997), 31-32.

<sup>3</sup> I follow Akiko Walley's periodization, which defines the Asuka period as beginning with the “official” introduction of Buddhism to the Great Ruler Kinmei 欽明 (r. 539-571) from the Korean kingdom Baekje 百濟 (Jp. Kudara) in 538 (as recorded in *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* 元興寺伽藍縁起併流記資財帳 and *Jōgū Shōtoku hōō teisetsu* 上宮聖德法王帝説), or 552 (as recorded in *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀), and ending with the Taika Reforms in 645. See Akiko Walley, *Constructing the Dharma King: The Hōryūji Shaka Triad and the Birth of the Prince Shōtoku Cult* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 174, note 4. For the historical significance and reliability of *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, see Miwa Stevenson, “The Founding of the Monastery Gangōji and A List of Its Treasures,” in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George Joji Tanabe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 299-315 and Yoshida Kazuhiko, “The Credibility of the *Gangōji engi*,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 89-107.

<sup>4</sup> Ishida Hisatoyo 石田尚豊, *Shōtoku Taishi to Tamamushi no zushi: Gendai ni tō Asuka bukkyō* 聖徳太子と玉虫厨子：現代に問う飛鳥仏教 (Tokyo: Tokyo Bijutsu, 1998), 3.

operates as an integrated unit whose constant staging of self-referentiality compels beholders to reflect upon the intersection of the corporeal, the architectural, and the cosmological. Such impulse also speaks volume of the technical and political ambitions of its patron and makers. This dissertation offers a preliminary attempt to tackle these issues.

The Tamamushi Shrine received its current name in the catalogue of the 1876 Nara Exposition (*Nara hakurankai* 奈良博覧会) (Fig. 1.14).<sup>5</sup> Its naming thus coincided with a time when Buddhist artifacts were drastically appropriated and refashioned as Japan's cultural heritage (*bunkazai* 文化財) by the government during the Meiji period (1868-1912).<sup>6</sup> Through diplomatic missions, the Meiji reformers discovered the values of employing art to conjure a sense of cultural belonging among its citizens, and for promoting Japanese national identity in the global stage. Art was thus regarded as part of the country's industrialization endeavor for its economic potential. When the Tokyo School of Fine Arts opened in 1887, the subject of art industry (*bijutsu kōgei* 美術工芸) was grouped alongside painting (*kaiga* 絵画) and sculpture (*chōkoku* 彫刻) to compose the curriculum of fine art (*bijutsu* 美術).<sup>7</sup> It was thus hardly surprising that the Tamamushi Shrine earned the title of Important Cultural Property (*jūyō Bunkazai* 重要文化財) in 1897 as an “art industrial object” (*bijutsu kōgeihin* 美術工芸品) precisely for its seamless amalgamation of wood carving, lacquerwork, gilt bronze, and ornamental metalwork – artistic skills that were heavily invested by the Meiji state. Symbolizing

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<sup>5</sup> Mita Kakuyuki 三田覚之, “Tamamushi no zushi honzon hensenkō 玉虫厨子本尊変遷考,” in *Bukkyō bijutsu ronshū* 仏教美術論集, vol. 3, ed. On Hayashi (Tokyo: Chikurinsha, 2013), 69.

<sup>6</sup> Note that the 1876 Nara Exposition took place not long after the nationwide anti-Buddhist movement as a result of the Meiji government's declaration of Shintō as state religion in 1868. See James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 43-86.

<sup>7</sup> Satō Dōshin, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty*, trans. Nara Hiroshi (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 70-71.

an ideal past of artistic and technical refinement that the modern art industry strove for, the Tamamushi Shrine inspired luxurious goods such as metalwork produced by the Kyoto-based Komai School 駒井系 that were showcased and collected overseas (Fig. 1.15).<sup>8</sup> Even after being enlisted as Japanese National Treasures (*kokuhō* 国宝) in 1951, the shrine remains to be classified as “craft object” (*kōgeihin* 工芸品) by the Agency for Cultural Affairs.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, it was the academia that displayed indifference – if not discomfort – towards the intermedial quality of the shrine.<sup>10</sup> Such tendency is evident in the writings of Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (pen name Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心, 1862-1913) and Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908).<sup>11</sup> Heavily involved with the institutionalization of art for the Meiji state, both Okakura and Fenollosa saw art as a source of national pride, and sought to elevate the cultural significances of Japanese and East Asian arts on par with that of the West.<sup>12</sup> Yet, their writings on Buddhist art are fraught with tensions between the universal and the ethnocentric. On one

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<sup>8</sup> Chelsea Foxwell, *Making Modern Japanese-style Painting: Kanō Hōgai and the Search for Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 119.

<sup>9</sup> For the history of the *kokuhō* system, see Christine Guth, “*Kokuhō*: From Dynastic to Artistic Treasure,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 9, no. 1 (1996): 313-322. See also Shimizu Yoshiaki, “Japan in American Museums: But Which Japan?” *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 1 (2001): 128-131.

<sup>10</sup> By “intermedial,” I am referring to Hans Belting’s definition of intermediality. According to Belting, intermediality is a more precise term than “mixed media” in describing works that evoke the forms and modes of engagement embedded in different media. In contrast to claims of medium specificity, Belting argues that media often act as intermediaries among themselves by quoting, overlapping, and mirroring the qualities of one another. As such, rather than being obsolete, old media often survive by changing their role and meaning in new media. See Hans Belting, “Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology,” *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (2005): 314–315.

<sup>11</sup> As early as the 1890s, the shrine was featured in three issues of *Tōyō bijutsu* 東洋美術 (*Oriental Art*, 1891-1893) edited by the National Learning (*Kokugaku* 国学) scholar Kosugi Sugimura 小杉榎邨 (1835-1910), yet the articles singularize each medium and the iconography involved. See Uehara Kazu 上原和, *Tamamushi no zushi: Asuka Hakuhō bijutsu yōshiki shiron* 玉虫厨子：飛鳥・白鳳美術様式史論 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1991), 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Victoria Weston, *Japanese Painting and National Identity: Okakura Tenshin and His Circle* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2004), 22-74.



hand, the universality of Buddhist art is analyzed through vocabularies and ideals from Greco-Roman and Renaissance art. On the other hand, their approach reinstates national exceptionalism by a classification schema that divides cultures based on modern geopolitical boundaries.

For example, Okakura declares that the lacquer painting on the Tamamushi Shrine as the “excellent specimen” of Chinese art from the “Hâng” (Han) dynasty (25 BCE-220 CE).<sup>13</sup> Expanding on Okakura’s point, Fenollosa suggests that landscape panel on the back of the upper section (Fig. 1.8) models after Han clay reliefs of the “Kunlung” (Kunlun 崑崙) range, and that the elongated Buddhist deities at the door panels (Fig. 1.9) recalls the “thin” art of the Northern Wei.<sup>14</sup> However, Fenollosa argues further by calling the shrine “a kind of reliquary” that exemplifies the style of 6<sup>th</sup>-century “Corean” (Korean) art, and labels it as such (Fig. 1.16).<sup>15</sup> He justifies such attribution with reference to the gilt bronze openwork of the shrine (Fig. 1.17), whose patterns of perforation demonstrate “the finest specimens of the Corean (Korean) power over abstract curvature.”<sup>16</sup> He attributes these curvatures as “an outcome of the Babylonian of Han” that in turn had “Persio-Indian” origin, but he did not substantiate his claim with concrete examples.<sup>17</sup> Taken together, Fenollosa shares with Okakura the reading of the Tamamushi Shrine as an agglomerate of foreign aesthetics from which a distinctive “Japanese” style of Buddhist art

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<sup>13</sup> Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三, *The Ideals of the East, with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (London: John Murray, 1903), 100.

<sup>14</sup> Ernest F. Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese & Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* (London: William Heinemann; New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1912), 49.

<sup>15</sup> No relics or ritual artifact was discovered inside the dais section when the shrine was disassembled for conservation in 1984.

<sup>16</sup> Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese & Japanese Art*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 49

emerged.<sup>18</sup> Their approach epitomizes what Bernard Faure calls “secondary Orientalism,” in which their claim of universality in Buddhist art only serves to reinforce the myth of Japan’s cultural distinctiveness, and to rehash the superiority of Western aesthetic paradigms as the arbitrator of taste and cultural achievement.<sup>19</sup>

A preliminary study of the architectural elements of the Tamamushi Shrine was conducted by Itō Chūta 伊東忠太 (1867-1954), who completed his thesis on the philosophy of architecture at the Department of Engineering of the Tokyo Imperial University in 1892.<sup>20</sup> Upon becoming the professor at the same university, he proposed a new research titled *Hōryūji kenchiku ron* 法隆寺建築論 (*Theory of the Architecture of the Hōryūji Temple*) in 1893.<sup>21</sup> The project was born out of Itō’s frustration with the evolutionist approach in Western scholarship – exemplified by works such as Banister Fletcher’s *A History of Architecture* (1896) (Fig. 1.18) – that misrepresented architecture in Asia as failing to progress through times.<sup>22</sup> Itō sought to redress Fletcher’s bias by demonstrating the interconnectedness of architecture from Eurasia to Japan. He traveled across Asia from 1902 to 1905, with the goal of delineating the morphologies of two architectural elements: the curvilinear column in Hōryūji’s Golden Hall (Fig. 1.19) that bulges in the middle (*dōbari* 胴張り); and the foliage-scroll pattern (*karakusa* 唐草) that

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 45-52.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Faure, “The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 3 (1998): 771.

<sup>20</sup> For a critical study of Itō’s career, see Alice Y. Tseng, “In Defense of *Kenchiku*: Itō Chūta’s Theorization of Architecture as a Fine Art in the Meiji Period,” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 24, no. 1 (2012): 155-167.

<sup>21</sup> Itō Chūta 伊東忠太, “Hōryūji kenchikuron 法隆寺建築論,” *Kenchiku zasshi* 建築雜誌 (1893): 330-331.

<sup>22</sup> Yu Shuishan. “Itō Chūta and the Narrative Structure of Chinese Architectural History,” *The Journal of Architecture* 20, no. 5 (2015): 885.

decorates different parts of the Tamamushi Shrine.<sup>23</sup> Itō claimed that both elements had their origins from Greco-Roman architecture: the former descended from the Classical column entasis; the latter from the anthemion or honeysuckle pattern common in the ornamentation of Greco-Roman and Byzantine architectures.<sup>24</sup> Itō published his findings in his six-volume essay collection in 1937, with illustrations painstakingly demonstrating such connections (Fig. 1.20). To counter Fletcher’s misconception of East Asian architecture as timeless and non-historical, he even designed a diagram on the evolution of Japanese architecture across time (Fig. 1.21). Yet, much like Okakura and Fenollosa, Itō’s superimposition of Fletcher’s evolutionist paradigm on Japan at times appears to reinforce rather than undermine the cultural superiority of Western architecture.<sup>25</sup> As Brij Tankha argues, what Itō created was a “mythic” history – a triumphal story of a core culture that continued to be uniquely “Japanese” even after centuries of assimilating elements overseas.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Itō’s emphasis on ancient architecture was very much motivated by the modernization effort of his times: as Miyuki Aoki Girardelli points out,

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<sup>23</sup> Miyuki Aoki Girardelli, “Tracing Origins Along the Silk Road: Japanese Architect Itō Chūta’s Travel in the Ottoman Lands,” in *Japan on the Silk Road: Encounters and Perspectives of Politics and Culture in Eurasia*, ed. Selçuk Esenbel (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 245.

<sup>24</sup> Itō Chūta, *Yachō* 野帳, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai, 1902-1905). For Itō’s discussion of entasis, see Vimalin Rujivacharakul, “The Buddha’s Europe (or Should It Be Europe’s Buddha?): How ‘Europe’ was Transformed through the Study of Buddhist Architecture.” *ABE Journal (Architecture beyond Europe)* 11 (2017): <https://doi.org/10.4000/abe.3475>.

<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that Itō belonged to the same intellectual circle of Okakura, who conducted lectures for the university since 1890. Itō in turn taught for the Tokyo School of Fine Art in 1893 when Okakura was the principal. The two thus shared the same commitment of establishing the field of Japanese art and architecture as culturally significant as that of the West. See Brij Tankha, “Exploring Asia, Reforming Japan: Ōtani Kōzui and Itō Chūta,” in *Japan on the Silk Road: Encounters and Perspectives of Politics and Culture in Eurasia*, ed. Selçuk Esenbel (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 171-172.

<sup>26</sup> Tankha, “Exploring Asia, Reforming Japan,” 155.

the connection between Greco-Roman and Asuka period architecture serves as the perfect metaphor of modern Japan's struggle for international recognition.<sup>27</sup>

A comprehensive analysis of all media of the Tamamushi Shrine was first undertaken by Uehara Kazu 上原和 (1924-2017). Graduated from Kyushu University, Uehara published *Tamamushi no zushi no kenkyū: Asuka Hakuhō bijutsu yōshiki shiron* 玉虫厨子の研究：飛鳥・白鳳美術様式史論 (*A Research on the Tamamushi Shrine: On the History of Artistic Styles in the Asuka and Hakuhō Periods*) in 1964, in which he synthesized and updated previous scholarship with the latest findings from Dunhuang and Gyeongju. Yet, Uehara reinstated medium-specific analysis by having separate chapters for each medium, and avoided addressing the rationale underlying why these media were put together. While the book title promises a study of the history of style (*yōshiki* 様式), the stress is less about morphology than the reoccurrence of individual motifs or construction techniques across space and time.<sup>28</sup> Echoing Itō, Uehara's narrative is predicated on the premises that the transmission of Buddhist art was spatially unidirectional and temporally linear; and in so doing, each element of the Tamamushi Shrine can be traced back to a certain continental prototype. Noticeably, based on the construction of the shrine's hip-and-gable roof on separate planes – a method known as *shikorobuki* 鋲葺 or *shikoroyane* 鋲屋根 (Fig. 1.22) – Uehara argues that the shrine predated the current Hōryūji's Golden Hall, and that it served as an architectural blueprint that inspired Buddhist architecture that followed.<sup>29</sup> Uehara's book thus largely rehashes and updates the

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<sup>27</sup> Girardelli, "Tracing Origins Along the Silk Road," 247.

<sup>28</sup> For the etymology of the term *yōshiki*, see Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State*, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Uehara, *Tamamushi no zushi*, 173-186.

frameworks that were already established in the Meiji period, and leaves the questions of ritual, function, and context of production largely unaddressed.

While Buddhist art might indeed diffuse eastwards, the “Silk Road” discourse as reconfigured in Japan traveled in the opposite direction. It is worth noting that both Itō and Uehara’s writings corresponded to two specific moments in Silk Road scholarship in Japan. For Itō, his Pan-Asia trip coincided with the first expedition led by Count Ōtani Kozui 大谷光瑞 (1876-1948), the 22<sup>nd</sup> abbot of Kyoto’s Nishi Honganji 西本願寺.<sup>30</sup> Aspired to be a modern-day Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664, the Chinese monk who traveled to India in search of Buddhist scriptures), Ōtani sought to refashion Buddhism as a modern, rational, and universal religion.<sup>31</sup> Upon hearing sensational stories of European explorers along the Silk Road, Ōtani dispatched altogether three archaeological expeditions to Central Asia and India (1902-1904, 1908-1909, 1910-1914).<sup>32</sup> The finds from key sites such as Khotan and Kucha were exhibited in his Kobe residence named Nirakusō 二楽荘 (“Villa of Two Joys”), whose Indo-Saracenic façade was designed by none other than Itō. Much like his European counterparts, the Ōtani expeditions were deeply embedded with imperialist agendas, in which colonial power was exercised through the possession and interpretation of the cultural heritage of the “Others.”

On the other hand, Uehara’s scholarship coincided with the boom of Silk Road studies from the 1960s to the 1980s fostered by the resumption of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relationship.

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<sup>30</sup> For a critical study of Ōtani’s engagement with the Silk Road, see Erdal Küçükyağcı, “Ōtani Kōzui and His Vision of Asia: From Villa Nirakusō to ‘The Rise of Asia’ Project,” in *Japan on the Silk Road: Encounters and Perspectives of Politics and Culture in Eurasia*, ed. Selçuk Esenbel (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 181-198.

<sup>31</sup> Tankha, “Exploring Asia, Reforming Japan,” 165 and 177.

<sup>32</sup> For the full itinerary of all three expeditions, see Imre Galambos and Kitsudō Kōichi, “Japanese Exploration of Central Asia: The Ōtani Expeditions and their British Connections,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 1 (2012): 113-134.

The romantic image of the Silk Road as the catalyst of cross-cultural exchanges – as cemented by the television documentaries co-produced by China and Japan – was deemed particularly beneficial to both parties. For China, it offered an alternative framework in which to negotiate its international image outside the orbit of the United States or the Soviet Union during the Cold War.<sup>33</sup> The Silk Road nostalgia also masked an implicit claim of superiority – of China as the “source” of cultural openness and sophistication. For Japan, the Silk Road discourse accredits itself the role of cultural gatekeeper, especially considering its sponsorship of preservation projects at Dunhuang and other sites in Central Asia, as well as the instigation of an annual exhibition of the imperial repository Shōsōin 正倉院 since 1946 that showcased the *crème de la crème* of continental art. As a matter of fact, these impulses are also evident in Korean scholarship on the Silk Road in the 1990s, a majority of which is geared towards justifying the role of Korea as either the originator or the indispensable transmitter of Buddhism and its art from China to Japan. The stress of Japan’s cultural indebtedness to early Korean kingdoms has been constantly reiterated under the guise of Silk Road imaginary. The claim to cultural dialogues in the name of the Silk Road thus produces a web of “monologues,” each invested with political-economic concerns of the present. One thing they do share, however, is the portrayal of early Buddhist art in Japan as belated copies of prototypes originated from continental Asia, an image that is further neutralized by geographical facts. Under such framework, the Tamamushi Shrine is casted as an encyclopedic repository of foreign cultures from which centuries of stylistic and iconographic transfers can be unraveled, extracted, and validated. It becomes the site where the grand narrative of Buddhist art reaches its conclusion – the beginning of an end.

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<sup>33</sup> Marie Thorsten, “Silk Road Nostalgia and Imagined Global Community,” *Comparative American Studies: An International Journal* 3, no. 3 (2005): 301-317.

But as Stanley Abe criticizes, how can one justify the classification of Buddhist art under modern national identities without exerting interpretative violence to the objects involved?<sup>34</sup> On the one hand, due to the difficulty of long distance travel during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is plausible to imagine the existence of “East Asia” (including modern-day Vietnam) as a coherent spatial or diplomatic unit. Nevertheless, ethnocentric labels are highly misleading when applied to this particular period, for much of East Asia had yet to coalesce into recognizable “nations” in the modern sense.<sup>35</sup> For the most part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, China was fragmented into a succession of multiethnic kingdoms under the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), with a majority of the rulers in the north of Tuoba 拓跋 origin. As Charles Holcombe argues, China in this period was no more than “a realm of many realms” – a cluster of contending principalities rather than a monolithic nation state.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the Korean peninsula was divided into the kingdoms of Goguryeo 高句麗 (37 BCE-668 CE), Baekje 百濟 (18 BCE-660 CE), and Silla 新羅 (57 BCE-668 CE), each with their own diplomatic interests and social structures. As such, throughout this dissertation I deploy the adjective “continental” so as to acknowledge the heterogeneity of cultural forms that early Japan was exposed to before and during Suiko’s reign.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Stanley K. Abe, *Ordinary Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 316.

<sup>35</sup> Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> As David Pollock argues, even the terms *kara* 唐, *koma* 高麗, or *morokoshi* 唐土 were used interchangeably in 8<sup>th</sup>-century texts to refer to “China,” “Korea,” “India,” or anything exotic and different. Therefore, the cultures and politics on the “continent” were not necessarily distinguished in early Japan. See David Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan’s Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 58.

The function and context of the Tamamushi Shrine become the subject of analysis in the works by Ishida Hisatoyo 石田尚豊 (1922-). In his 1998 monograph *Shōtoku Taishi to Tamamushi no zushi: Gendai ni tō Asuka bukkyō* 聖徳太子と玉虫厨子：現代に問う飛鳥仏教 (*Prince Shōtoku and the Tamamushi Shrine: How Asuka Buddhism Problematizes the Present*), Ishida examines Prince Shōtoku's motivation for promoting Buddhism, and positions the shrine as a didactic tool for its propagation. Accordingly, he proposes that the shrine was designed for *etoki* 絵解き, a form of pictorial exegesis that introduces novices the lives of the Buddha and the worldview of Buddhism.<sup>38</sup> While Ishida rightfully challenges the view of the shrine as a private devotional object, the practice of *etoki* did not appear in textual records until the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, given the size of its paintings, beholders would need to come close to scrutinize their details, and thus compared to early mural painting or sculptural tableaux in the Hōryūji complex, the efficiency of the shrine as a tool for *etoki* remains doubtful. Contextually, the reliance on Prince Shōtoku's biography to explain the Tamamushi Shrine appears tenuous, especially considering that the shrine was not designed for the Golden Hall of Hōryūji, but was transferred there from the nunnery Tachibanadera 橘寺.<sup>40</sup> Ishida's decision to assign Suiko – who was explicitly stated in primary texts as the patron of the shrine – the marginal role in the narrative is thus particularly striking, let alone the absence of prominent Asuka period nuns in his account.

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<sup>38</sup> Ishida, *Shōtoku Taishi to Tamamushi no zushi*, 98-105. It should be noted that Ishida was not the first scholar to suggest the *etoki* function of the Tamamushi Shrine, see Maeda Masayuki 前田雅之, “Etoki to Tamamushi no zushi e 絵解きと玉虫厨子絵,” in *Etoki 絵解き* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1985), 218-231.

<sup>39</sup> Micah Auerback, *A Storied Sage: Canon and Creation in the Making of a Japanese Buddha* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 47. See also Kevin G. Carr, *Plotting the Prince: Shōtoku Cults and the Mapping of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 128-130; and Kaminishi Ikumi, *Explaining Pictures: Buddhist Propaganda and Etoki Storytelling in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 19-30.

<sup>40</sup> Fujita Tsuneyo, ed., *Kōkan bijutsu shiryō: jūinhen 2*, 33.



A reconsideration of the iconographic program of the Tamamushi Shrine was proposed by Akiko Walley in the 2012 article “Flowers of Compassion: The Tamamushi Shrine and the Nature of Devotion in Seventh-Century Japan.” In contrast to previous studies that identified multiple scriptures as possible sources, Walley argues that the *Compassionate Flower Sūtra* (Sk. *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra*; Jp. *Hikkekyō* 悲華經), which contains multiple references to bodily sacrifice, material transformation, and Buddhist cosmologies, encapsulates nearly all of the shrine’s pictorial and sculptural programs.<sup>41</sup> While my research has benefited greatly from Walley’s insights, it remains unclear why this particular sūtra resonated with the shrine’s donor in 7<sup>th</sup>-century Japan – especially considering the other scriptural options popular in the continental context that were more explicit in marrying Buddhism with rulership. Regardless, Walley concludes that the shrine functioned as a cosmic pillar or an embodiment of Mount Sumeru (Jp: Shumisen 須彌山) in Buddhist cosmology, hinting at the purposeful doubling of such representation across media throughout the shrine – a point that I elaborate further in Chapter Two.<sup>42</sup>

The issue of scale, however, has received scant attention from existing scholarship. Given the demand for technical precision, the production of scaled-down artifacts could be as time consuming and labor intensive as their “lifesize,” functional counterparts. The additional costs and values involved, as well as the motivation underneath, thus warrant further attention. In particular, what was the appeal of small-scale architectural objects in early Japan? What does different modes of scaling afford beholders, and what does it demand from them? Or more broadly, how does scale in art and architecture condition the perception of Buddhist ideas and

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<sup>41</sup> Akiko Walley, “Flowers of Compassion: The Tamamushi Shrine and the Nature of Devotion in Seventh-Century Japan,” *Artibus Asiae* 72, no. 2 (2012): 265 and 306-318.

<sup>42</sup> Walley, “Flowers of Compassion,” 321.

cosmologies? As Joan Kee and Emanuele Lugli argue, scale transforms and is transformed by the practical, social, and affective dimensions of an artifact, and to the conceptualizations of measurements and other systems of ordering.<sup>43</sup> Hidden in plain sight, scale demands a relational interpretation with the observable or immeasurable sizes of other things. Mindful of the expressive potential of scaling, this dissertation positions the Tamamushi Shrine as a micro-architectural object rather than a “miniature,” for the latter suggests a specific referent after which the shrine is modeled, and thus reinforcing the “prototype-copy” framework that fails to address the dynamics of architectural transmission. Here, I take inspiration from Achim Timmermann’s definition of micro-architecture, and explore how the Tamamushi Shrine operated as an exercise of spatial imagination, and a statement of artistic and technical virtuosity.<sup>44</sup> I argue that delineating the issue of scale allows us to recover the agency of the many social actors involved with the shrine’s production and consumption. More importantly, it reveals how formal elements such as scale can engendered their own context that is not necessarily predicated on text.

## Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two examines the intermedial quality of the Tamamushi Shrine, foregrounding the conceptual and technical ingenuity of its creators. In contrast to the presumption of the shrine as a building “model,” a close reading of its architectural elements and their intersection with the

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<sup>43</sup> Joan Kee and Emanuele Lugli, “Scale to Size: An Introduction,” *Art History* (Special Issue: Size Matters: Questions of Scale in Art History) 38, no. 2 (2015): 253. See also Joan Kee, “What Scale Affords Us: Sizing the World up through Scale,” *ARTMargins* 3, no. 2 (2014): 3-30; and Andrew J. Hamilton, *Scale and the Incas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 5.

<sup>44</sup> Achim Timmermann, “Microarchitecture,” in *The Grove Dictionary of Medieval Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), accessed May 1, 2018, [http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2216986?q=microarchitecture&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2216986?q=microarchitecture&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit).

sculptural and the pictorial, calls into question the applicability of any teleological account of stylistic transfer. I instead argue that the shrine operated as an exercise of spatial imagination that communicated religious cosmologies through the interplay of media and scale, the doubling of forms, and the staging of self-referentiality. These features point to the larger question of the religious landscape in 7<sup>th</sup>-century Japan, in which things “Buddhist” operated within a mode of spatial-temporal perception that was constantly in dialogue with everyday and mortuary practices.

Chapter Three connects the production of the Tamamushi Shrine with Suiko’s engagement with Buddhism. To a large extent, the indifference towards the conceptual ingenuity of the shrine has been part of a larger tendency to marginalize Suiko’s role in Buddhist developments of early Japan. To redress such oversight, I delineate how Buddhism offered Suiko the opportunity to refashion and consolidate both her reign and the position of the Yamato court in East Asia. In particular, I turn to the representation of religious cosmologies in the Tamamushi Shrine, and underscore how its departure from continental examples negotiated the court’s precarious position against internal machination and the rapidly transforming international order of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Furthermore, I argue how the type of icons and scriptures propagated during her reign indicate a purposeful reconfiguration of Buddhism that coincided with her vision.

Moving away from the court-centric approach, Chapter Four situates the Tamamushi Shrine within the networks of immigrant communities and regional Buddhist practices. First, I explore how immigrant clan families and occupational groups deployed their expertise in the use and management of technology to advance socially and politically. Through case studies of inscriptions found on diplomatic and Buddhist artifacts, I examine how they performed their textual and visual literacy on things continental to accumulate their cultural cachet. In so doing,

the intermedial quality of the Tamamushi Shrine can be read as a technical tour de force that declared its makers as the authoritative gatekeepers and interpreters of continental culture. I further argue that Buddhism would have been practiced in the area that the immigrant communities settled before receiving court's endorsement. Using material evidence that intersects Buddhist and pre-existing mortuary practices, I seek a more dynamic and variegated account of religious lives in early Japan – one that underscores the *longue durée* of Buddhist developments unbound by borders of periodization.

Taken together, this dissertation argues that the Tamamushi Shrine foregrounds the heterogeneous developments of Buddhism in early Japan that exceed the teleological and state-driven frameworks presumed in previous scholarship. While a comprehensive account of such developments awaits further archeological researches, the rough sketch presented in this dissertation points to the urgency of an alternative framework of approaching Buddhist art that resonates with both early Japan and East Asia as a whole.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Eclecticism and Plural Temporalities

In 1238, a monk named Kenshin 顯真 (fl. ca. 1227-1254) took stock of Hōryūji's holdings and compiled the record *Kokon mokuroku shō* 古今目録抄 (*Excerpts from Records of Past and Present*). He notes an encounter with an architectural shrine in the Golden Hall, stating that:

Next, towards the east entrance [of the Golden Hall] is the venerable shrine of Emperor Suiko. It has a slender waist (and covers the dais below). It is decorated with wing cases of jewel beetles and copper openwork in arabesque patterns ([The shrine] was transferred [to the Hōryūji Temple] after the destruction of the Tachibanadera. Inside [the upper section] there is [gilt bronze] images of the Thirteen-thousand buddhas. [The shrine] measures seven *shaku* in height.)<sup>1</sup> Inside [the upper section] there is a gilt bronze triad of Amitābha (Śākyamuni in older records). Due to robbers,

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<sup>1</sup> I follow Chari Pradel in adopting Arai Hiroshi's theory of *shaku*. As Pradel observes, the fractional units of the *shaku* are decimal based, meaning that one *shaku* is further divided into ten *sun* 寸; one *sun* is divided into ten *bu* 分; and so on. Yet, the length of one *shaku* was not standardized in early Japan. For example, the earliest extant rulers in Japan in the royal repository Shōsōin and the Hōryūji collections are all supposed to represent one *shaku*, but their lengths vary from 29.5 to 30.5 centimeters. Based on his measurement of tombs, temple plans, and artifacts dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> to late 7<sup>th</sup> centuries in Japan and the Korean peninsula, Arai Hiroshi argues that the *shaku* in the 7<sup>th</sup> century was equivalent to 26.8 centimeters, and names it the “ancient Korean shaku (*kokanjaku* 古韓尺).” Arai's hypothesis is supported by the measurement of the bronze banner from Hōryūji and the space between columns at the original site of Chūgūji 中宮寺. The modern *shaku* as defined in the Meiji period is equal to 30.3 centimeters (roughly one foot in U.S.). See Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjūkoku Shūchō Mandara*, 188-191; and Arai Hiroshi 新井宏. *Maboroshi no kodaijaku: Komajaku wa nakatta* まぼろしの古代尺: 高麗尺はなかった (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1992), 4-7 and 203-205.

only two halos remain. (Four Guardian Kings made of white sandalwood are inserted inside to deter burglars.)<sup>2</sup>

次向東戸有厨子 推古天皇御厨子也 其形腰細也 (蓋彌須坐) 以玉虫羽以銅彫透唐草下臥之 (此橘寺滅滅之時 所送者也 内一萬三千佛坐高七尺) 其内金銅阿彌陀 (古帳釋迦像云々) 三尊御 其盜人取 光二許所殘也 (此内 白檀四天王長坐 爲誅盜人 成立誓願遂成就其願所造像也)

Despite being the earliest extant document that specifically refers to the Tamamushi Shrine, Kenshin's entry raises more questions than it solves. Although it indicates what Kenshin believed to be the shrine's patron (Suiko) and original site (Tachibanadera 橘寺), he also recognized the discord among historical records, especially regarding the main icon in the upper section.<sup>3</sup> Compiled about six centuries after the Asuka period, Kenshin's text reminds us how our current understanding of the Tamamushi Shrine was largely filtered through retrospective accounts. Such juxtaposition of temporalities, however, are not limited to textual sources, nor was it solely a medieval phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, I argue that plural temporalities were already evident in the design of the Tamamushi Shrine. By exposing the disjunctive nature of Japan's reception of continental Buddhist art, I argue against the portrayal of the transmission of

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<sup>2</sup> See original text in Fujita Tsuneyo, ed., *Kōkan bijutsu shiryō*, 33. For citing and translating primary texts, comments that appear in square brackets [] are my additions for clarification, while those in parentheses () are supplementary information (e.g. commentary, correction) in red or smaller font inserted in the original document. Note that the text is also known as *Shōtoku Taishi denshiki* 聖德太子傳私記 (*Personal Memo of the Biography of Prince Shōtoku*).

<sup>3</sup> On the fire at Tachibanadera, see NS 4/680 (Tenmu 9), *SNKBZ* 3: 396. Further complicating the matter, the sandalwood icons that Kenshin saw were no longer extant. Today, a medieval bodhisattva statue is inserted as replacement. For a history of the changes in the main icon enshrined, see Mita Kakuyuki, "Tamamushi no zushi honzon hensenkō," 68-73.

<sup>4</sup> As Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood argue, no cultural device more efficaciously generates the effect of the bending or doubling of time than the work of art, whose relation to time is essentially *plural*. See Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 9.

Buddhist art in East Asia as spatiotemporally unidirectional, and the reduction of the shrine as simply an architectural model or the belated copies of some continental “prototype.” I also underscore the intersection of religious currents beyond an iconographic reading that is exclusively Buddhist, and in so doing, expose the dynamic underlying the reconfiguration of Buddhism practices that took place in its incipient stage of reception. Furthermore, extricating ourselves from the “prototype-copy” framework allows us to fully account for the creativity involved in Tamamushi Shrine’s participation in the negotiation of architecture’s role in mortuary culture across East Asia, and its implication in Buddhist art in particular. The shrine’s participation in the dynamic confounding of the corporeal, the architectural, and the cosmological in relation to cave temple art and portable shrines also compel us to consider how the interchangeability of media and non-anthropocentric scaling efficaciously communicated the divine in Buddhist art.

### **Timing the Tamamushi Shrine: Revisiting the Murata-Uehata Debate**

While the dating of the Golden Hall (Fig. 2.1) and pagoda (Fig. 2.2) of Hōryūji has been contentiously debated since the Meiji period, that of the Tamamushi Shrine has received relatively scant attention after the dispute between the architectural historian Murata Jirō 村田治朗 (1895-1985) and art historian Uehara Kazu in the 1960s. The ways these two scholars approach the shrine are indicative of some of the methodological pitfalls in the study of early Buddhist art in Japan, and thus warrant elaboration here. In a nutshell, the Murata-Uehara debate centers on which Chinese dynastic style served as the “prototype” for the architectural elements of the Tamamushi Shrine. On the one hand, Murata proposes mid- to late Tang as the main source of stylistic inspiration, and accordingly, argues that the Tamamushi Shrine postdates the

Hōryūji Golden Hall that was reconstructed after the 670 fire.<sup>5</sup> Uehara, on the other hand, purports Buddhist art of Sui and early Tang as the sources, and dates the shrine to early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Rather than positioning the shrine as the miniaturized version of any pre-existing structure, he argues for the opposite case: it was the Hōryūji Golden Hall that mimics elements from the shrine.<sup>6</sup>

The point of contention of the Murata-Uehara debate eventually boiled down to one architectural element: the cloud-shaped bracketing system (Ch. *yungong* 雲栱; Jp. *kumogata tokyō* 雲形斗栱). Popular among Buddhist structures in early Japan from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century to the completion of Yakushiji 薬師寺 in 680, the bracketing system was regarded by both scholars as the benchmark for dating Buddhist edifices in Asuka period Japan. For Murata, such bracketing system appears majestic and lavishly ornate in the Hōryūji Golden Hall (Fig. 2.3), whereas that of the Tamamushi Shrine (Fig. 2.4) echoes with the elegant simplicity (*senrensei* 洗練性) of that in the pagodas of Hokkiji 法起寺 (Fig. 2.5) and Hōrinji 法輪寺 (Fig. 2.6) in Nara.<sup>7</sup> In so doing, Murata argues that the makers of the Tamamushi Shrine were more mature in craftsmanship and artistic expression, and that they were either artisans introduced directly from Tang China or those active locally in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century when the architectural profession became more developed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Murata Jirō 村田治朗, “Tamamushi no zushi no shokōshatsu 玉虫厨子の諸考察,” *Ars buddhica* 63 (1966): 1-20. On details about the 670 fire incident, see *NS* 4/670 (Tenji 9), *SNKBZ* 3: 284-286. See also the debate regarding the existence of the incident in J. Edward Kidder, “Reviving the Burning Question: The Hōryūji Fires and Its Reconstruction,” in *Hōryūji Reconsidered*, ed. Dorothy C. Wong (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 5-26.

<sup>6</sup> Uehara, *Tamamushi no zushi*, 353.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 362-364.

<sup>8</sup> Murata, “Tamamushi no zushi no shokōshatsu,” 18-20.



In contrast, Uehara dates the Tamamushi Shrine back to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. In his genealogical diagram (Fig. 2.7), he observes that its bracketing system displays features that either disappeared or simplified after the Asuka period: the reduction of corner bracket arms (*sumiki* 隅木) from three to one that penetrates the corners of the palatial structure; the merging of the bracket arms and the bearing blocks (*kumoto* 雲斗 or *makito* 卷斗) in inverted triangular shapes; a clear segregation between the two bearing blocks on either end of the bracket arms, which often produces a negative space in the shape of a circular urn; and the absence of decorative cloud-patterned carving on the bracket arms and blocks, unlike that in the Hōryūji Golden Hall (Fig. 2.3).<sup>9</sup>

To further support his claim, Uehara traces the precursor of such bracketing system to two types of architectural practices in China: first, Han dynasty stone gate-towers (*que* 闕) guarding entrance to city, palace, religious space, or funerary complex; and second, mural paintings and reliefs in Buddhist cave temples. For the former, Uehara deploys works such as the stone gate-towers dedicated to Shenfujun 沈府君石闕 in Sichuan province, which abridge such bracketing system in stone and position them above mounted figures and mythical beasts (Fig. 2.8).<sup>10</sup> For the latter, Uehara cites Buddhist grottoes such as Caves 1 and 16 of Xiantangshan 響堂山, in which the bracketing system operates similarly as architectural thresholds demarcating the sacred and the secular.<sup>11</sup> While comparable works are limited, Uehara observes one peculiar development of the cloud-shaped bracketing system in early Japan: the merging of bracket arms

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<sup>9</sup> Uehara, *Tamamushi no zushi*, 364-366.

<sup>10</sup> For pre-Han development of *que*, see Chien Li-kuei, “Gateways to Power and Paradise: Twin Towers in Early Chinese Architecture,” *Archives of Asian Art* 68, no. 1 (2018): 67-86.

<sup>11</sup> Uehara, *Tamamushi no zushi*, 324-325.

and bearing blocks as if they are manufactured as a single unit, which offsets the principle of weight distribution that the system is designed for (Fig. 2.4).

Based on the degree of such merging as illustrated in his diagram (Fig. 2.7), Uehara dates the Tamamushi Shrine before the Hōryūji Golden Hall and the Hokkiji pagoda. He even names the bracketing system of the latter two as “distorted” (*henkei dokyō* 变形斗栱), for the merging takes place not only between the bearing blocks and the bracket arms, but also among the bearing blocks to the extent that they almost absorb each other (Fig. 2.9). In contrast to Murata’s praise of such development, Uehara describes it as “deformed” (*ibitsunarika* 歪形化) and “degenerative” (*taikateki* 退化的) – the result of stagnancy in craftsmanship and imagination.<sup>12</sup> While Uehara’s dating schema has been generally accepted in current scholarship, its morphologist approach to architectural development appears to reinforce the image of early Buddhist edifices in Japan as defective copies of continental “prototypes.” Any derivation from the latter would thus be casted in an unfavorable light as negative attempt by inexperienced artisans. I argue that such presumption forecloses rather than opens up more productive discussions of architectural transmission in this period. Rather than reducing derivation as mistranslation, I consider the case of cloud-shaped bracketing system as demonstrating how continental styles and practices were often reconfigured in early Japan precisely for their exotic appeal, which at times superseded concerns about accuracy or structural functionality.

### **Reassessing the “Prototype-Copy” Framework**

The Murata-Uehara debate reveals a larger methodological pitfall in the study of Buddhist art in early Japan, which presumes stylistic transfers as both spatiotemporally

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 356-359 and 364.

unidirectional, and that the cultural significance of individual artifacts are measured in terms of their resemblance to (or derivation from) certain continental “prototypes.” Although Murata and Uehara offer different dating for the Tamamushi Shrine, their methodologies are largely the same: to assign the shrine a serial position along a sequence of morphological development. Their analyses therefore strongly resonate with George Kubler’s study of Pre-Columbian Art in *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962) that was published around the time of the Murata-Uehara debate. In a nutshell, Kubler’s model is designed for approaching artifacts that resist iconographic reading, especially those that exist in multiples and are not grounded in any form of authorship.<sup>13</sup> First, a range of artifacts is grouped into a “form-class” based on their formal similarities. A chain of morphological development is then constructed by identifying the “prime object” that instigates the sequence, to be followed by its subsequent incarnations as “replicas” across spaces and time. The latter objects are assigned their own serial positions along the sequence based on the degree of resemblance and derivation they have in relation to the “prime object,” as well as among each other.

Kubler postulates that each “form-class” operates as a solution to a specific cultural “problem,” and that individual artifacts along the sequence are conceived to address the early, middle, and late versions of such problem.<sup>14</sup> A “form-class” becomes a “closed series” when the problem is resolved. In the opposite case, it becomes an “open sequence” that might be abandoned or reactivated in a completely different context. Kubler’s model thus prioritizes the taxonomies and structures of formal change over the content and meaning of the works

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<sup>13</sup> George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962): 39-61.

<sup>14</sup> To Kubler, the history of art “resembles a broken but much-repaired chain made of string and wire to connect the occasional jeweled links surviving as physical evidences of the invisible original sequence of prime objects.” See Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 40 and 75-78.

themselves. However, his emphasis on morphology should not be reduced as a mere return to formalism. As Christopher S. Wood observes, the model operates as a critical reflection of iconographic studies that proliferated in the 1960s, whose explicatory power pales when faced with material culture produced in non Euro-American contexts that often hold very different notions of authorship and originality.<sup>15</sup> Calling attention back to the objects themselves, Kubler's model is skeptical towards interpretation that operates outside the morphological system that an artifact belongs to.

To give a more concrete example: in Kublerian term, the history of Buddhist architecture can be analyzed as follows: first, the death of the Historical Buddha necessitated the construction of a space appropriate for commemorating his life and teaching (the "problem"). A burial mound was established as the "prime object," which gradually developed into the more elaborate stūpas for circumambulation and other rituals. Yet, when Buddhism spread to Asia, the stūpa form and its content changed accordingly in response to local contexts. For example, pagodas in the form of tower were erected as a local manifestation of stūpa, with Buddhist texts refashioned as "dharma relics" substituting the Buddha's absent body. By tracing the morphological change among these edifices, a "form-class" can be constructed regardless of contextual differences. Any pagoda in early Japan can thereby be analyzed in relation to that in other parts of East Asia, which are all accorded a serial position as the "replicas" of the earliest stūpas in India.

As such, the "prototype-copy" framework prevalent in the scholarship of Buddhist art in early Japan is in many ways akin to Kublerian notion of "prime object" and its "replica." Such approach is further reinforced by the myth of the Silk Road, which operates through a diffusionist narrative that regards the development of Buddhist art in Asia as spatiotemporally

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<sup>15</sup> Christopher S. Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008): 37.

unidirectional. As discussed in Chapter One, while to a certain extent geographical facts do support such narrative, it unhelpfully reduces Buddhist art as a static, monolithic entity that merely traveled eastwards, and in so doing, suppresses the many changes and reconfigurations that occurred at varying regions and circumstances. This methodological pitfall is particularly inimical for the case of early Japan. As the “end-point” of the Silk Road, early Japan is often portrayed in a passive role – the site where Buddhist arts across Asia were deposited and preserved. Accordingly, the study of Buddhist artifacts in this period often becomes an exercise of matching the “replicas” with the most plausible “prime objects” in other parts of Asia. When a morphological sequence is established, the discussion forecloses itself, reaffirming what is presumed in the first place.

Furthermore, such approach tends to suppress the creative agency embedded in Buddhist art of early Japan, and caricaturize any stylistic discrepancies as merely cultural mistranslations or technical crudeness. In so doing, it reinforces the historiographical bias that pits early Japan against medieval Japan, the latter from which a more distinctive “Japanese” (*wayō* 和様) style of Buddhist art is believed to finally emerge.<sup>16</sup> The arbitrariness of such approach, however, often goes unexamined: given that what we know about continental Buddhist art and architecture before the 7<sup>th</sup> century is at best fragmentary, on what ground can one assert a particular edifice or object as the representative “period piece” that served as the “prime object” for similar works in early Japan?

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<sup>16</sup> For the origin of the art-historical binary known as the *Wa-Kan* 和漢 paradigm (*Wa* as “Japanese”; *Kan* as “Han” or “continental”), see Kristopher W. Kersey, “In Defiance of Collage: Assembling Modernity, ca. 1112 CE,” *Archives of Asian Art* 68, no. 1 (2018): 17.

Take, for example, the link established between the 6<sup>th</sup>-century Yicahui limestone pillar 義慈惠石柱 of Northern Qi dynasty (550-577) in Dingxing, Hebei Province (Fig. 2.10) and the Tamamushi Shrine. As Nancy Steinhardt argues:

The [Tamamushi] shrine as a whole is a rare example of a structure that can be compared to the Yicahui pillar, and the building that contains the image offers an almost unique comparison with the shrine atop the pillar..... It is noteworthy how often Chinese-style architecture is represented by pillars and roofs alone..... In the seventh century the purpose of representing Chinese architecture [in Japan] was an association with China, and symbolically its political, religious, or ideological system.<sup>17</sup>

Here, the discussion centers on how Chinese architecture served as the authoritative source for building practices in early Japan. While the Yamato court certainly perceived continental architecture as fashionable and effective for conjuring new political identity, it remains unclear how and why a rather obscure column from northeastern China established for communal ritual would have any direct impact for the design of the Tamamushi Shrine.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the major differences between the two artifacts are left unaddressed. In particular, the palatial structure of the Chinese example is placed on top of a pillar rather than a dais common for enshrining Buddhist icons. Moreover, the Yicahui pillar is hexagonal rather than square, and contains engraved ornaments connected to the representation of maṇḍala in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which

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<sup>17</sup> Nancy Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 334-335.

<sup>18</sup> For the socio-historical context underlying the commission of the pillar, see Tracy Miller, "Of Palaces and Pagodas: Palatial Symbolism in the Buddhist Architecture of Early Medieval China," *Frontiers of History in China* 10, no. 2 (2015): 222-263.

are absent in the iconographic program of the Tamamushi Shrine.<sup>19</sup> As such, instead of rehashing the “prototype-copy” paradigm, I argue that it is more productive to develop an alternative framework that, on the one hand, addresses how material culture of continental Buddhism was reconfigured in early Japan, and on the other hand, confronts the plural temporalities embedded in artistic transmission and production of the Asuka period.

### **Plural Temporalities in Early Japan**

Rather than reducing the Tamamushi Shrine as a “replica” of any period or regional style in continental Buddhist art, at stake is to account for its formal, stylistic, and iconographic eclecticisms. I argue that such heterogeneities are indicative of two aspects of cultural transmission from continental Asia to the Yamato court: first, the cultural flow was intermittent rather than continuous; second, continental elements were not simply “adopted” by the Yamato court, but were purposefully selected and reconfigured, a point that I will expand in the second half of this chapter. In many ways, the first aspect calls into question the romanticized image of a seamless cultural flow as projected by the Silk Road discourse. Granted, Suiko did instigate at least five embassies to Sui China (600; 607-608; 608-609; 610-?; 614), which significantly broke down the century-long diplomatic pause between the two sides. Yet, as *Nihon shoki* indicates, the contact was largely indirect as it was filtered through the help of professionals from clan families or immigrant communities that were familiar with Chinese writing systems and imperial customs, a majority of which originated from the Korean kingdoms. What is more, most of the students and scholar-monks sent by these embassies did not return to China after the Sui-Tang transition, and thus the continental knowledge they acquired did not have any immediate impact

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<sup>19</sup> Miller, “Of Palaces and Pagodas,” 248-258.

on art and culture of the Suiko's reign.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, after 615 a long diplomatic hiatus once again ensued as a result of the growing tension in the Korean peninsula, and the uncertainties brought by the expansion of Tang. As such, it would be a gross generalization to position rulers of early Japan as avid learners of foreign knowledge, and to presume their exposure to continental culture as comprehensive and continuous.

In his study of the Reims Cathedral, Erwin Panofsky argues that the heterogeneity of architectural and sculptural forms in its façade renders it counterproductive to categorize the edifice under one period style.<sup>21</sup> He thus proposes two temporal orders embedded in the writing of art history: the primary order (natural time) intrinsic to an edifice or artwork (e.g. the time it took for a building to be completed, and the *longue durée* of repair and modification); and the secondary order (historical time) developed by art historians through dating and periodization.

The task of art historians thus involves balancing both orders that are mutually embedded.

Although art-historical writing would risk losing its bearing without adherence to some degree of historical time, Panofsky stresses the importance of recognizing the temporal heterogeneity and anachronism embedded in all artifacts. Similarly, Donald McCallum cautions against any rigid periodization in dating Buddhist temple of early Japan. Based on archaeological data gathered by Ōhashi Katsuaki from Asukadera 飛鳥寺 in 1976, he points out that temple construction in early Japan was a huge logistical undertaking for the court. Not only would it require at least four to five years to construct a single building in a temple complex, but we also need to consider the fact that only one building could be worked on at a time.<sup>22</sup> His argument was further supported

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<sup>20</sup> Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjūkoku Shūchō Mandara*, 120-121.

<sup>21</sup> Erwin Panofsky, "Reflections on Historical Time," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 4 (2004): 691-701.

<sup>22</sup> Donald F. McCallum, *The Four Great Temple: Buddhist Archaeology, Architecture, and Icons of Seventh-century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 40.



by the fact that the so-called “Four Great Temples” of 7<sup>th</sup> century Japan were not built concurrently but spread evenly in the four quarters of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (with minor overlaps), indicating that the court could only afford to build one temple complex at a time.<sup>23</sup>

McCallum further expands his discussion to the dating of Buddhist icons imported or produced in Japan during the Hakuho period 白鳳時代, which he defined as the years circa 650-710. While he proposes a tripartite chronological schema to classify these statues into early, middle, and late Hakuho styles, he also acknowledges the limit of any teleological account given the irregularity of the court’s engagement with continental culture.<sup>24</sup> For instance, while *Nihon shoki* indicates that the Yamato court under Kinmei 欽明 (r. 539-571) officially received the “first” Buddhist statue as a diplomatic gift from the Baekje King Seongmyeong 聖明王 (r. 523-554) in 552, no extant work can validate this entry.<sup>25</sup> Given the stylistic heterogeneity of extant statues, McCallum also questions the validity of labeling them as replicas of any period style from the continent (e.g. Northern Wei, Sui, or Tang).<sup>26</sup> Instead, he argues that artisans in early Japan were exposed to a reservoir of “complex variables,” which they had some degree of freedom to juxtapose and reconfigure to please their patrons.<sup>27</sup>

Here, it is worth considering the linguistic concept of “chaotic input” that has been employed in the study of contemporary art. As defined by the linguist Derek Bickerton, “chaotic

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<sup>23</sup> McCallum, *The Four Great Temple*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Donald F. McCallum, *Hakuho Sculpture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 15-78.

<sup>25</sup> NS 10/552 (Kinmei 13), SNKBZ 2: 416. The year is noted as 538 according to *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* 元興寺伽藍縁起并流記資財帳 and *Jōgū Shōtoku hōō teisetsu* 上宮聖德法王帝説, see Kanaoka Shūyū 金岡秀友 and Yanagisawa Keiichi 柳川啓一, eds., *Bukkyō bunka jiten* 仏教文化事典 (Tokyo: Kōsei Shuppan, 1989), 370-372. The event is also translated in William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert, *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 13-14. See also McCallum, *The Four Great Temple*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> As McCallum argues, even the so-called “Sui period style” is highly synthetic of artistic trends from different periods and regions across China, see McCallum, *Hakuho Sculpture*, 4-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 38 and 49.

input” refers to the process under which children that are exposed to an environment of competing languages (especially those of multilingual family) attain literacy by synthesizing dissonant information rather than relying on a singular model.<sup>28</sup> For example, Alexandra Schwartz discusses the 1990s as a period of “chaotic input” in which artists were exposed to numerous stimuli at a relatively short span of time as a cause of the acceleration of information technology, whose rules and structures had yet to be codified.<sup>29</sup> Spatially speaking, the concept is manifested by an absence or a rapid succession of centers where such stimuli are produced and reconfigured. To some extent, Suiko’s reign can also be regarded as a moment of “chaotic input” in Japanese history. In particular, the dissemination of continental culture was uneven, haphazard, and largely circumstantial. While geographically the process took place at various centers that were not centrally coordinated, temporally it was accelerated in a relatively short period of time through different waves of immigrants from the Korean peninsula. Among them were merchants, scholar-monks, and professionals once served the Korean kingdoms, some claimed to be of Han Chinese heritage from ancestors who had settled down in the peninsula before the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup> To forge connection with the political elites of early Japan, these immigrants performed the role of cultural intermediaries through marketing their knowledge of Chinese writing system and technological skills.

Against such backdrop, iconographic programs that took centuries to develop in continental Buddhist art, as well as styles both antiquated and current, were introduced to Japan

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<sup>28</sup> Derek Bickerton, “The Language Bioprogram Hypothesis,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 7, no. 2 (1984): 173-88.

<sup>29</sup> Alexandra Schwartz, “Chaotic Input: Art in the United States, 1989-2001,” in *Come as You Are: Art of the 1990s*, ed. Alexandra Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 9.

<sup>30</sup> For the history of Han Chinese immigrants in the Korean peninsula, see Mark E. Byington and Oh Youngchan, “Scholarly Studies on The Han Commanderies in Korea,” in *The Han Commanderies in Early Korean History*, ed. Mark E. Byington (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2013), 11-47.

simultaneously in less than three decades. Consider, for instance, the Hōryūji Golden Hall. Besides the cloud-shaped bracketing system, one finds the angle rafters on the top story supported by bases in the shape of mythical beasts (Fig. 2.11). While this feature might have been inspired by the aforementioned *que* common in Han dynasty (Fig. 2.8), it can also be found in the sculpted pillar of Northern Qi Buddhist cave temples (Fig. 2.12). Inside the Golden Hall, while the main icon (Śākyamuni triad) has been stylistically defined as Northern Wei, the truncated pyramid-shape canopies (*fukutogata tengai* 覆斗形天蓋) above (Fig. 2.13) resonates more with Buddhist reliquaries of Tang China and Unified Silla (Fig. 2.14).<sup>31</sup> As such, bracketing the Hōryūji Golden Hall under a singular regional or period style from continental Buddhist art is largely counterproductive.

The same can be said for the Tamamushi Shrine. Even Alexander Soper, who attempts to develop a coherent teleology charting the “evolution” of Buddhist architecture in Japan, expresses certain unease towards the role played by the Tamamushi Shrine. While he discerns that most extant Asuka period Buddhist structures share the use of eaves purlins and rafters that are oblong in cross-section, he notes that:

Minor dissent is voiced only by the Tamamushi Shrine, standing on the altar of the “golden” hall. This is closely imitative of actual architecture in its forms, and in general corresponds to the evidence of the larger constructions with which it seems to be contemporary. Its purlins, however, are round, the cross-section typical of the succeeding Nara period, which may indicate a slightly different source of style. Its bracketing units, in addition, emerge not on transverse axes but at an angle away from each other, as if they followed radii from the same center which determines the corner diagonals. This method produces a more

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<sup>31</sup> Uehara, *Tamamushi no zushi*, 327-328.

equal distribution of span along the eaves purlin than that adopted in actual Asuka architecture, and thus may have had practical use in a variant continental style.<sup>32</sup>

The “minor” dissent posed by the Tamamushi Shrine appears to constantly contradict Soper’s teleological model. While the analysis above dates the shrine to the 8<sup>th</sup> century based on the round cross-section of its purlins, in the other section of his book Soper describes its segregated hip-and-gable roof as “primitive,” representing “the earliest stage of combination [of roof styles] not yet fully reconciled,” thus pushing the dating back to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> The shrine thus occupies both the beginning and the end points of the Asuka period, inviting yet evading any serial position that it is offered.

By refuting any teleological account, the stylistic eclecticism of the Tamamushi Shrine compels us to develop another model to approach early Buddhist art in Japan. Here, it is worth examining Aby Warburg’s concept of the “survival” (*Nachleben*) of image. In a nutshell, the notion argues against imposing any evolutionary model (whether progressive or degenerative) from natural science onto the study of art, and declares that the time of image operates differently than that of history.<sup>34</sup> Recognizing the persistence of atemporality and anachronism in the history of images, Warburg positions an artwork as a product of multiple pasts, a *time knot* that operates through the perpetual citations, resurrections, and displacements of historical fragments.<sup>35</sup> In so doing, culture under Warburg’s view represents itself less as an essence than a

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander Soper, *The Evolution of Buddhist Architecture in Japan* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978 [1942]), 104.

<sup>33</sup> Soper, *The Evolution of Buddhist Architecture in Japan*, 113.

<sup>34</sup> George Didi-Huberman, “The Surviving Image: Aby Warburg and Tylorian Anthropology,” *Oxford Art Journal* 25, no. 1 (2002): 61.

<sup>35</sup> Didi-Huberman, “The Surviving Image,” 61.

*symptom* from the past, a displaced entity composed of things that are abandoned but modified and persisted in the present.<sup>36</sup> As Georges Didi-Huberman succinctly puts, the task of art history is the analysis of “spectral reality,” which means that the discipline chiefly concerns with the ghostly manifestations of images and things that persist in other spaces and times despite being casted off from their original contexts.<sup>37</sup>

In a similar vein, I argue that the Tamamushi Shrine resonates with Warburg’s concept of “survival,” and challenges the many presumptions brought to the study of early Buddhist art in Japan. In particular, its stylistic eclecticism foregrounds the plural temporalities conjured by its unique historical backdrop. Juxtaposing both antiquated and current elements from continental cultures, the shrine is perhaps less a repository than a coincidental agglomerate of historical fragments, and exemplifies how the memory of forms can survive through latencies and leaps rather than continuity. Furthermore, its eclecticism also registers how continental culture could be purposefully selected and reinterpreted by the political elites of early Japan to maximize the potential of a foreign religion. More than being an architectural model, the shrine functioned as an exercise of spatial imagination that maximized the potential of different media, architecturalized representations, and scaling conventions to convey a religious cosmology.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 65. In a similar vein, Kubler’s serial model can also be considered as a critique of the progressive, developmental mode of historical time. As Pamela M. Lee argues, Kubler’s interest in seriality was in part a reaction against the myth of the avant-garde, whose belief in linear temporality and the rhetoric of progress was increasingly interrogated in the postwar context. His idea of “open sequence,” in which a “form-class” that ceases morphologizing might be reactivated in a completely different context, thus strongly resonates with Warburg’s notion of *Nachleben*. See Pamela M. Lee, “‘Ultramoderne’: Or, How George Kubler Stole the Time in Sixties Art,” *Grey Room* (2001): 48-57. As Wood observes, Kubler was the pupil of French formalist Henri Focillon, who regarded form as living a life of its own outside of historical time, while Focillon himself was very much inspired by the vitalist thought of Henri Bergson. As such, Kubler’s theory of art belongs to the long tradition of anti-rationalist, non-empiricist thinking about the temporality of matter, see Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction*, 37.

<sup>38</sup> By “architecturalized,” I refer to the discursive representations of recognizable architectural “types” across media. The term is distinctively different from “architectural,” which refers to functional structures and its embellishments that are components of an actual built environment. See Vimalin Rujivacharakul, et al., “Introduction,” in

The following section thus delineates how the wide range of continental currents – whether religious, stylistic, or iconographic – were negotiated and reconfigured in the Tamamushi Shrine to serve such purposes.

### **The Case of *Mingqi* Tower**

Given the formal eclecticism of the Tamamushi Shrine, it is worth considering comparative works beyond the “purely” Buddhist context. Take, for example, pottery vessels known as *mingqi* 明器 (or 冥器) in architecturalized forms commonly found in Han dynasty tombs (Fig. 2.15), whose origin could be traced back to as early as the Warring States period (475-221 BCE). Often translated as “spirit vessels” (*ming* 明 literally means “bright,” while 冥 denotes the underworld; and *qi* 器 as “vessel”), *mingqi* was mainly made of clay or wood, and could take the forms of figurines, animals, household objects, or architecture. As Guo Qinghua observes, the mass production of *mingqi* took off in the Eastern Han period (206 BCE-220 CE), and architecturalized *mingqi* in the shape of watchtower, fortified courtyard house, or granary were commissioned for tombs for a wide spectrum of social classes, ranging from scholar-officials, military generals, communal leaders, to merchants and other figures of lower-middle class background.<sup>39</sup> Intriguingly, *mingqi* is not commonly found in royal tombs, suggesting that it was mostly a middle-class phenomenon.

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*Architecturalized Asia: Mapping a Continent through History*, ed. by Vimalin Rujivacharakul, Ken Tadashi Ōshima, H. Hazel. Hahn, and Peter Christensen (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 1-12.

<sup>39</sup> Guo Qinghua, *The Mingqi Pottery Buildings of Han Dynasty China, 206 BC-AD 220: Architectural Representations and Represented Architecture* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2016), 5-6.

As Hong Jeehee points out, *mingqi* was not a mere substitute for any real object, but a material manifestation of the relationship between the realms of the living and the dead.<sup>40</sup> In Confucian texts, *mingqi* was distinguished from utilitarian vessels (*shengqi* 生器) and sacrificial vessels (*jiqi* 祭器), and it was produced to furnish the chamber of underground tombs alongside mural paintings, sculptural reliefs, and other buried goods.<sup>41</sup> It is believed that *mingqi* performs two intersecting functions: as a *record* that transfers the deceased's possessions and social status to the netherworld; and more likely, as a *projection* that idealizes his/her life and afterlife. Scale matters in such negotiations. As Wu Hung argues, the scale of *mingqi* is charged with symbolic significance: it is precisely its diminutive scale and inconsumability by the living that signify its status as the vessel for the deceased.<sup>42</sup> Despite the fact that *mingqi* could not perform its function without certain resemblance to actual edifices and objects, its scale declares a non-anthropocentric worldview that resists such identification. While its diminutive size and portability might conjure a sense of intimacy, paradoxically it also inhabits an interiority that is autonomous from the living world. *Mingqi* is thereby a liminal entity that constantly entices yet disavows one's bodily and psychological identifications.

That the mortuary culture of *mingqi* was introduced to early Japan is supported by the 612 /2/28 entry in *Nihon shoki*, which concerns the reburial of the Great Consort Kitashihime 堅鹽媛 (Suiko's mother) to the tumulus dedicated to her husband the Great Ruler Kinmei. It states:

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<sup>40</sup> Hong Jeehee, "Mechanism of Life for the Netherworld: Transformations of *Mingqi* in Middle-Period China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 43, no. 2 (2015): 162.

<sup>41</sup> Wu Hung, "The Invisible Miniature: Framing the Soul in Chinese Art and Architecture," *Art History* 38, no. 2 (2015): 286-303.

<sup>42</sup> Wu, "The Invisible Miniature," 287-288.

2<sup>nd</sup> month, 28<sup>th</sup> day

The Great Consort (Ōkisasi) Kitashihime was reinterred in the Great Tumulus (Ōmisanagi) of Hinokuma. On this day funeral orations were pronounced on the Karu highway (*machita*). First, Abe no Uchi no Omi Tori pronounced an eulogistic decree of the Empress, and made offerings to the spirit of the deceased of things such as spirit utensils (*meiki*) and spirit garments (*meii*), fifteen thousand kinds in all.<sup>43</sup>

二月辛亥朔庚午 改葬皇太夫人堅鹽媛於檜隈大陵 是日誅於輕街  
第一 阿倍內臣鳥 誅天皇之命 則奠靈 明器明衣之類萬五千種也

The entry is significant in that it explicitly states that continental *mingqi* (Jp: *meiki*) was incorporated into the burial goods for the tumulus for Suiko's mother. The record indicates that by the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, the continental practice of *mingqi* had been fully integrated into pre-existing funerary culture associated with the Kofun period. Two scenarios are plausible: either *mingqi* as a foreign loanword was used to describe pre-existing funerary wares such as *haniwa* and *sueki* that were installed above and inside mounded tumulus, or that *mingqi* of distinctive continental styles were imported or produced by immigrant artisans working for the political elites in early Japan. What is more, given that Buddhism had already been officially promoted by then, the record indicates that Buddhist funerary practices such as cremation had yet to replace the construction of burial mound. It is believed that the first royal figure to endorse cremation was Emperor Jitō (r. 690-697), by then it was already a century after Suiko's reign.<sup>44</sup> Together, they underscore that the dissemination of Buddhism in Japan was not an overnight event but a

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<sup>43</sup> NS 2/612 (Suiko 20), SNKBZ 2: 566-567. English translation modified from Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 143.

<sup>44</sup> Cremation was first associated with monk Dōshō 道昭 (629-700), who requested the ceremony before his passing. See Richard Bowring, *The Religious Traditions of Japan 500-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 59-60.



long process, and that in such period of negotiation there were significant overlaps and dialogues between pre-existing and imported funerary practices (see Chapter Four).

For the study of the Tamamushi Shrine, *mingqi* in the form of tower and storehouse warrant specific attention. As Candace Lewis observes, *mingqi* tower (Fig. 2.15) first appeared in tombs of the scholar-official class in Hunan and Jiangsu provinces.<sup>45</sup> Based on their architectural components, and the figural tableaux of domestic activities they contain, the genre can be subdivided into towers that guard private residence, military watchtowers, pavilions (possibly for garden), and bell towers.<sup>46</sup> Given that there is no extant edifice from Han dynasty for direct comparison, the accuracy of their representation remains debatable. Moreover, as aforementioned, I argue against treating them as mere copies of some unknown “prototypes,” and thus my analysis below primarily concerns with how they communicate ideas about the afterlives through architectural metaphors.

As Luo Di observes, tower was imagined in Han rhapsodies (*fu* 賦) not only as a discourse that alludes to the ruler’s ability in overseeing his or her realm, but also as a site where heaven and earth meet.<sup>47</sup> Luo cites literary sources such as the 6<sup>th</sup>-century *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selection of Refined Literature*), the first anthology of Chinese literature written from Han dynasty onwards, which contains rhapsodies that refashion architecture as the source of political

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<sup>45</sup> Candace J. Lewis, “Tall Towers of the Han,” *Oriental Art* 21, no. 8 (1990): 45-54. It should be noted that around the Latter Han period also witnessed the rise of popular “temple” structures known as *fangmiao* 房廟 dedicated to the deceased who were not one’s ancestors. The ritual conducted in such space is called *fangsi* 房祀, and it is believed that images of deities of various sorts were installed there. Land contracts (*maidiquan* 買地券) also became one of the burial goods in elite tombs of the times. Terry F. Kleeman, *Celestial Masters: History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), 11-12 and 222.

<sup>46</sup> Guo, *The Mingqi Pottery Buildings of Han Dynasty China*, 1-14.

<sup>47</sup> Luo Di, “Han Rhapsodies and Dynastic Ethos: Reconstructing the Literary Mind on Chinese Architecture,” *Michigan Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 3-19. See also Nicholas M. Williams, “Li Bai’s ‘Rhapsody on the Hall of Light’: A Singular Vision of Cosmic Order,” *T’oung Pao* 101, no. 1-3 (2015): 35-97.

legitimization. That *mingqi* tower first appears in the tombs of the scholar-official class resonates with the fact that much Han dynasty rhapsodies ontologically portray architecture as embodying *tiandao* 天道 (the “Way of Heaven”) – the natural, rationalized order of things.<sup>48</sup> Most notably, the Chinese term for cosmos *yuzhou* 宇宙 originally means eaves and ridgepole, which further underscores how architecture in early Chinese thoughts was closely embedded with the perception of the external world.<sup>49</sup>

Luo further points out how imperial structures such as terraces and towers were imagined as the “cosmic nexus” that connects the heavenly realms and the human world.<sup>50</sup> For example, in the *Sweet Springs Palace Rhapsody* (*Ganquan fu* 甘泉賦) written by Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), readers are invited to impersonate the vision of a sagely protagonist in a marvelous journey of a paradise on earth. After encountering a sky-piercing tower of immeasurable height, he proceeds to the next wonder:

And then, a grand edifice, illusory as clouds, deceptive as waves,  
Precipitously piled, forms a tower.  
Raising and lifting His head to look on high,  
His eyes, blurred, and blinded, see nothing.  
Straight ahead, the view full and flowing, vast and wide,  
Points to a spacious sweep east and west.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Luo, “Han Rhapsodies and Dynastic Ethos,” 5-6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Wen xuan* 文選. *Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua* 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (*Chinese Text Project*). Accessed 20 June, 2018, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=608698>. English translation modified from David Knechtges, in John Minford and Joseph S. M. Lau, ed., *Classical Chinese Literature: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 298-307.

於是大廈雲譎波詭 摧確而成觀  
仰擣首以高視兮 目冥眴而亡見  
正瀏濫以弘愴兮 指東西之漫漫

This paradise on earth alludes to the legendary Ganquan Palace 甘泉宮 that Han Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 141-87 BCE) constructed in 138 BCE. While the alignment of political authority and supernatural vision was hardly anything new, what warrants attention here is the stress of immediacy throughout the rhapsody that renders the immortal realm from something to be contemplated from a distance to one that can be intimately experienced. What is more, Luo discerns that the allusion to cloud, dream, and other mythical beasts in the rhapsody strongly resonates with the rhetoric of early Daoist texts, indicating that both *mingqi* towers and their real-life counterparts provided the ground upon which different cosmological schemas intersected and mutually reconfigured.

While Buddhist pagoda has been discussed as the localization of Indian *stūpa* in the form of Chinese tower, its connection with other religious currents remains under-theorized.<sup>52</sup> Aligned with Luo's observation, Mukai Yūsuke deploys textual sources that indicate the crucial role played by early Daoism in such architectural translation.<sup>53</sup> In particular, he cites the case of the nine-storied pagoda of the Yongningsi Monastery 永寧寺 (completed in 516), which is believed to be the largest pagoda built in Chinese history (Fig. 2.16).<sup>54</sup> One element named “dew basin” (*chenglupan* 承露盤 or *ganlupan* 金露椀) receives significant attention in texts related to the

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<sup>52</sup> For the connection between *stūpa* and tower construction in Chinese context, see Guo Qinghua, “From Tower to Pagoda: Structural and Technological Transition,” *Construction History* 20 (2004): 3-19.

<sup>53</sup> Mukai Yūsuke 向井佑介, “Buttō no Chūgokuteki hen'yō 佛塔の中國的變容,” *Tōhō Gakuhō* 東方學報 88 (2013): 82, 93-98.

<sup>54</sup> Guo, “From Tower to Pagoda: Structural and Technological Transition,” 15.

monument. For example, in volume one of *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (*Record of Monasteries in Luoyang*) compiled by Yang Xuanzhi 楊銜之 (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century) in 547, it is recorded that:

On the mast [of the Yongningsi Pagoda] one finds a golden vase inlaid with precious stones, with a capacity of twenty-five piculs. Underneath the jeweled vase are thirty tiers of golden plates for collecting the dew. Golden bells hung from each of the plates.<sup>55</sup>

刹上有金寶瓶 容二十五斛 寶瓶下有承露金盤三十重 周匝皆垂金鐸

Given that South Asian stūpa does not contain the feature of the dew basin, its appearance in the mast of Chinese pagodas indicates the centrality of early Daoist thought in its reconfiguration of Buddhist architecture. As both Mukai and Lillian Lan-ying Tseng observes, sweet dew (*ganlu* 甘露 or 金露) was one of the most prevalent omens in the textual and visual cultures of the Han dynasty and it was widely believed to be a magical substance conjured out of the harmony between Heaven and Earth for cultivating longevity.<sup>56</sup> On the cliff of the Western Passage (Xixia 西狹) near Xianbian 下辨, Gansu province, five omens were incised on the cliff surface in 171 CE praising the accomplishment of Li Xi 李翁 (fl. 2<sup>nd</sup> century), the governor of Wudu Commandery 武都郡. One of the omens depicts a figure under a tree extending both arms to collect the heavenly dew, and is labeled as such (*chenglu ren* 承露人) (Fig. 2.17). To further clarify the narrative, another cartouche is inserted between the figure and the tree, naming the

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<sup>55</sup> Fan Xiangyong 范祥雍, ed., *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu* 洛陽伽藍記校釋, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1958), 46. English translation modified from trans by Wang Yi-T'ung, *A Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 48.

<sup>56</sup> Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 130.

scene as “the descent of sweet dew” (*guanlu jiang* 甘露降). Together with the mythical yellow dragon, white deer, interconnecting trees (*mulianli* 木連理), and auspicious grain (*jiahe* 嘉禾), this cluster of omens allude to Li’s success in improving transportation in this geographically challenging region and, by extension, the peace and prosperity that Emperor Wu brought to this newly acquired region through military expansion.<sup>57</sup> As such, the motif’s appearance in pagoda form underscores the urgency of recognizing the intersection of belief systems in early Buddhist architecture across East Asia, and the fallacy of analytical model that operates via the binary of straightly “Buddhist” and “non-Buddhist” visual culture.

The preoccupation with heavenly realms and omens in Han dynasty visual culture was closely related to the crumbling of the feudal system, which incited criticism of the concept of the Heaven’s mandate (*tianming* 天命) as a governing principle of rulership.<sup>58</sup> For example, high-ranking officials such as Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340-278 BCE) expressed through poems doubts about the reasons why the omniscient Heaven would confer political legitimacy to an immoral ruler in the first place and then punished him for his misdeed. According to Tseng, such critical reflections engendered three developments. First, there was a growing interest in analyzing the Heaven less as a formidable abstraction than a physical entity that can be observed and systematically analyzed. Second, among political elites, the pursuit of immortality as informed by early Daoist thought largely superseded that of the Heaven’s mandate. Third, the quest of immortality also gained popularity across different social classes, and thus it was no longer the ruling class that possessed the privilege to communicate with the divine.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, 99.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-12, 149-152.

Against such backdrop, the figure of the immortal gradually replaced the sage king as the new agent between Heaven and Earth. The pursuit of immortality was reflected in two types of Han art: imperial architectural project and tomb furnishings of the social elites. The most noticeable example is the aforementioned towers and terraces commissioned by Emperor Wu, who embarked on a costly journey to Mount Tai 泰山 to imitate the legend of the Yellow Thearch (Huangdi 黃帝), who became an immortal after meeting a dragon that transported him to heaven.<sup>60</sup> After failing to encounter any immortal, Emperor Wu followed the advice of Gongsun Qing 公孫卿 (fl. 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) and changed his strategy: instead of searching them, efforts were put to recreate the immortal paradise on earth so as to invite them to come down in this world. Drawing from both textual and archaeological evidences, Tseng demonstrates Emperor Wu's fascination with the immortal figure in the design of his palace complexes at Jianzhang 建章宮 and Ganquan 甘泉宮.<sup>61</sup> In particular, north to the Jianzhang palace, a large garden complex was erected in 104 BCE, with man-made islands representing the mythical isles of Penglai 蓬萊, Fangzhang 方丈, Yingzhou 瀛洲, and Huliang 壺梁 amidst a vast artificial lake called Taiye Pond 太液池. The entire garden complex was designed to replicate the Eastern Sea so as to spare Emperor Wu from another costly excursion to the east.

In order to access the heavenly realms, the emperor also commissioned four lofty structures in the palace complex: two Gate-Pillars with Phoenixes (*Fengque* 鳳闕) east of the palace; the Jian Terrace (*Jiantai* 漸臺) northeast of the lake; the Terrace of the Divine Luminaries (*Shengmingtai* 神明臺) northwest of the palace; and the Well Curb Tower

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 154-155.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 155-159. See also Shin Jeongsoo, "From Paradise to Garden: The Construction of Penglai and Xuanpu," *Journal of Daoist Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 1-31.

(*Jingganlou* 井幹樓) whose exact location had yet to be identified.<sup>62</sup> The eclecticism of these structures reveals that even at the imperial level, there was a lack of consistency in the architectural representation of Heaven in the Han dynasty. Regarding the Well Curb Tower, Tseng cites a bronze model excavated from a Han tomb at Shizhaishan 石寨山, Yunnan province, that offers an approximation of what the tower might look like (Fig. 2.18). Popular in southwest China, a *jinggan* is formed through interlocking four timbers in the shape of the Chinese character for well (*jing* 井), with successive layers piling up on top of such foundation to form its wall. To achieve further height, the entire wooden structure has to be constructed upon an earthen core, which was deployed for constructing the nine-story Yongningsi pagoda.<sup>63</sup> The *jinggan* structure appears to inspire wooden storehouse common in Buddhist complexes, and its upward-expanding roof formed by intersecting logs in the shape of X strongly resonates with similar storehouse structures in ancient Japan, but the connection has yet to be delineated.

Returning to the twin gate-pillars (*que*) in Emperor Wu's palatial complex, given that the structural and decorative elements of Han dynasty *que* were reconfigured in the Tamamushi Shrine and the Hōryūji Golden Hall, the subject merits further consideration. Often represented as a pair of two-story wooden structure, *que* was originally erected for guarding entrance to imperial structures and religious sites, and it acquired further symbolic value as the gateway to Heaven in the Han dynasty. For instance, in a decorated brick discovered in Xihua, Henan province, a pair of gate-towers are depicted with their respective gatekeepers (Fig. 2.19). That one is transposed to the celestial realm is further indicated by the presence of two phoenixes at

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<sup>62</sup> Luo, "Han Rhapsodies and Dynastic Ethos," 13. See also Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, 161-162.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

the left and right of the composition, two prominent *bi* 璧 discs, and an exaggerated zoomorphic gate knocker at the center.

According to Tseng, the earliest depiction of *que* as the “gate of Heaven” can be traced to the painted silk banners founded in Tomb No. 1 of Mawangdui 馬王堆漢墓 in Changsha, Hunan province.<sup>64</sup> Dated 168 BCE, the upper section of the banner contains two gate-pillars with their individual platform and attendant (Fig. 2.20). Despite the comparatively plain façade, their pointed tops indicate the presence of a roof-like structure similar to extant gate-towers from the period (Fig. 2.8).<sup>65</sup> The association of *que* with phoenix is further supported by two works unearthed from Sichuan: the former a decorated brick with relief unearthed in Dayi 大邑, Sichuan province, which shows two interconnected *que* with a phoenix resting at the walkway in the middle (Fig. 2.21); the latter is a bronze plaque from Wushan, Sichuan province, which is incised with two gate-towers with one *bi* disc suspending above the figure of a gatekeeper (Fig. 2.22). Most noticeably, the two *que* are conjoined by a pointed arch enveloping the character *tianmen* 天門 (literally “gate of heaven”), with a phoenix above presiding all components. The markers of this bronze plaque appeared to have the two *fengque* of the Jianzhang Palace in mind for its composition.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>65</sup> Another example can be found in Tomb 61 at Luoyang, in which the painted gate is shown superseded by 5 *bi* discs and flanked by two dragons and their riders are placed before the ceiling paintings of the sun, the moon, stars and clouds in the front chamber. Since the pictorial progression are arranged from the perspective of the deceased (i.e. progressing from the ceiling of the rear to the front chambers), the entire pictorial program would operate like the Mawangdui banner in guiding the deceased’s soul to his or her celestial journey. See *ibid.*, 205-207.



## Daoist Connections

Together, the cases of dew basin and gate-tower foreground how Han dynasty representations of the heavenly realms persisted (or “survived” in Warburgian term) in mortuary and Buddhist material cultures in China during the 6<sup>th</sup> century. As Terry Kleeman argues, even though Buddhist rituals were recorded to take place as early as 65 CE, the foreign religion was often perceived in relation to the Laozi 老子 and the pursuit of immortality as a cause of its rejection of blood sacrifice, its stress on moral kingship, messianism, and meditation.<sup>66</sup> However, the development was far from one-sided. As Christine Mollier’s study of Dunhuang manuscripts indicate, both religions were actually invested in appropriating each other’s scriptural and liturgical practices.<sup>67</sup> Just as early translators of Buddhist scriptures often borrowed Daoist terminology to render abstract concepts relatable, the Daoist communities also imitated their counterparts by forging their own scriptural canon and monastic complexes (known as *guan* 館 or 觀) during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that Daoism would not become an institutionalized religion without the competition posed by Buddhism.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully delineate the development of early Daoism in China, and thus I will focus on schools and scriptures that are germane to the ideas of heaven and immortality. One of the earliest organized form of Daoism was Tianshidao 天師道 (The Way of the Celestial Master). Founded in western China around the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century, the local sectarian movement diffused across China from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>68</sup> Since its beginning, practitioners referred to the tenets of this school as Daojiao 道教 (“teaching of the

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<sup>66</sup> Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 14; and Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>67</sup> Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 6 and 15.

<sup>68</sup> For the history of its founding, see Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 21-62.

Dao”), with the title of its religious officiants changed from *jijiu* 祭酒 (“libationers”) to Daoshi 道士 (“masters of the Dao”).<sup>69</sup> Apart from Tianshidao, another major school was Lingbaodao 靈寶道 (“The Way of the Numinous Treasure”) founded during the Eastern Jin dynasty 東晉 (317-420) in south China, whose emphasis on salvation, monasticism, and communal ritual closely modeled after that of Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>70</sup>

To compete with Buddhist preachers, the early Daoist schools actively invented their own scriptures by incorporating Buddhist concepts such as karma and bodhisattvahood. Such phenomenon is evident in the formation of new deities in the Daoist pantheon that are largely the “doppelgängers” of their Buddhist counterparts, such as *Jiuku tianzun* 救苦天尊 (Heavenly Venerable Savior from Suffering) that is clearly modeled after the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin 觀音).<sup>71</sup> Based on her study of the so-called “apocryphal” sūtras collected by Paul Pelliot from the “library cave” of Dunhuang (Cave 17) in 1908 and that discovered from the Nanatsudera Temple 七寺 in 1990, Mollier discerns many parallels between Buddhist and Daoist eschatology texts on the subjects of messianism and the end of the world. In particular, Maitreya, the future Buddha (Ch. Mile 彌勒), was refashioned as Laozi in these apocryphal texts, who predicts that the moral and religious decadence of humanity would eventually cause the cosmic

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<sup>69</sup> On a more expansive use of the term “Daoism” or “Daoist” that includes philosophical currents during the Warring States era (479-220 BCE), see Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 2-3; and Nathan Sivin, “On the Word ‘Taoist’ as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China.” *History of Religions* 17, no. 3/4 (1978): 303-330. Notes that before institutionalization, the officiates were more commonly referred to as *fangshi* 方士 (“masters of methods”) in the Han court.

<sup>70</sup> Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 19. Likewise, Como also points out that the deity Jade Maiden (Ch. *Yunu* 玉女; Jp. *Gyokunyo* or *Gyokunjo*), which appears in Daoist text as the heavenly entourage or messengers, or as the astral deity associated with the Pole Star and the stars of the Northern Dipper, possesses a fluid identity vacillating between the Buddhist and Daoist traditions as Myōken Bosatsu 妙見菩薩, Nyōirin Kannon 如意輪觀音, or Kichijō Tenryō 吉祥天女 in the Buddhist pantheon of early Japan. See Michael Como, “Daoist Deities in Ancient Japan: Household Deities, Jade Women and Popular Religious Practice,” in *Daoism in Japan: Chinese Traditions and their Influence on Japanese Religious Culture*, ed. Jeffrey L. Richey (New York: Routledge, 2015), 27-29.

collapse and the spread of demons, diseases, and calamities. Besides religious pantheon, similar process took place in Daoist visual culture, which gave birth to icons such as the set of twin Daoist deities (Fig. 2.23) (possibly the Jade Emperor on the left and Laozi on the right) that recalls the iconography of the Two Seated Buddha (Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna), as well as triads of Laozi that apparently draw inspiration from Buddhist votive images (Fig. 2.24).

Perhaps the most radical change took place regarding Laozi's identity. In the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Daoist text *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 (*Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens*), Laozi is said to have sojourned in the West sometimes during the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and reborn as the Buddha in India.<sup>72</sup> By portraying Buddhism as coming from Daoism, such narrative reinforced the superiority of Daoism as the autochthonous tradition of Chinese culture. As a rebuttal, a contemporary Buddhist sūtra named *Foshuo qingjing faxing jing* 佛說清淨法行經 (*Sūtra of the Pure Practice of the Dharma as Preached by the Buddha*) portrays Laozi as one of the Buddha's disciple, who became a bodhisattva and disseminated Buddhism in the guise of Daoism in China – his trip to India was simply a story of homecoming.<sup>73</sup> The mid-Tang period (ca. 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries) witnessed the apex of scriptural plagiarism between the two religions. In part, it was fueled by the court's ever-changing religious patronage, which triggered both parties to intensify scriptural production to take advantage of imperial favor. Most scandalous is the incident that took place in the Northern Wei court in 570, in which the Buddhist monk Zhen Luan 甄鸞 (fl. 535-570) presented to the court the treatise *Xiaodao lun* 笑道論 (*Laughing at the Dao*), which

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<sup>72</sup> Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 8. See original text in DZ 1205. 1/4a-4b.

<sup>73</sup> Ochiai Toshinori, *The Manuscripts of Nanatsu-dera: A Recently Discovered Treasure-house in Downtown Nagoya*, translated and ed. by Makita Tairyō, Antonino Forte, and Silvio Vita (Kyoto: Istituto italiano di cultura, Scuola di studi sull'Asia orientale, 1991), 26-29.

accused Daoist of stealing Buddhist ideas, and denigrated Daoist counterfeits (*weijing* 偽經) of the *Lotus Sūtra* as “heretical” (*xie* 邪).<sup>74</sup>

However, the issues of plagiarism and inauthenticity were not unilateral, for the Buddhists in China also fabricated sūtra themselves, and as aforementioned, appropriated style and vocabulary in Daoist texts to render its ideas accessible. The production of apocryphal sūtras thus operated concurrently with new hagiographies and accounts of miraculous events that convinced its skeptical audience the many benefits of practicing Buddhism. The case of apocryphal sūtras thus sheds light on the *longue durée* of mutual appropriation between Buddhism and Daoism in early medieval China. Just as Buddhist scriptures owed Daoist texts its vocabulary and rhetoric, Daoism also owed Buddhism its visual culture and bureaucratic structure for its institutionalization. The dialogues between the two were thus mutually beneficial, for they incentivized both sides to develop a more diverse and relatable doctrines for followers to attain this-worldly and posthumous benefits.

With regard to early Japan, there remains no consensus on when and how Daoist elements were incorporated into its religious landscape and mortuary culture. As Tim H. Barrett argues, unlike China during the late 4<sup>th</sup> to early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, early Japan did not experience any large-scale political movement led by organized religions.<sup>75</sup> Recognizing the political reality that neither suppression nor a *laissez-faire* attitude would placate these movements, the rulers of the Northern and Southern Dynasties in China actively involved with the institutionalization of Daoism and Buddhism as a means of political contingency: instead of challenging the status quo, these religions began to turn against one another to compete for court patronage. While such

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<sup>74</sup> Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 12.

<sup>75</sup> Timothy H. Barrett, “Shinto and Taoism in Early Japan,” in *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*, ed. John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 14-15.

rivalry stimulated each religion to conjure a more distinctive identity, it also paradoxically rendered them more susceptible to political manipulation. In the case of early Japan, it appears that such intense religious competition had yet to take shape during Suiko's reign, and that no religious current had reached the scale of operation that would threaten the status quo. As such, the contours dividing Buddhism, *kami*-worship (or "proto-Shintō"), and other folk practices were much less clear. What is more, given that Daoism was not introduced to Japan as a fully-fledged institutionalized system, and that traces of possibly Daoist observances remain fragmentary, it appears that Daoism as practiced in early Japan was never sufficiently separated from other religions to develop a distinguishable identity.<sup>76</sup>

It is equally doubtful whether motifs and iconographic programs identifiable as "Daoist" in the continental context would be understood as such in early Japan. One contested example is the *Tenjukoku shūchō* 天壽國繡帳 (Embroidered Curtain of the Land of Heavenly Lifespan; hereafter the Curtain) from Chūgūji 中宮寺, Nara (Fig. 2.25). Based on its length inscription (see detailed analysis in Chapter Four), the Curtain was commissioned by Princess Tachibana to wish for her husband Prince Shōtoku's safe rebirth in heaven after his premature death in 622.<sup>77</sup> It appears that the iconographic eclecticism of the Curtain can hardly be circumscribed by one belief system. Consider, for instance, the moon disk motif, which often contains either (or both) an alchemical hare or toad in the pictorial program of continental tombs.<sup>78</sup> In the Curtain, the

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<sup>76</sup> Herman Ooms, "Framing Daoist Fragments, 670-750," in *Daoism in Japan: Chinese Traditions and their Influence on Japanese Religious Culture*, ed. Jeffrey L. Richey (New York: Routledge, 2015), 37.

<sup>77</sup> Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjukoku Shūchō Mandara*, 88-93.

<sup>78</sup> Some of the earliest examples of this motif can be found in the aforementioned Mawangdui banner, the mural paintings at the ceiling of the Tomb of Bo Qianqiu 卜千秋墓 and Tomb 61 in Luoyang, and that of the Jiaotong Daxue Tomb 西安交通大學墓 in Xi'an. Such pairing remained popular during the Southern Dynasties, as evident in the relief at the brick tombs at Jinjia, Danyang county 金家村丹陽王墓, Jiangsu province that is dated to the Southern Qi period (479-502). The motif can also be found in tombs of the Korean kingdoms, such as the mural painting at the Deokhwari Tomb 德花里墓 No. 2, South Pyongyang province built during the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup>

hare is shown standing on its hind legs pounding a jar next to the tree of life (Fig. 2.26). Its sun disk, though missing, would have encircled a three-legged crow similar to the one in the cosmic panel of the Tamamushi Shrine (Fig. 1.12). The paired motif has also been located in the east (sun) and west (moon) wall of the Takamatsuzuka Tomb 高松塚古墳 (ca. late 7<sup>th</sup>-early 8<sup>th</sup> century) (albeit in much damaged condition), which embellished its interior alongside the twenty-eight constellations and groups of star represented by gold dots linked with red lines. Another example is the Kitora Tomb キトラ古墳 of the same period, which represents the sun (with trace of the three-legged crow) and moon alongside an elaborate astronomical chart at its ceiling.<sup>79</sup> While both Daoist and Buddhist readings have been proposed for the term *Tenjukoku* 天壽國 (literally “the Land of Heavenly Lifespan”) in the Curtain’s title, Pradel argues that the coinage may indicate a generalized notion of the heavenly realm rather than a specific paradise based on Buddhist or Daoist text.<sup>80</sup>

Similar ambivalence can be said about the mythical beasts represented in the Curtain, of which only a turtle (Fig. 2.27) and a red bird (Fig. 2.28) survived intact. They are believed to represent the Four Divinities (Ch. *sishen* 四神) that operated in a system of correspondence alongside the four cardinal directions, yin-yang, and the Five Phases (Ch. *wuxing* 五行).<sup>81</sup> If we follow this schema, the turtle would represent the Dark Warrior of the north (Ch. *xuanwu* 玄武), and the latter the Red Bird of the south (Ch. *zhunian* 朱雀). Besides the Curtain, the Four

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century. For a detailed discussion, see *ibid.*, 39-45; and Ariane Perrin, “The Image of the Deceased in Koguryō Funerary Art (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD): A Comparison between the Ji’an (China) and Pyongyang (Korea) Regions,” *Arts Asiatiques* 71 (2016): 77-99.

<sup>79</sup> Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjukoku Shūchō Mandara*, 42.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 127-130.

<sup>81</sup> The system of correspondence was formulated during the Warring States period (ca. 480-221 BCE). See *ibid.*, 46-49.

Divinities are also depicted inside the Takamatsuzuka and Kitora Tombs, the latter contains six of the twelve zodiac animals juxtaposed with human bodies. While similar works have been discovered in the tombs of early Korea as well (e.g. the Gangseo daemyo Tomb 江西大墓 in the Goguryeo kingdom), Nagaoka Ryūsaku argues that the Four Divinities might not be an exclusively Daoist motif, especially considering that they also embellish Buddhist reliquaries (Fig. 2.29) alongside representation of the Four Guardian Kings, which might have inspired similar design in the pedestal for the Medicine Buddha at the Golden Hall of Yakushiji (Fig. 2.30).<sup>82</sup> As such, to its audience in early Japan, the Four Divinities were considered efficacious because they appeared “foreign” rather than “Daoist” per se.

Likewise, although historical sources such as *Nihon shoki* might contain entries of miraculous events that have strong Daoist undertone, they might reflect a general fascination with immortality by the Great Rulers. For example, the mythical hero Yamato Takeru ヤマトタケル (or Yamato Takeru no Mikoto 日本武尊) was recorded in *Nihon shoki* to have undergone metamorphic change upon his death. Leaving behind only his clothes, his body and spirit fly out of the tomb in the form of a white bird, which indicates his attainment of the stage of immortality.<sup>83</sup> As Ooms observes, the entry might have been inspired by the Daoist notion of *shjie* 屍解 (or *jiexing dunbian* 解形遁變) a technique of bodily metamorphosis for liberating oneself from the confine of corporeality.<sup>84</sup> Another entry for 613 (Suiko 21) tells of Prince

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<sup>82</sup> Nagaoka Ryūsaku 長岡龍作, “Butsuzō no imi to jōdai no sekaikan: uchi to soto no ishiki wo chūshin ni 仏像の意味と上代の世界観 – 内と外の意識を中心に,” in *Kōza Nihon bijutsushi 4: Zōkei no ba* 講座日本美術史 4 : 造形の間, ed. by Nagaoka Ryūsaku (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005), 29-40. See also Suzuki Yui, *Medicine Master Buddha: The Iconic Worship of Yakushi in Heian Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 21-22.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Como, *Shōtoku: Ethnicity, Ritual, and Violence in the Japanese Buddhist Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 101. For the full story, see *NS* (Keikō), *SNKBZ* 1: 386-387; and Aston [1896] 1972, 1: 210.

<sup>84</sup> Ooms, “Framing Daoist Fragments,” 40.

Shōtoku's miraculous encounter with a beggar on the road to Kataoka, to whom he offers food, drink, and even his cape. The beggar turns out to be an immortal, and like Yamato Takeru, leaves no bodily remains in his tomb upon his death.<sup>85</sup> At awe, Shōtoku declares the beggar as a “Perfected Man” (Ch. *zhenren*; Jp. *mahito* 真人) – a clear indication of the author's awareness of similar accounts in the ancient Chinese text *Zhuangzi*, which later became one of the foundational texts of Daoism.<sup>86</sup>

### The Case of *Mingqi* Storehouse

The intersection of religious currents is also embedded in another type of architecturalized *mingqi*: pottery storehouse known as *chu* 厨 (literally “kitchen” or “storage cabinet”). As Han dynasty brick relief indicates (Fig. 2.31), *chu* appears to be a type of furniture that functions like storage unit possibly for ritual or culinary preparation. As such, unlike *mingqi* tower, the reduction of scale is significantly less for *chu*: what one encounters is not a scaled-down edifice but a scaled-down furniture that contains architectural elements. Perhaps not coincidentally, the same character is used for *zushi* 厨子 in Japan, a common yet understudied genre of Buddhist art that the Tamamushi Shrine is classified under. Most notably, certain elements from the Tamamushi Shrine might have been inspired by *mingqi* storehouses, especially considering those that contain hip-and-gable roof, elongated main chamber, abridged bracketing systems, and movable door panels (Fig. 2.32).

To further complicate the matter, the character *chu* also denotes a form of meditation that was discussed extensively in early Daoist and Buddhist texts. The practice is believed to have

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<sup>85</sup> For the full story, see *NS* 12/613 (Suiko 21), *SNKBZ* 2: 570-571; and Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 144-145.

<sup>86</sup> Ooms, “Framing Daoist Fragments,” 41. See also Michael Como, “Ethnicity, Sagehood, and the Politics of Literacy in Asuka Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30, no. 1/2 (2003): 78.



originated from the communal rite in ancient China known as *chuhui* 廚會 (“kitchen assembly”), which involved a sacrificial banquet dedicated to the god of the soil.<sup>87</sup> The ritual gradually became an excuse for sumptuous consumption, and was heavily condemned by early Daoist schools such as Tianshidao that openly rejected animal sacrifice as a means of communicating with the divine. Yet, recognizing the ritual’s social values, Tianshidao eventually incorporated *chuhui* within its regular liturgy in the form of *sanhui* 三會 (“the Three Kitchen Assemblies”; hereafter “the Kitchen”). To “sanitize” *chuhui*, lavish meal was replaced by a meatless diet of vegetables and rice.<sup>88</sup>

As stated in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Daoist text *Yaoxiu keyi jielu chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔 (*Abstract of Important Rituals and Commandments*), grain donated by practitioners would go into a Heavenly Storehouse called *tiancang* 天倉 that supported the community in times of famine.<sup>89</sup> To avoid waste, ritual leftovers were distributed to the participants as *fushi* 福食 (“merit meals”), and ingesting such food was believed to facilitate one’s communication with the divine. Supplanting communal meals with purificatory repasts (*zhai* 齋), and animal sacrifices with symbolic offerings of fresh fruit and wine (or tea) to the gods (*jiao* 醮), the Daoist Kitchen could

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<sup>87</sup> Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 257. See also Rolf A. Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries,” in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, ed. Anna Seidel and Holmes Welch (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 53-81.

<sup>88</sup> Specific titles were created within the Daoist bureaucratic structures to monitor the logistics of the ritual, including *jianchu* 監廚 (the Supervisor of the Kitchen), *jiezhong* 節衆 (the Regulator of the Masses), and *dade* 大德 (the Priest of Great Virtue). For their respective duties, see Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 265-266.

<sup>89</sup> 同集天師治 付天倉及五十里亭中 以防凶年飢民往來之乏. See Zhu Faman 朱法滿, *Yaoxiu keyi jielu chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔 (*Abstract of Important Rituals and Commandments*). *Zhongguo zhhexueshu dianzihua jihua* 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (*Chinese Text Project*). Accessed 20 June, 2018, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=119163>.

last for one, three, or seven days, and it could also be held to address special circumstances such as childbirth, disease, or absolution of sin.<sup>90</sup>

The Kitchen rite could also be conducted individually, which might explain the gradual expansion of scriptures that function as “self-help” guide for one to practice the ritual in a domestic setting.<sup>91</sup> As stated in the 8<sup>th</sup>-century *Laozi shuo wuchu jing* 老子說五厨經 (*Scriptures of the Five Kitchens as Revealed by Laozi*; hereafter *Wuchu jing*), adepts are advised to achieve salvation through committed fasting, which involves abandoning cereals (a practice known as *duangu* 斷穀 or *bigu* 辟穀), and consuming “survival food” such as mushrooms, wild fruits, or even natural elements like dew and wind.<sup>92</sup> To render the abstract notion of mental transcendence comprehensible, the scripture alludes itself as a kitchen that supplies nourishment, a fruitful site where the “Five Viscera (*wuzang* 五藏) are provisioned.”<sup>93</sup> It should be noted that the term *zang* 藏 means either viscera or storehouse, and thus the text intentionally conflates the two to help adepts visualize the process of fasting, meditation, enlightenment through bodily and architectural metaphors.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 258, 264-270. See also Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 11 and 24.

<sup>91</sup> Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 24.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>93</sup> DZ 763:1a.

<sup>94</sup> Written in esoteric languages, the poems of the “Five Kitchens” in *Wuchu jing* establish the theory of correspondences to refashion the process of meditation as a psychophysical exercise, in which each kitchen is matched to one of the five directions, the five elements, the five sensations, and the five viscera. In the Kōyasan recension of *Wuchu jing*, even the Tathāgatas of the Five Directions are included:

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Sensation</u>	<u>Viscera</u>	<u>Tathāgata</u>
east	wood	longevity	liver	Aksobhya
south	fire	warmth	heart	Ratnasambhava
center	earth	hunger	spleen	Vairocana-samantamukha
west	metal	cold	lungs	Amitābha
north	water	thirst	kidneys	Vimalaghosa

As aforementioned, there were many incidences of scriptural appropriation between Daoism and Buddhism in early medieval China, and as Mollier observes, the phenomenon was particularly discernible for scripture related to the Kitchen ritual. One example is the *Foshuo sanchu jing* 佛說三廚經 (*Sūtra of the Three Kitchens as Preached by the Buddha*; hereafter *Sanchu jing*), which was translated to Chinese between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>95</sup> Three recensions of this text were discovered in Dunhuang, with an additional version titled *Foshuo santingchu jing* 佛說三停廚經 (*Sūtra of the Three Interrupted Kitchens as Preached by the Buddha*; hereafter *Tingchu jing*) found in Japan. Due to its popularity in Tang China, Makita Tairyō purports that the text should have been known in Japan at least by the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>96</sup> As a matter of fact, two *Tingchu jing* copies dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries are found in the Shingon headquarter at Mount Kōya 高野山.<sup>97</sup>

In many ways, *Sanchu jing* can be considered as one of the “self-help” scriptures like the Daoist *Wuchu jing* that guide one to practice the Kitchen at home. In explaining the benefits of the practice, the scripture states that the goal of the Kitchen is to obtain the visions of the Heavenly Kitchens (*tianchu* 天廚) so that one can be “free from hunger,” as well as “attaining

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<sup>95</sup> The “Three Kitchens” (*sanchu fa* 三廚法) are: 1) the spontaneous Kitchen of compassion and consciousness of the self (慈悲自覺自然廚); 2) the Kitchen of the four steps towards the enlightenment of a “self-realized Buddha” (Skt. *pratyekabuddha*) and the non-conceptualization of the auditors (Skt. *śrāvaka*) (辟支四果聲聞無思廚); and 3) the spontaneous Kitchen of being, non-being, and non-divine (非有無非神自然廚). See Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 23-29.

<sup>96</sup> Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, *Gikyō kenkyū* 疑經研究 (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūsh, 1976), 248-351. The popularity of the text during the Tang dynasty is specified in *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (*Record of Śākyamuni’s Teaching during the Kaiyuan Era*) written by Zhisheng 智昇 (668-740) in 730. Yet, Zhisheng describes the origin of the text as “suspicious” (*yi* 疑). It was further denounced as a work of Buddhist plagiarism by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933) in his Daoist miraculous story collection *Daojian lingyan ji* 道教靈驗記 (*Record of Miracles in Support of Daoism*), which contains a story of a Buddhist imposter who received fatal punishment for plagiarizing Daoist scriptures. See Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 25-27.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

enlightenment and longevity” (令人不飢 湛然長生).<sup>98</sup> To distinguish itself from the Daoist Kitchen, the scripture adds that one can acquire additional benefits such as extrication from karma, and even access to the Pure Land of Amitābha after one year of practice. As stated in the text:

Reciting [the text] while keeping still, without moving and without thought, just like the Buddha Amitābha of the Land of Limitless Longevity (Ch. *Wuliangshouguo*; Skt. *Sukhāvātī*).....

Compassionate beings who respectfully take refuge in the Three Jewels and who permanently concentrate upon Amitābha would definitely be able to see him in a year.<sup>99</sup>

常住不動 不思飲食 猶如阿彌陀佛無量壽國等無有異也.....

慈悲眾生 歸敬三寶 恒念阿彌陀佛 至一年必得見佛 決定無疑

By promising access to Amitābha’s Pure Land, the scripture authenticates itself as a legitimate Buddhist text regardless of its Daoist undertone. Accordingly, the ritual is also recontextualized: rather than acknowledging the possible origin of the Kitchen as a Daoist corrective to the sacrificial rite of ancient China, the Buddhist Kitchen is framed in *Tingchu jing* as an eschatological practice expounded by the Historical Buddha during the final age of the Dharma (*mofa* 末法). Addressing his assembly in Kusīnagara before entering nirvāṇa, the Buddha explicates the Kitchen to help adepts to achieve emancipation from the cycle of death and

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 30. T. vol. 85, no. 2894: 1413b9. Similar expression can be found in a Dunhuang manuscript from the Pelliot collection (Pelliot 2447) entitled *Laozi shuo fashi jinjie jing* 老子說法食禁誡經 (*Scripture of Food Interdictions and Prescriptions Revealed by Laozi*): “To eat plants is not as good as to sustain oneself with mushrooms and flowers / To eat mushrooms and flowers is not as good as to feed oneself with minerals / To eat minerals is not as good as to nourish oneself with primordial breath / To nourish oneself with primordial breath is not as good as to not eat at all / The one who [can do] without eating at all survives even to the collapse of heaven and earth.” Pelliot 2447. Modified translation based on Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 23.

<sup>99</sup> T. vol. 85, no. 2894: 1413c14-1414a19. Modified translation based on Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 29-34.

rebirth.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps out of the need to appeal to a wider audience, the concept of enlightenment appears to be purposefully conflated with that of immortality. For example, the Dunhuang version of *Tingchu jing* contains a list of vegetal and mineral drugs to help practitioners to overcome hunger and extend life. Such stress of longevity and therapeutic diet render the text equally applicable in the Daoist context. As such, while these scriptures were produced at a time when Buddhism and Daoism were heavily invested in establishing their own institutional identities, such binary seems to have little bearing in actual practices.

Another point of convergence between the two religions can be detected from the kind of architectural space specified for the Kitchen ritual. For instance, *Sanchu jing* instructs the readers that in order to repent one's sin, one must either retreat to nature or to the mediation room (*jingshi* 靜室) of a secluded dwelling.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, to practice the Kitchen effectively, one must change into clean clothes, undergo a rigorous program of fasting, and burn all sorts of high-quality incense to worship the saints and sages in the room.<sup>102</sup> As Shin-shan Susan Huang points out, *jingshi* 靜室 (or 靖室, also as *qingshi* 清室), which literally means “quite room,” was a kind of oratory originally associated with the Daoist school of Tianshidao in the Eastern Han, and that apart from meditation, an adept would also make confession there in the presence of a master.<sup>103</sup> While there is no extant oratory to verify these entries, based on related description in medieval literature, Zornica Kirkova observes that *jingshi* would have been an undecorated, enclosed

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>101</sup> Here, *Sanchu jing* cites the relevant passage from the 6<sup>th</sup>-century sūtra *Zhancha shan'e yebao jing* 占察善惡業報經 (*Sūtra of Divining the Retribution of Skillful and Negative Actions*; T. vol. 17, no. 839: 901c-910c): 懺悔罪已須於山林靜谷閑房靜室……前件法受持須著淨潔衣服在靜室內燃種名香供養一切賢聖. T. vol. 85, no. 2894: 1414a22-1414b6.

<sup>102</sup> Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 222-228.

<sup>103</sup> Huang Shih-shan Susan, *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 190.

space with only a single door and one window.<sup>104</sup> For example, as stated in *Lu Xiansheng Daomen kelue* 陸先生道門科略 (*Survey on Rituals of the Daoist Portal by Master Lu*) written by the Daoist master Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406-477), the oratory should be designed according to these rules:

[The oratory] should be secluded and separated from other buildings. Its interior should be pure and empty, not cluttered with superfluous things. When opening and closing the door, do not bang it recklessly or rush through it. The chamber should be sprinkled, swept, purified, and revered. It should always be kept as such as if the gods always dwelled there. There should only be only four objects: an incense burner, an incense lamp, a table for memorials, and a writing knife. [The room] should be simple and clean. How can one spend more than a hundred *qian* on furnishing it? Compared to the households of the vulgar people [whose oratory] is decorated with couches, icons, banners, and canopies, what a difference between the complicated and the simple, the luxurious and the plain?<sup>105</sup>

其外別絕 不連他屋 其中清虛 不雜餘物 開閉門戶 不妄觸突  
灑掃精肅 常若神居 唯置香爐香燈章案書刀四物而已 必其素淨  
政可堪百餘錢耳 比雜俗之家 床座形像幡蓋眾飾 不亦有繁簡之殊  
華素之異耶

By emphasizing seclusion, cleanliness, and simplicity of the oratory, Lu criticizes worship spaces of the “vulgar” people, whose elaborate settings run contrast to the purpose of the ritual. Given that the superfluous things that Lu disapproved of (couches, icons, banners, and canopies)

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<sup>104</sup> Zornica Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond: Representations of Xian Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 222-224.

<sup>105</sup> DZ 1127, 24: 780c. Modified translation based on Livia Kohn, *Monastic Life in Medieval Daoism: A Cross-cultural Perspective* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 108.

were common in both Buddhist and Daoist worship spaces, it is very likely that Lu excoriates both religions for endorsing conspicuous consumption. The growing popularity of *jingshi* and relevant “self-help” scriptures on the Kitchen from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries in China thus indicate the centrality of non-monastic form of religious practices, which have yet to be fully integrated into current scholarship of East Asian religious art.

Yet, the oratory is a paradoxical construct. On the one hand, it is indispensable for conducting the Kitchen ritual, but on the other hand, mastering the technique eventually requires its relinquishment. The conundrum is best encapsulated by the concept of *xingchu* 行厨 (“mobile kitchen”). For example, in the 4<sup>th</sup>-century Daoist text *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Traditions of Divine Transcendents*), the author Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343) recounts the legend of the Daoist immortal Li Gen 李根, who was said to have mastered the arts of longevity by his ability to summon the mobile kitchen:

[Li] Gen could transform himself [into other forms] and could enter water and fire [without harm]. He could sit down and cause the mobile kitchen to arrive, and with it could serve twenty guests, All the dishes were finely prepared, and all of them contained strange and marvelous foods from the four directions, none of these things were locally available.<sup>106</sup>

根能變化入水火中 坐致行廚能供二十人 皆精細之饌 四方奇異之物  
非當地所有也

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<sup>106</sup> Ge Hong 葛洪, *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Traditions of Divine Transcendents*). *Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua* 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (*Chinese Text Project*). Accessed 20 June, 2018, <https://ctext.org/shen-xian-zhuan/10/ligen/zh>. For full translation, see Robert F. Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 219-220.

Given that many Daoist scriptures attack lavish feasting of the aristocrats, and instruct the adepts to isolate themselves from the city and agricultural communities, the miraculous feast offered by the mobile kitchen addresses a deeper anxiety towards the role of religious ritual in society.<sup>107</sup> As Mollier observes, in early Daoist schools such as Shangqingdao 上清道 (The Way of the Highest Clarity), an adept could not attain longevity without displaying the ability to summon the mobile kitchen during meditation (*zuozhi xingchu* 坐致行厨).<sup>108</sup> Apart from conquering hunger, such ability is meant to assist the adept to mentally visualize the cosmos, and to realize its presence within his or her own body. That heaven in early Daoist texts was denoted interchangeably as “celestial palace” (*tiantang* 天堂) or “heavenly kitchen” (*tianchu* 天厨) further underscores how the human body, architecture, and religious cosmology are closely intertwined in the Kitchen ritual.

The tension between physical and mental nourishments is also deployed in Buddhist scriptures to explicate abstract concepts. For example, *Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經 (*Teaching of Vimalakīrti*), a 5<sup>th</sup>-century sūtra that was propagated during Suiko’s reign, describes an episode in which the Historical Buddha offered a stupefying banquet to innumerable bodhisattvas upon request from Vimalakīrti. The miraculous meal is described as:

[Even if all begins] open their mouths as vast as Mount Sumeru, these foods would not be diminished. Why so? Because they emerge from the inexhaustible elements of morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and

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<sup>107</sup> Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 221.

<sup>108</sup> Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 41.



the knowledge and vision of liberation, the leftovers of the Tathāgata's good contained in this bowl are inexhaustible.<sup>109</sup>

使一切人食揣若須彌乃至一劫猶不能盡 所以者何  
無盡戒定智慧解脫解脫知見功德具足者 所食之餘 終不可盡

Here, we find another incidence of “consumption against consumption,” in which the boundless wisdom of the Buddha is alluded to innumerable food that practitioners should visualize during meditation.<sup>110</sup> In particular, the transition from physical to spiritual nourishments is dramatized through the tension between the palpable and the imagined. Whether as a type of furniture, a storehouse, a mortuary object, a ritual, or an expression of the heavenly realm, *chu* was mobilized by both early Daoist and Buddhist communities to render the abstract concept of mental transcendence comprehensible.

In the case of early Japan, the term *zushi* 厨子 also encapsulates multiple meanings that defy binaries such as sacred/secular and private/public presumed in modern scholarship. As Nishikawa Akihiko points out, one of the earliest documents that contains the term *zushi* is the royal inventory *Kokka chinpōchō* 國家珍寶帳 (*Record of Rare Treasures of the State*; hereafter *Chinpōchō*) compiled in 756 on the occasion of the consecration of the Vairocana statue at Tōdaiji 東大寺, Nara.<sup>111</sup> In this document, *zushi* refers to several wooden cabinets in red or black lacquer for the perseveration of royal treasures. One extant example made of red-lacquered

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<sup>109</sup> T. vol. 14, no. 475: 552c14-17. Modified translation based on Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 43-44.

<sup>110</sup> Likewise, another sūtra named *Daloutan jing* 大樓炭經 (*Sūtra of the Great Conflagration*), which was translated into Chinese by Fali 法立 (265-316), describes the celestial feast in the Four Heavens conjured out the devas' mental concentration (*yinian* 意念), see T. vol. 1, no. 23: 297a5-13.

<sup>111</sup> Nishikawa Akihiko 西川明彦, “*Sekishitsu bunkanboku no onzushi to 'Sekishitsu kanboku no zushi'* 赤漆文櫃木御厨子と〈赤漆櫃木厨子〉,” *Shōsōin kiyō* 34 (2012): 53-70.

*zalkova* (Jp. *kanboku* 欏木) is currently in the Shōsōin collection (Fig. 2.33). It once stored exotic and precious treasures from Tang China and other parts of Asia, ranging from medicine, silverware, glass wine cup, writing and weaving equipment, and even musical instruments.<sup>112</sup>

Although *zushi* is often classified as *chōdoki* 調度器 (“furniture”) in current museum label and scholarship, *Chinpōchō* indicates that it was also mobilized for religious oblation and royal succession. In particular, the document specifies that the aforementioned red-lacquered *zushi* was passed down across six rulers of early Japan before its presentation to the Vairocana statue: Tenmu 天武 (r. 673-686), Jitō 持統 (r. 690-697), Monmu 文武 (r. 697-707), Genshō 元正 (r. 715-724), Shōmu 聖武 (r. 724-749), and Kōken 孝謙 (r. 749-758).<sup>113</sup> The text also mentions another red-lacquered cabinet (no longer extant) that was offered to Fujiwara no Kamatari 藤原鎌足 (614-669) as a diplomatic gift from the Baekje King Uija 義慈王 (r. 641-660).<sup>114</sup> That these cabinets were mobilized to confer power and to forge diplomatic ties, combined with the fact that it was used to consecrate the Cosmic Buddha that negotiated Shōmu’s political ambition, underscore how *zushi* operated less as a “furniture” than a potent symbol for legitimizing theocratic rule.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Nishikawa, “*Sekishitsu bunkanboku no onzushi*,” 64-68.

<sup>113</sup> 厨子壹口 赤漆文欏木古様作金銅鉸具 右件厨子は飛鳥浄原宮御宇天皇傳賜藤原宮御宇太上天皇 天皇傳賜藤原宮御宇太行天皇 天皇傳賜平城宮御宇中太上天皇 天皇七月七日傳賜平城宮御宇御太上天皇 天皇傳賜今上 今上謹獻盧舍那佛. *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>114</sup> 赤漆欏木厨子一口 右百濟國王義慈進於内太臣. *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>115</sup> What is more, given that both *chu*-typed *mingqi* and the Kitchen rituals had been practiced for centuries in the continental context by the 7th century, the Yamato court would have been aware of the multivalence embedded with the term and its related material culture. As a matter of fact, the reigns of Tenmu and Jitō witnessed the apex of the court’s acquisition of the structures and the symbols of institutionalized Daoism. As Herman Ooms argues, both rulers established a new model of Yamato polity at a time when acquaintance with Daoist texts was fashionable in the court. While the presence of Daoism development in historical record is elusive at best, the shift was most discernible in the change of the ruler’s title from *ōkimi* to *tennō* (literally “heavenly ruler”). See Herman Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty, 650-800* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009), xviii-xix and 132-153.

## ***Kan* as a Framing Device**

Untangling the cultural and religious currents that informed the production of the Tamamushi Shrine thereby avoid reducing the shrine as a belated derivative of any continental prototype. Besides addressing why certain architectural form was selected as a framework for icon enshrinement for the TM, it also sheds light on the larger question of the symbolic role of architecture in Buddhist art and its implication in early Japan. In particular, the shrine's affordance to political uses also intersects with its potency as a cosmological construct that articulates the Yamato court's self-positioning in the rapidly changing international order between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. To elucidate this point, the following discussion explores the commingling of the corporeal, the architectural, and the cosmological in continental Buddhist art, and how such intersection was reconfigured in the Tamamushi Shrine.

Besides mortuary artifacts, another continental current that might have inspired the Tamamushi Shrine is Buddhist cave temples. Of particular relevance is the spatial unit called *kan* 龕 (Jp. *gan*), which denotes architecturalized niches or alcoves that house individual icons in Buddhist grottoes. In the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters*), *kan* is defined as *longmao* 龍兒 (“in the likeness of dragon”), which suggests its possible connection with the aforementioned belief of the Four Divinities.<sup>116</sup> In the Buddhist lexicon *Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義 (*Dictionary of the Buddhist Canon*; compiled in 802), *kan* is combined with the character *shi* 室 (“room”) to form *kanshi* 龕室, and the compiler Huilin 慧琳 (783-807) offers three definitions: first, niches crafted inside mountain cliffs (i.e. Buddhist grottoes); second, portable artifacts such as small-scaled shrines made of sandalwood;

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<sup>116</sup> Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters*). *Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua* 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (*Chinese Text Project*). Accessed 13 January, 2016, <https://ctext.org/shuowen-jie-zi/long-bu/zh>

and third, room-like enclosures on the four sides of a large pagoda.<sup>117</sup> While it remains unclear why the pictography for dragon (*long* 龍) forms the radical of *kan*, it is evident that by the 8<sup>th</sup> century, *kan* in its multitude of forms had been fully integrated into Buddhist visual culture. Similar to *chu* and *zushi*, *kan* eschews stable definition based on form, and I consider such fluidity functions precisely as the source of its efficacy.

While *kan* might take different forms and materials, the three definitions offered by Huilin have one thing in common: that *kan* serves as a framing device for Buddhist icon. As Paul Duro argues, framing constitutes the ground upon which worldviews and social values are negotiated.<sup>118</sup> It governs access to the framed, and condition how one should interact with it.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, *kan* as an architecturalized frame also operates as the threshold over which religious worldviews and spatiotemporal differences (both cosmic and lived) are negotiated. The frame and the framed are thus mutually embedded and function as an integral unit. Yet, scholarship on Buddhist art tends to approach architectural elements in paintings, sculpture, and ritual implements as either miniaturized replicas of actual edifices, or as part of the merit-generating act of icon embellishment known as *zhuangyan* 莊嚴 (Jp. *shōgon*).<sup>120</sup> None of these approaches offer a critical appraisal of the discursive use of architecture and architectural framing in

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<sup>117</sup> 龕 坎含反考聲云鑿 山壁爲坎也 說文龍貌 從今從龍 俗從合誤龕室 上苦含反 廣雅龕盛也取也 尚書大傳龕 剋也 案龕室者如今之檀龕之類也 於大塔四面安其小龕如室故言龕室 此小室中有種種形兒如檀龕像也 說文 從龍含省聲, see T. vol. 54, no. 2128: 490a5-6.

<sup>118</sup> See Paul Duro, "Introduction," in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-10.

<sup>119</sup> On the use of framing devices as the surrogate of sacred icons in European context, see Megan Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 214-215. See also Jacqueline E. Jung, "Seeing through Screens: The Gothic Choir Enclosure as Frame," in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. Sharon Gerstel (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006), 185-213.

<sup>120</sup> For a general discussion of *zhuangyan* (J: *shōgon*) in the design of reliquaries and tombs in East Asian Buddhist art, see Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨, et al., *Mochizuki Bukkyō daijiten* 望月佛教大辞典 (Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai, 1974-1988), 9: 673.

Buddhist art. The neglect is in part a result of *kan*'s eclectic forms and tenuous relationship with texts, which prove particularly unyielding for iconographic and medium-specific analyses.

The discursive use of architectural representation, however, had already occurred at the incipient stage of Buddhist art. In his study of Gandhāran Buddhist art, Kazi Ashraf argues that the intersection of body, building, and cosmology was a recurring feature in images depicting the life of the Historical Buddha.<sup>121</sup> Take, for instance, the climactic scene of his enlightenment in Bodhgayā (Fig. 2.34), in which the palatial structure is rescaled and contorted to engulf the Buddha's body. Closely following his silhouette, the chaitya arch appears to aggrandize his halo, *uṣṇīṣa*, and by extension, his corporeal presence. As Ashraf observes, such spatial compression amplifies the sage's transcendental quality, and resonates with the architectural metaphor in the *Dhammapada* (*Verses of Dharma*; compiled ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), in which the Buddha declares the following verse upon his enlightenment:

O, architect of this house,  
now I have seen you, you will not build this house again.  
The rafters have crumbled, the ridgepole is smashed, my mind  
disintegrated.  
I have attained the destruction of desires.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Kazi K. Ashraf, "The Buddha's House," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 53/54 (2008): 241-242.

<sup>122</sup> From verses 153 to 154 in the eleventh chapter entitled "Old Age" (*Jaravaggo*). Translation adopted from Kazi K. Ashraf, *The Hermit's Hut: Architecture and Asceticism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 195. An alternative translation by Valerie Roebuck renders the verse as "I wandered without respite / A journey of many births, / Seeking the house-builder. / Painful is birth again and again. / House-builder, I have seen you: / You shall not build a house again. / All your rafters are broken: / Your ridge-pole is destroyed. / The mind, freed from conditioned things, / Has reached the end of cravings." See Valerie J. Roebuck, trans., *The Dhammapada* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), verses 153-154. The sūtra is known as *Chuyao jing* 出曜經 in Chinese, and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 (fl. 365-410 CE) translated the verse as: 生死無有量 往來無端緒 求於屋舍者 數數受胞胎..... 以觀此屋 更不造舍 梁椽已壞 臺閣摧折..... 心已離行 中間已滅, see T. vol. 4, no. 212: 759b3-23.

In this poetic expression, the Buddha's spiritual breakthrough occurs concurrently with the disintegration of his house, here referring to the secluded lodging for his meditation.

Architectural destruction thereby alludes to the Buddha's forgoing of his desires, and ultimately, his selfhood.<sup>123</sup> Returning to the relief image, while the architectural frame remains intact,

Ashraf regards the delay of its shattering as purposeful: by freezing at the critical moment when the architecture engulfs the Buddha so closely that it is on the brink of collapse, the

representation grants beholders the agency to activate the moment of mental breakthrough.<sup>124</sup>

Rendering architecture *venerable* and *malleable*, the relief image operates as a visual argument that conveys the immanent yet transcendental qualities of the sage.

Ashraf's observation strongly resonates with the architectural representation in the Yungang Grottoes in Shanxi province, China. For instance, in Cave 13 (completed late 5<sup>th</sup> century), three palatial roofs are found floating above the Seven Buddhas of the Past (Skt: *Saptatathāgata*; Ch: *guoqu qifo* 過去七佛) at the bottom register of the south wall (Fig. 2.35).<sup>125</sup> On the one hand, the roofs as forming three *kans* that house the buddhas. On the other hand, it also appears that the buddhas and their halos are supporting the buildings like walls and pillars. The suspending roofs and the shapeless *kans* thereby hints at the liminal nature of architectural space, the ultimate symbol of our illusionary attachment to wealth, social recognition, and permanence. Hovering between form and formlessness, the representation reinterprets the critical

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<sup>123</sup> From Pali commentary of the verses, Acharya Buddhārakkhita further interprets the house/hut as a metaphor to one's entrapment in *samsāra*, the house-builder as craving, the rafters as passion, and the ridgepole as ignorance. See Acharya Buddhārakkhita, trans., *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom* (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985), 46.

<sup>124</sup> Ashraf, *The Hermit's Hut*, 21.

<sup>125</sup> Together with Śākyamuni, the seven Buddhas are Vipasyin, Sikhin, Visvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa. They are differentiated by their mudras.

moment of architectural obliteration in Bodhgayā, which awaits beholders to re-activate across spaces and times.

The intersection of the corporeal and the architectural takes on a cosmic significance in the central pillar of Yungang Cave 2 (Fig. 2.36), in which clusters of *kan*, each shaped around the buddhas' silhouette, function as building blocks that conjure the pillar. As Mukai argues, in 5<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese cave temples, the central pillar often represents Mount Sumeru (Ch. *Xumishan* 須彌山; Jp. *Shumisen*), the *axis mundi* at the center of Buddhist cosmology.<sup>126</sup> While the structure of the Buddhist universe varies among scriptures, Mount Sumeru is consistently represented as the vertical axis that connects heaven, earth, and hells.<sup>127</sup> While the palatial forms dotting its terraced ledges are the realms of the Four Heavenly Kings, its summit represents either Trāyastriṃśa (Ch: *Daoli tian* 忉利天), the palace of Indra (Ch.: *Yintuoluo* 因陀羅); or Tuṣita Heaven (Ch. *Doushuai tian* 兜率天), the abode of Maitreya.<sup>128</sup> With the growing popularity of Mahāyāna Buddhism, such single-world system often merged with the multiple-world system that situates beholders in cosmic rather than linear time. As shown in the central pillar of Yungang Cave 2, each *kan* represents what Dorothy Wong called a Buddha-field (Skt. *buddhakṣetras*; Ch. *fo tu* 佛土), a world system presided by its own buddha.<sup>129</sup> The plurality of *kans* therefore compel beholders to recognize his or her existence as merely one of the

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<sup>126</sup> Mukai, "Buttō no Chūgokuteki hen'yō," 99-104.

<sup>127</sup> Dorothy C. Wong, "The Mapping of Sacred Space: Images of Buddhist Cosmographies in Medieval China," in *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road*, edited by Philippe Forêt and Andreas Kaplony (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 54

<sup>128</sup> Wong, "The Mapping of Sacred Space," 60-61. For an exhaustive study of major discrepancies on the description of Mount Sumeru among different sūtras, see Sotomura Ataru, *Mt. Sumeru: Source Manual for Iconographic Research on the Buddhist Universe* (Singapore: Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011).

<sup>129</sup> Wong, "The Mapping of Sacred Space," 60-62.

uncountable phenomena that had been repeated perpetually in other realms. Similar to the south wall of Cave 13 (Fig. 2.35), the frame and the framed operate concurrently to convey the immensity of the Buddhist universe, in which differences among spaces and times are relativized.

The dialectic between the singular and the multiple is also embedded in the second type of *kan* as defined in Huilin's lexicon: portable shrines made of sandalwood (Ch. *fokan* 佛龕; Jp. *butsugan*). One of the earliest extant works is now preserved in Kongōbuji 金剛峯寺, Mount Kōya (Fig. 2.37), which was imported from China by the monk Kūkai 空海 (774-835).<sup>130</sup> Given that similar works made of sandalwood and other materials have been located in the Gandhāra and Kashmir regions, it is believed that portable shrines were produced around the same time when Buddhist grottoes were developed to accommodate the nomadic lifestyle of itinerant monks or merchants that frequented the Silk Road.<sup>131</sup> Such connection is further supported by the details of the portable shrine, whose left and right wings contains curvilinear forms at the top that resemble the interior of a karst cave, whilst at the central top the rolled-up curtain and brick-like features evoke a palatial setting. What is more, given that the first image of the Buddha was carved out of sandalwood, its use in making portable shrine effectively conjures a kind of religious intimacy that transports beholders to the time and space of the Historical Buddha.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The shrine is commonly referred to as *Shoson butsugan* 諸尊佛龕 (“Buddhist Shrine of Assembled Deities”) in current scholarship. Consensus have yet to be reached regarding its iconography, especially that of its right wing. See Cynthia J. Bogel, *With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyō Vision* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 131-135. See also Itō Shirō 伊藤史朗, “Kongōbuji Shoson butsugan (makura honzon) ni tsuite 金剛峯寺諸尊佛龕 (枕本尊) について,” *Kokka* 國華, no. 1111 (1988): 15; and Li Bohua 李柏華, “Tangdai zhuzun fokan mudiaoxiang kaozheng 唐代諸尊佛龕木雕像考証,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物, no. 1 (2012): 83. See also Diana P. Rowan, “Portable Buddhist Shrines of the Tang Period,” (PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1997), 222-232.

<sup>131</sup> Rowan, “Portable Buddhist Shrines of the Tang Period,” 254.

<sup>132</sup> Christian M. Boehm, *The Concept of Danzō: “Sandalwood Images” in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture of the 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London: Saffron Books, 2012), 131-138. See also Suzuki Yoshihiro 鈴木喜博, “Danzō no gainen to hakuboku no igi 檀像の概念と栢木の意義,” in *Mikkyō jūin to Butsuzō: Heian no kenchiku chōkoku I* 密教寺院と



Echoing with the innumerable *kans* in the multiple-world system of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the portable shrine constantly bridges and collapses the dimensions of the corporeal and the universal.

The Tamamushi Shrine appears to harmoniously synthesize the two types of *kan* in continental practice. As Akiko Walley points out, the depiction of Mount Sumeru in its back panel (Fig. 2.38) strongly resonates with the overall shape of the shrine.<sup>133</sup> Coiled by two intertwined dragons, the sacred mountain is shown connecting the heavenly palace at its summit and the undersea world below. Its distinctive silhouette, which resembles the collision of two convex curves, recalls other representations of Mount Sumeru in the ceiling of Mogao Cave 249, Dunhuang (Fig. 2.39) and the Freer's Cosmological Buddha (Fig. 2.40).<sup>134</sup> Besides, all of these examples mobilize a simplified one-story roofed structure, which strongly resembles the storehouse-type *mingqi* (Fig. 2.41), to represent the heavenly realm of Trāyastriṃśa or Tuṣita. To heighten the sense of immediacy, the Dunhuang example even depicts a half-opened gate that dramatizes the moment of mental transcendence.

Yet, the discrepancies among these works are as remarkable as their similarities. Consider, for example, the relationship between the frame and the framed. Instead of inserting architectural forms inside a stone cave, the Tamamushi Shrine inverts the equation by containing the mountain within an architectural setting. As Walley observes, the sacred mountain

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仏像: 平安の建築・彫刻 I, ed. Mizuno Keizaburō, Suzuki Kakichi, and Konno Toshifumi (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), 169-178. As a matter of fact, compared to mural painting or clay sculpture tableaux, *kan* in the form of portable shrine remains a popular mode of displaying Buddhist icon, attesting its efficacy in Buddhist visual culture. It is most evident in the production of “home altar” that is commonly found in household furnishing in East Asia, see Fabio Rambelli, “Home Buddhas: Historical Processes and Modes of Representation of the Sacred in the Japanese Buddhist Family Altar (*butsudan*),” *Japanese Religions* 35, no. 1-2 (2010): 63-86.

<sup>133</sup> Walley, “Flowers of Compassion,” 275.

<sup>134</sup> Uehara, *Tamamushi no zushi*, 291-296. See also Angela F. Howard, *The Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 33-46.

is represented twice in the shrine: first, it is drawn on the back panel at its dais; and second, it is evoked by the overall shape of the shrine.<sup>135</sup> In other words, Mount Sumeru is not only pictorialized but also *architecturalized* as a tower-like edifice. Similar reversal also takes place regarding the motif of the Thousand Buddhas that embellish the palace section of the shrine (Fig. 2.41). Unlike continental precedents such as Yungang Caves 39, 272 (Northern Liang), or 254 (Northern Wei) (Fig. 2.42), which encircles the architecturalized cosmic pillar with rows of buddhas on all sides, the shrine condensed the motif within the icon hall. In terms of technique, while in the cave temples the buddhas are carved out from natural rock (extraction), in the shrine they are hammered out from the reverse side of a thin metal plate (surface alteration). As such, rather than recreating man-made edifices within nature, the Tamamushi Shrine offers the exact opposite: a Buddhist ghetto engulfed within a wooden architecture.<sup>136</sup>

These discrepancies further underscore how the Tamamushi Shrine calls into question the “prototype-copy” framework in the study of early Buddhist art in Japan. In fact, its pictorial representation of Mount Sumeru alone displays some major reconfigurations. Most peculiar of all is the replacement of hell with seascape at the bottom of Mount Sumeru (Fig. 2.38). If the shrine was indeed placed on an altar for veneration, this section would be slightly above one’s eyelevel. The prominence of the seascape is further supported by the fact that the underwater palace is significantly larger than that in the summit of Mount Sumeru, which completely inverts the top-heavy composition common in continental precedents. What is more, the

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<sup>135</sup> Walley, “Flowers of Compassion,” 275.

<sup>136</sup> Such reversal also takes place inside the Hōryūji pagoda. See Akiko Walley, “Figuring Salvation: The Hōryūji Clay Sūtra Tableaux,” *Archives of Asian Art* 64, no. 2 (2014): 119-163. Structurally, the placement of an icon hall above a dais also lacks continental equivalent. Given that the dais closely resembles that of the Shaka Triad in the Golden Hall, the audience of the Tamamushi Shrine might have considered the icon and the icon hall as interchangeable entities. Such continuity between the corporeal and the architectural, which was frequently deployed in continental cave temples, appears to be recognized early on in the dawn of Buddhist art in Japan.

underwater palace is situated between two disproportionately large phoenixes, a combination that eschews straightforward iconographic reading based on Buddhist scriptures.

### **Building an Eclectic Cosmos**

To fully account for these discrepancies, it is crucial to examine other religious currents again to approach the possible meaning of this cosmological diagram. As aforementioned, given the strong intersection between Buddhist and Daoist visual cultures in continental Asia before the 7<sup>th</sup> century, it is highly possible that the mountain at the back of the Tamamushi Shrine represents a mixture of both Mount Sumeru and Mount Kunlun 崑崙山, abode of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母). Both Mount Kunlun and Xiwangmu are commonly found in Han dynasty incense burners, money trees, lamps, and other mortuary artifacts.<sup>137</sup> Yet, the term Xiwangmu once encompassed a wide range of meaning ranging from a tribe's name, a place name, or a human-beast hybrid in pre-Han texts, and its representation as a female deity that possesses the elixir of immortality was only consolidated by Han times through texts such as *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*Book of the King of Huainan*) that were produced during the reign of Emperor Wu.<sup>138</sup>

Even though the anthropomorphized image of Xiwangmu was consolidated by Han times, there were different regional varieties. Of particular relevance to the present study is the type common in Sichuan that shows the deity sitting on a mat above a mushroom-like landform. One such example is in a plaque made by Sichuan artisans that was discovered in Lelang

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<sup>137</sup> Stanley K. Abe, "Northern Wei Daoist Sculpture from Shaanxi Province," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 9, no. 1 (1996): 69-83; Wu Hung, "Buddhist Elements in Early Chinese Art (2nd and 3rd centuries AD)," *Artibus Asiae* 47, no. 3/4 (1986): 269.

<sup>138</sup> Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, 211.

Commandery 樂浪郡 (Fig. 2.43). With reference to *Hainei shizhou ji* 海內十洲記 (*Record of Ten Continents*), Wu Hung argues that the landscape represents Mount Kunlun that is described as having a narrow bottom, a broad top, and a flat summit.<sup>139</sup> The fact that a plaque from Sichuan was discovered in the Han commandery at northeastern China indicates the mobility of artisans and mortuary artifacts in this period, and suggests the wide array of religious currents and material culture that early Korea and Japan would have exposed to during different waves of population migration from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Another example also from Sichuan shows a majestic Xiwangmu seated on a mat above an upward-expanding mountain coiled by dragons (Fig. 2.44). That the entire composition is located at the summit of a money tree is crucial, for the same genre also contains some of the earliest representations of the meditating Buddha.<sup>140</sup> As such, the money tree is another example of mortuary culture that demonstrates the commingling of different religious currents in continental context. It is highly possible that during the incipient stage of Buddhism in Han dynasty China, Mount Sumeru was not perceived differently from Mount Kunlun.<sup>141</sup> Another possible scenario is that the distinction was purposefully dissolved by the Buddhist communities to render the foreign religion relatable to a broader audience that concerned more about posthumous immortality than spiritual advancement.

It should be noted that Xiwangmu was often shown with the architectural motif *que*. As aforementioned, *que* was commonly erected during the Han dynasty as a gateway marking entrance to palaces, tombs, and religious spaces. Operate as the threshold bridging the mortal and

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<sup>139</sup> 上有三角 方廣萬里 形似偃盆 下狹上廣 故名曰崑崙山三角. *Hainei shizhou ji* 海內十洲記 (*Record of Ten Continents*). *Zhongguo zhhexueshu dianzihua jihua* 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (*Chinese Text Project*). Accessed 13 January, 2016, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=271165>. See also Wu Hung, "Xiwangmu, the Queen Mother of the West," *Orientalisms* 8, no. 4 (1987): 28.

<sup>140</sup> Wu, "Buddhist Elements in Early Chinese Art," 269-270.

<sup>141</sup> See also Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 27.

the immortal worlds, *que* is often depicted with the cloud-shape bracketing systems to evoke the heavenly realm. One such example is a 2<sup>nd</sup>-century sarcophagus unearthed from Sichuan (Fig. 2.45). In the front panel, two *ques* are depicted to signal the entrance to the immortal world, which are echoes with a phoenix at the back panel. On the side panel, Tseng argues that the figure to the right of the half-opened gate represents Xiwangmu due her unique headgear (*sheng* 勝), while the embracing couple on the left represents the heavenly bliss that one can enjoy posthumously.<sup>142</sup> The composition is further animated by the majestic cloud-shaped bracketing systems, and the maid that opens the gate in the middle. Facing back, she appears to invite beholders to join her in crossing the threshold. Two phoenixes bracket the gate, a composition that also appears in other stone carvings for tombs and sarcophagi, as well as the underwater palace at the cosmological diagram of the Tamamushi Shrine. The popularity of combining Xiwangmu, architecture, mountainous landscape, and mythical beasts as an iconographic set in Han mortuary art is further underscored by another *mingqi* house unearthed from Tomb 37 at Fanji, Henan (Fig. 2.46). Here, one finds at the back of the house the entourage of Xiwangmu floating above Mount Kunlun that is compressed and elongated into a mountain range. The entourage is composed of three immortals on the right and four fantastical animals on the left, including a three-legged bird and a toad, a nine-tailed fox, and an alchemical hare that is shown making elixir with its mortar and pestle.

That the image of Xiwangmu was known and circulated in early Japan is supported by bronze mirrors excavated in the tombs of the political elites. One of such example is the mirror found in the Kanmakikudo Tumulus 上牧久渡古墳群 at the Nara Basin, which depicts Xiwangmu surrounded by swirling lines and mythical beasts, with the figure of the King Father

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<sup>142</sup> Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, 215.

of the East (Dongwanggong 東王公) positioned at the opposite side (Fig. 2.47).<sup>143</sup> The discovery is significant in part because the mirror is located at the tombs of political elites close to the seat of the Yamato court. Whether locally manufactured or imported as diplomatic gift, the existence of such mirror demonstrates that the image of Xiwangmu alongside other symbols such as the Four Divinities were fully incorporated into the funerary culture of early Japan despite the lack of institutionalized Daoism.

Against such backdrop, it is possible that Mount Sumeru and Mount Kunlun were not perceived as distinct in early Japan, and that the cosmological diagram at the back of the Tamamushi Shrine operates as a synthesis of both. That Mount Kunlun was known in Suiko's times is suggested by the discovery of mountain-shaped stone columns in the Asuka region that are dated to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Although they are often labeled as "Mount Sumeru Rocks" (Jp. *shumisenseki* 須彌山石) in modern scholarship, such a reductive reading fails to consider other religious currents that operated in early Japan. One of such rock columns now installed in the Asuka Historical Museum is composed in four layers with carving of continuous mountain ranges (Fig. 2.48). This rock sculpture was discovered alongside other rock slabs in the shape of boats or mythical animals. Given that water passageways were found inside this sculpture, it is believed that it was once used as a fountain in the garden of social elites.<sup>144</sup> Textual sources further support this observation. It is recorded in *Nihon shoki* that in 612 (Suiko 20), a refugee from Baekje named Michiko no Takumi 路子工 (or Shikomaro 芝耆摩呂) who was skilled in making "figures of mountains" (山岳之形) was hired by Suiko to construct bridges and

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<sup>143</sup> Kanmakimachi Kyōiku Inkai 上牧町教育委員会, *Kanmaki kudo kofungun hakkutsu chōsa hōkokusho* 上牧久渡古墳群発掘調査報告書 (Nara: Kanmakimachi Kyōiku Inkai, 2015), 65-69.

<sup>144</sup> Sotomura Ataru 外村中, "Asuka no Shumisenseki 飛鳥の須彌山石," *Nippon Teien Gakkaishi* 日本庭園学会誌 21 (2009): 7.

landscape (possibly features for a royal garden) in the southern court (南庭), the same site where Suiko was buried in 628.<sup>145</sup> Given the strong linkage between garden architecture and the cult of immortality in continental Daoist practices, the stone column might operate as a generic image of the heavenly realm that was projected towards both Mount Kunlun and Mount Sumeru. What seems exclusively “Buddhist” to the modern viewers might thereby have encompassed many more interpretive possibilities to its 7<sup>th</sup>-century audience in early Japan.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored how the Tamamushi Shrine mediated the heterogeneities of styles, iconographies, architectural expressions, and religious currents across East Asia. Challenging the “prototype-copy” framework that often reduces Asuka period Buddhist art to the status of belated derivatives of continental counterparts, I have foregrounded the plural temporalities embedded in the shrine, and how underscore the expressive potential of architecture in negotiating religious worldviews. By calling attention to the multivalence of different genres of mortuary and religious art, my analysis highlights the intersection of the corporeal, the architectural, and the cosmic as fundamental to the design and reception of the Tamamushi Shrine. In defying an anthropocentric worldview, the shrine effectively compels beholders to reorient themselves in relation to a cosmological program that creatively synthesizes a wide range of funerary practices and belief systems. Though relatively diminutive in size, the Tamamushi Shrine encapsulates the potential power that Buddhism offered to the political elites of early Japan, as well as the ambitions they envisioned in promoting continental religions.

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<sup>145</sup> 是歲自百濟國有化來者其面身皆斑白若有白癩者乎惡其異於人欲棄海中嶋然其人曰若惡臣之斑皮者白斑牛馬不可畜於國中亦臣有小才能構山岳之形其留臣而用則爲國有利何空之棄海嶋耶於是聽其辭以不棄仍令構須彌山形及吳橋於南庭時人號其人曰路子工亦名芝耆摩呂。NS ‘this year’/612 (Suiko 20), *SNKBZ* 2: 567-569. English translation in Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 144.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Suiko's Buddhist Patronage

According to *Nihon shoki*, the Great Ruler (*ōkimi*) Suiko (554-628; r. 593-628) issued the following edict in 594 to promote Buddhism:

Spring, 2<sup>nd</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> day

[The Great Ruler Suiko] instructed the Imperial Prince and the Great Ministers to propagate the Three Jewels. At this time, all Great Ministers vied with one another in building Buddhist temples for the benefits of their lords and parents.<sup>1</sup>

春二月丙寅朔 詔皇太子及大臣 令興隆三寶  
是時諸臣連等各爲君親之恩 競造佛舍

As the first Great Ruler after the so-called “pre-historical” period (*kesshi jidai* 闕史時代), Suiko played a crucial role in establishing a network of state-sanctioned Buddhist temples.<sup>2</sup> She was also recorded as commissioning the production of several religious artifacts, such as the noted Tamamushi Shrine and the two six-*jō* (*jōroku* 丈六) Buddhist icons – one embroidery, the other

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<sup>1</sup> NS 2/594 (Suiko 2), *SNKBZ* 2: 532. English translation modified from Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 123. Note that Aston left *ōmi* untranslated, and here I follow Donald F. McCallum's translation of *ōmi* as “Great Minister.” See McCallum, *The Four Great Temples*, 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> Akima translated as *kesshi jidai* as “historyless” period, see Akima Toshio, “The Myth of the Goddess of the Undersea World and the Tale of Empress Jingū's Subjugation of Silla,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 20, no. 2/3 (1993): 140.



bronze, both no longer extant – at Gangōji 元興寺, Nara.<sup>3</sup> What did Suiko see in Buddhism? How to evaluate her role in relation to that of Prince Shōtoku 聖德太子 (574-622; or Prince Umayato no miko 厩戸皇子) and her maternal uncle Soga no Umako 蘇我馬子 (540?-626), whose involvement with Buddhism has been studied extensively? In delineating the socio-political currents in Suiko’s time, and her awareness of continental development, this chapter examines how Suiko employed Buddhism to negotiate both her position at the Yamato court and her diplomatic vision. Concurrently, I also investigate the circumstances under which her role was gradually absorbed and supplanted by the cult of Prince Shōtoku in medieval times. Mindful of the retrospective nature of the textual sources, I focus on the discursive strategy, rather than the historical accuracy, of events attributed to Suiko’s Buddhist patronage.

### **Change and Continuity in the Suiko’s Reign**

To recapitulate the political and cultural significance of Suiko’s rule, it should be noted that the term *tennō* 天皇 (“emperor”) was not a coinage used before the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. As Joan R. Piggott points out, the sovereign of the Yamato court was denoted as *ōkimi* 大王 (literally “great ruler”), indicating that s/he was perceived as a leader of clan-based confederates rather than an expanding “empire.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, rather than military aggression, the Yamato court maintained power mainly through monopolizing economic resources to coerce

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<sup>3</sup> As recorded in *Nihon shoki*, Buddhist temples directly associated with Suiko’s patronage are Hōkōji 法興寺 (later known as Asukadera 飛鳥寺), as stated in *NS* 1/593 (Suiko 1), *SNKBZ* 2: 528-530; Shitennōji 四天王寺, as stated in *NS* ‘this year’/593 (Suiko 1), *SNKBZ* 2: 532; and Hachiokadera 蜂岡寺 (later known as Kōryūji 廣隆寺), as stated in *NS* 11/603 (Suiko 11), *SNKBZ* 2: 540. As for the two *jōroku* icons, see *NS* 4/605 (Suiko 13) and *NS* 4/606 (Suiko 14), *SNKBZ* 2: 550.

<sup>4</sup> Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship*, 8-9.

submission of regional confederates (*kuni* 國, with their chieftains as *kuni no miyatsuko* 國造).<sup>5</sup> Given that these *kuni* maintained certain degree of political, economic, and diplomatic autonomies from the Yamato court, the common translation of *kuni* is “regional confederate” or “country” rather than “province.”

The period between the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the ascendancy of six female rulers (two of them reigned twice) in the Yamato court: Suiko, Kōgyoku 皇極 / Saimei 齊明 (r. 642-645 and 655-661), Jitō 持統 (r. 690-697), Genmei 元明 (r. 707-715), Genshō 元正 (r. 715-724), Kōken 孝謙 / Shōtoku 稱德 (r. 749-758 and 764-770). Such a development might have motivated compilers of 8<sup>th</sup>-century historical texts to portray Suiko as the exemplary female ruler embodying the ideals and ambitions of her successors. For instance, *Kojiki* 古事記 (*Records of Ancient Matters*) begins the imperial mythology in primeval time and ends with Suiko’s reign, and in so doing, positions her as the indispensable link between the mythical past and the historical present. According to *Nihon shoki*, Suiko was born in 554 – two years after the Great Ruler Kinmei 欽明 (r. 539-571) received the “first” Buddhist statue from the king of Baekje. As the second daughter of Kinmei, Suiko’s mother was Kitashihime 堅塩媛, daughter of the powerful politician Soga no Iname 蘇我稻目 (506-570).<sup>6</sup> Suiko, known as Princess Nukatabe (Nukatabe no Himemiko 額田部皇女) before marriage, had the same mother as the Great Ruler Yōmei 用明 (r. 585-587). She became actively involved with politics since she was married off at the age of 18 to her half-brother the Great Ruler Bidatsu 敏達 (r. 575-585) in 571, to whom she gave birth to two sons and five daughters. Noticeably, the eldest daughter, Princess

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 17 and 97.

<sup>6</sup> NS 1/586 (Yōmei 1), SNKBZ 2: 500; as well as NS prologue for Suiko, SNKBZ 2: 528.

Ujinokaitako 菟道具蛸, later became the wife of Prince Shōtoku. Suiko's son Prince Owari 尾張 was the father of another Shōtoku's wife, Tachibana no Ōiratsume 橘大郎女.<sup>7</sup>

Bidatsu, however, passed away in 585 at the age of 34. On the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 586, while mourning in Bidatsu's funeral palace (*hinkyū* 殯宮), Suiko's cousin Prince Anahobe (穴穗部皇子, ?-587) attempted to break in the palace to assault her, but was repelled by Miwa no Kimi Sakyō 三輪君逆 (?-586).<sup>8</sup> Bidatsu was succeeded by his half-brother Yōmei, but the latter too died abruptly in 587, leaving an urgent political vacuum to be filled. War broke off between the Mononobe clan led by Mononobe no Moriya 物部守屋 (?-587) in support of Prince Anahobe and the Soga clan led by Soga no Umako in support of Prince Hatsusebe 泊瀬部皇子 (553?-592). After the victory of the Soga clan, Suiko declared Prince Hatsusebe as the new ruler Sushun 崇峻 (r. 587-592).<sup>9</sup> Yet, political tension continued. Sushun was assassinated by Umako in 592 as a cause of his refusal to take Umako's daughter as his main consort. Soon after, Suiko was enthroned in the Toyura Palace 豊浦宮 in 593. She was 39.

According to Yoshie Akiko, the ruler in this period was largely selected based on seniority, and thereby Suiko's enthronement was not an historical anomaly.<sup>10</sup> Although her maternal uncle Umako held a powerful position at court, Suiko refused to be a mere political figurehead. Shortly after her enthronement, she appointed her nephew Prince Shōtoku (Yōmei's son) as regent in 593, and spearheaded major political restructurings inspired by continental

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<sup>7</sup> Takagi Kiyoko 高木きよ子, *Hachinin no jotei* 八人の女帝 (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 2005), 24-29.

<sup>8</sup> *NS* 5/586 (Yōmei 1), *SNKBZ* 2: 500.

<sup>9</sup> Although she would have preferred her son Prince Takeda 竹田皇子 (birth and death dates unknown) as the next heir (to which Umako would have approved), the prince died young around 600.

<sup>10</sup> Yoshie Akiko 義江明子, *Nihon kodai joteiron* 日本古代女帝論 (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 2017), 7-26.

examples. First, the royal palace was relocated to Oharida 小墾田 in 603, followed by the institution of the Twelve-Level Cap and Rank System (*Kan'i jūni kai* 冠位十二階) in the same year and the issuing of the Seventeen Article in 604. However, with the premature death of Prince Shōtoku in 622 and Umako in 626, signs of internal machination resurfaced. Before her passing at the age of 75 at the Oharida Palace in 628, it was recorded that Suiko, in her deathbed, advised Prince Takara (who later became the Great Ruler Jomei 舒明, r. 629-641) to politically collaborate with Shōtoku's son Prince Yamashiro 山背大兄王 (?-643). Her wish was not fulfilled: in 645, military conflicts plotted by Nakatomi no Kamatari 藤原鎌足 (614-669; believed to be the founder of the Fujiwara clan), Prince Naka no Ōe 中大兄皇子 (later enthroned as Tenji 天智, r. 668-672) and others occurred. Known as Isshi Incident 乙巳の變, the event led to the elimination of the main branch of the Soga clan.<sup>11</sup>

Diplomatically, Suiko reinvigorated contact with China by actively dispatching students (*gakumonshō* 學問生) and monks (*gakumonsō* 學問僧) to the Sui court. Known as *kensuishi* 遣隋使, the first mission was dispatched in 600 (Suiko 8). A well-known incident occurred in the second mission in 607 (Suiko 15) led by Ono no Imoko 小野妹子 (fl. 7<sup>th</sup> century) with the immigrant-translator Kuratsukuri no Fukuri 鞍作福利 (fl. 7<sup>th</sup> century). According to the *Book of Sui* (*Sui shu* 隋書), Imoko was recorded as enraging the Sui Emperor Yangdi 隋煬帝 (r. 604-618) by addressing his empire as the domain “where the sun falls” (日沒處).<sup>12</sup> Curiously, the incident did not appear in *Nihon shoki*, and Imoko appeared to return safely the next year with the scholar

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<sup>11</sup> NS 5/586 (Yōmei 1), *SNKBZ* 3: 98-104.

<sup>12</sup> *Sui shu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973), 81.1827. For details of the incident, see Wang Zhenping, “Speaking with a Forked Tongue: Diplomatic Correspondence between China and Japan, 238-608 AD.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, no. 1 (1994): 29-32. *Nihon shoki* only contains a brief description of the event, see NS 7/607 (Suiko 15), *SNKBZ* 2: 554.

Pei Shiqing 裴世清 (fl. early 7<sup>th</sup> century), who was well versed in Chinese classics and other continental knowledge.<sup>13</sup> There were at least five imperial missions to Sui China dispatched during Suiko's reign, with the final one dispatched in 614, four years before the Sui dynasty collapsed.

Suiko's openness to continental culture was cultivated even before she took up the throne. Previous to her marriage to Bidatsu, Suiko would have been involved, or at least aware of, the patronage of Buddhist temples by the Soga clan, such as the construction of Asukadera 飛鳥寺 in 588 during Bidatsu's reign. Upon her enthronement, apart from issuing the aforementioned edict for promoting Buddhism in 594, Suiko also granted land to Prince Shōtoku and Umako for the erection of Ikarugadera 斑鳩寺 in 601 (Suiko 9).<sup>14</sup> Curiously, despite her active involvement with Buddhist establishment, Suiko preferred to be buried in a tumulus like her predecessors rather than being cremated.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, her continuous patronage for *kami*-worship and other beliefs is underscored by another edict in 607 (Suiko 15), in which she declared that ministers across her reign should continue “with their whole hearts” to revere “the Gods of Heaven and Earth (群臣共爲竭心 宜拜神祇).”<sup>16</sup>

As Sekiguchi Hiroko and Charles Holcombe argue, women were more prominent in early Japanese society than they have ever been in Chinese history.<sup>17</sup> Take, for instance, issues

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<sup>13</sup> For entries on Pei, see *NS* 4, 8 and 9/608 (Suiko 16), *SNKBZ* 2: 556-560.

<sup>14</sup> *NS* 2/601 (Suiko 9), *SNKBZ* 2: 536.

<sup>15</sup> Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship*, 100.

<sup>16</sup> 春二月庚辰朔 定壬生部 戊子 詔曰 朕聞之 曩者 我皇祖天皇等宰世也 踰天踏地 敦禮神祇 周祠山川 幽通乾坤 是以陰陽開和 造化共調 今當朕世 祭祠神祇 豈有怠乎 故群臣共爲竭心 宜拜神祇 甲午 皇太子及大臣 率百寮以祭拜神祇 *NS* 2/607 (Suiko 15), *SNKBZ* 2: 554, Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 135.

<sup>17</sup> Sekiguchi Hiroko, “The Patriarchal Family Paradigm in 8th century Japan,” in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, ed. Jahyun Kim Haboush, Dorothy Ko, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 28-37; and Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia*, 195.

concerning property right. In remarkable contrast to the patrilineal model in China, 8<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese law made provisions for women's property right, in that both males and females were allocated farmland from early childhood, which was reserved only to men in Tang law codes. Also, unlike northern Chinese pattern of virilocal marriage, until the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century it was not unusual for a young married couple to live separately or together with the bride's family.<sup>18</sup> In terms of court politics and regional governance, female chieftain or dual-gender chiefly pair was common in different parts of the archipelago even by the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

Suiko's role, however, was often marginalized by historians and Buddhologists that prioritized her male counterparts in the Soga clan, most notably Prince Shōtoku. In particular, historian E. Patricia Tsurumi points out that such gender bias is often rehashed in the tendency to interpret her reign as "intermediary," which reduced Suiko's enthronement as a matter of contingency to ensure a smooth political transition for the next male heir.<sup>20</sup> While there was continental precedent in which the sudden death of a male emperor, or the lack or prematurity of available male heir, led to the enthronement of a woman as empress dowager, in the case of Suiko, her experience and seniority mattered much more than her gender.<sup>21</sup> To classify her reign as "intermediary," or to read her actions as forced upon by her maternal uncle Umako, would unjustly rob Suiko of her political authority.

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<sup>18</sup> Sekiguchi, "The Patriarchal Family Paradigm in 8th century Japan," 30-37. See also Yoshie, *Nihon kodai joteiron*, 257-268.

<sup>19</sup> Joan R. Piggott, "Chieftain Pairs and Co-rulers: Female Sovereignty in Early Japan," in *Women and Class in Japanese History*, ed. Wakita Haruko, Tonomura Hitomi, and Anne Walthall (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1999), 17-52. See also Narikiyo Hirokazu 成清弘和, *Jotei no kodaishi 女帝の古代史* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2005), 48-57.

<sup>20</sup> E. Patricia Tsurumi, "Japan's Early Female Emperors," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 8, no. 1 (1981): 41-42.

<sup>21</sup> Yoshie, *Nihon kodai joteiron*, 7-26; Narikiyo, *Jotei no kodaishi*, 89-94.

As a matter of fact, Suiko's investment with her posthumous reputation is underscored in her ordering of Prince Shōtoku and Umako in 620 to compile the *Tennōki* 天皇記 (*Record of Emperors*) and *Kokki* 國記 (*National Records*) (both no longer extant).<sup>22</sup> These texts are believed to serve to connect her reign with that of her predecessors back to prehistorical times. Another relevant episode took place in 624 in which Suiko admonished Umako after declining his request for taking over the lands of Katsuragi 葛城. Suiko was recorded to have argued that such favoritism would render them both as laughing stock of future generations.<sup>23</sup> Suiko was also invested with collating historical accounts of her allies in the Korean peninsula as demonstrated by her commission of the three chronicles on Baekje entitled *Kudaraki* 百濟記, *Kudara shinsen* 百濟新撰 and *Kudara honki* 百濟本記 (altogether *Kudara sansho* 百濟三書) in 620 (Suiko 28).<sup>24</sup>

Another bias concerning female rulers of early Japan is the assumption that they performed the role of “female shaman” in court ritual, which reduced them to the ritual sphere disassociated from the day-to-day running of the court.<sup>25</sup> The approach is problematic on two levels. First, the boundary between the administrative and the ritualistic/symbolic functions of the Yamato court in early Japan was not clear-cut even by the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and thereby such rhetoric problematically reifies the gendered biases concerning their roles at court. Second, the so-called “shamanistic” functions (such as praying for rain, good harvest, disaster relief, or

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<sup>22</sup> NS 12/620 (Suiko 28), *SNKBZ* 2: 575-576.

<sup>23</sup> NS 10/624 (Suiko 32), *SNKBZ* 2: 588.

<sup>24</sup> NS ‘this year’/620 (Suiko 28), *SNKBZ* 2: 576.

<sup>25</sup> Tonomura Hitomi, “Royal Roles, Wider Changes: Understanding Japan’s Gender Relations from a Historical Perspective,” in *Japanese Women: Lineage and Legacies*, ed. Amy McCreedy Thernstrom (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), 18-19.

pacifying malicious spirits) were performed by male rulers as well. For instance, the 27<sup>th</sup> Great Ruler Ankan 安閑 (r. 531-536) was known for communicating with ancestral and nature spirits along with his consort, thus paving the way for the role of Great Ruler as maneuvering both bureaucratic and ritualistic spheres.<sup>26</sup> While quantitatively there are more records in *Nihon shoki* regarding the ritual aspect of female consorts, these data cannot be interpreted as evidence of female's role as solely "ritualistic" in early Japan, nor should such role be considered as the only means for them to advance politically.

### **Conjuring Resonance: Suiko Looking West**

On what methodological ground, then, shall we reconstruct Buddhism under Suiko's reign? While much has been discussed about Kōken/Shōtoku's Buddhist patronage in relation to that of Wu Zhao 武曩 (or Wu Zetian 武則天; r. 690-705) in China, Suiko's role in Buddhist development has received scant attention.<sup>27</sup> Although Suiko might lack charismatic leaders such as Wu Zhao as a direct point of reference, Buddhist patronage by prominent female aristocrats was not uncommon before Tang China, and that their activities would have been known in early Japan via diplomats and immigrant professionals. To what extent, then, did Suiko's domestic and foreign policies intersect with her promotion of Buddhism? My goal here is not to argue that Suiko, by being a female sovereign, patronized Buddhism differently: as a matter of fact, what Suiko was recorded or attributed to do, such as the commission of temples and icons, did not depart significantly from her predecessors. Yet, it is apparent that records of Buddhist-related

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<sup>26</sup> Also, as Turquil Duthie points out, the association of Yoshino with so-called shamanistic activity was evident for both male and female emperors. See Torquil Duthie, "Yoshino and the Politics of Cultural Topography in Early Japan." *Monumenta Nipponica* 70, no. 2 (2015): 189-235.

<sup>27</sup> For example, see Peter Kornicki, "The Hyakumantō Darani and the Origins of Printing in Eighth-Century Japan." *International Journal of Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2012): 43-70.



activities under her reign were much more frequent and detailed, and the range of material culture more varied. These narratives in part underscore Suiko's recognition of the potential of the foreign religion in refashioning the Yamato court during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Given Suiko's early exposure to continental knowledge via her upbringing in the Soga clan, she would have known of prominent female political figures in other parts of East Asia before taking up the throne. Besides, diplomats and immigrants from the Korean kingdoms, whose numbers accelerated by the 6<sup>th</sup> century due to political instability in the Korean peninsula, would have served as her informants.<sup>28</sup> In fact, Suiko's grandfather Soga no Iname 蘇我稻目 (?-570) was recorded to have installed a Buddhist icon hall in his residence in 552, and that his wife Omina Hime 美女媛 was originated from the Kingdom of Goguryeo.<sup>29</sup> As such, Buddhism and continental culture were part of Suiko's upbringing. Furthermore, the political strife between the Soga and the Mononobe clan in 553 triggered by the debate about the worship of Buddhist icon, which resulted in the destruction of Iname's residence and the burial of the icon inside, would have made Suiko highly aware of the risk and opportunity involved in promoting the religion.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of Chinese history, Suiko's lifetime coincided with the shift from the long political disunity across the 5<sup>th</sup> century to that of the hegemony of the Sui. Among the many kingdoms of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Northern Wei 北魏 (386-535) would have served as the most direct source of inspiration for Suiko's religious agenda. However, it would

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<sup>28</sup> On the activities of Han Chinese in early Korea, see Oh Youngchan and Mark E. Byington, "Scholarly Studies on The Han Commanderies in Korea," in *The Han Commanderies in Early Korean History*, ed. Mark E. Byington (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2013), 11-47.

<sup>29</sup> For the installation of the worship hall, see *NS* 10/552 (Kinmei 13), *SNKBZ* 2: 416-418. For entry on Omina Hime, see *NS* 8/562 (Kinmei 23), *SNKBZ* 2: 454.

<sup>30</sup> *NS* 10/552 (Kinmei 13), *SNKBZ* 2: 416-418. For an analysis of the historical significance of this incident, see Alexander C. Soper, "Notes on Hōryūji and the Sculpture of the 'Suiko Period,'" *The Art Bulletin* 33, no. 2 (1951): 77-78.

be inaccurate to consider Suiko as merely superimposing continental Buddhism over Japan. Quite the contrary, Suiko's engagement with Buddhism was highly selective, and it was geared towards balancing conflicting interests at court. Moreover, Buddhism under Northern Wei and Asuka period Japan operated in very different contexts. As demonstrated below, Northern Wei court was remarkable for its animosity to female political advancement, rendering Buddhism as almost the only means for women to escape from turmoil at court. In contrast, women at the Yamato court possessed much more authority in early Japan. Furthermore, apart from the 553 incident at Soga no Iname's residence, large-scale persecution of Buddhists as carried out in the continent did not occur in the archipelago.

The reason for considering Northern Wei is twofold: not only were there substantial records on the lives of eminent nuns and female patrons of Buddhism in this period, but these sources also indicate that these women were actively involved in the political matters at court. The clashes of social values, especially that between the Confucian ideal of filial piety and that of world renunciation in Buddhism, have been discussed extensively in scholarship on early Buddhism in China. Such conflict was even more trying for female practitioners, who struggled to maintain both spiritual pursuits and the social expectations of being the virtuous wives or mothers. As Bret Hinsch points out, while female patronage of Buddhism certainly took place before the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the case of Northern Wei was unusual in the proliferation of discourses that legitimized women who took the tonsure as fulfilling both Buddhist and Confucian ideals.<sup>31</sup>

One particular text that warrants attention is *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (*Biography of Eminent Nuns*) written in 517 by Shi Baochang 釋寶唱 (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century). As Hinsch observes, three main narrative tropes are deployed to lionize exemplary nuns who pursue their spiritual

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<sup>31</sup> Bret Hinsch, "Confucian Filial Piety and the Construction of the Ideal Chinese Buddhist Woman," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 30, no. 1 (2002): 49-75.

needs without forgoing Confucian values. These include: 1) the emphasis of their fluency in Confucian classics before renouncing the world; 2) the stress on the moral superiority of both married or unmarried women who take tonsure to protect their chastity; and 3) the notion of merit transfer, in which her renunciation is portrayed as an act of compassion toward universal suffering, and that the merit generated would benefit her parents in obtaining a better rebirth, thereby equating tonsure-taking as a form of filial piety.<sup>32</sup> By deploying the rhetoric of filial piety against itself, the debate foregrounds the moral superiority of Buddhism in encompassing both personal and universal goals. Non-attachment to one's parents thus becomes the ultimate expression of filial piety.

An alternative framework, as observed by Stephanie Balkwill, bypasses the issue of moral conflicts and examines how asceticism functioned within the political landscape of the Northern Wei court.<sup>33</sup> Employing sources such as memorial steles (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘) and *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (*Record of Monasteries in Luoyang*) compiled by Yang Xuanzhi 楊銜之 (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century) in 547, Balkwill points out how filial piety played an insignificant role regarding why female aristocrats took tonsure. Instead, Balkwill argues that they became nuns mostly out of political contingency, for nunneries operating as asylums that allowed them to hide from court machinations and expand their networks of political alliance. It should be noted that a

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<sup>32</sup> Hinsch, "Confucian Filial Piety," 56. One example concerns the story of the 4<sup>th</sup>-century An Lingshou 安令首, who convinced her father of the superiority of world renunciation by saying "I set myself to cultivate the Way so as to free all living beings from suffering. How much more, then, do I [think of] my two parents! (立身行道方欲度脫一切 何況二親耶)" See T. vol. 50, no. 2063: 935a12-13. Modified translation based on *ibid.*, 64-65.

<sup>33</sup> Stephanie Balkwill, "When Renunciation is Good Politics: The Women of the Imperial Nunnery of the Northern Wei (386–534)," *Nan Nü* 18, no. 2 (2016): 224-256.

majority of these women that took residence in nunneries had no record of being officially ordained, and some even maintained their status as nun after returning to the political scene.<sup>34</sup>

What constituted nunneries as political asylums? As Balkwill argues, the Northern Wei court was particularly hostile to female advancement. One notorious rule was that the mothers of current emperors were required to commit suicide to prevent her from amassing power as empress dowager.<sup>35</sup> More importantly, the heir to the throne was selected based on talent rather than age, and thus undercutting the possibility of female regent or empress dowager supporting an infant emperor. As contradictory as it might seem, however, the Northern Wei court was also distinctive in recruiting a large number of female bureaucrats: a majority of them were captives from conquered kingdoms (including Han Chinese) whose skills in nursing, writing, and different aspects of administration were valued at a time when the court, established by the Tuoba people, actively appropriated continental culture. The sheer amount of female bureaucrats, versus the limited window for political advancement, conjured an extremely competitive environment for women. Against this backdrop, imperial nunneries as a site for declaring (if not performing) one's political renunciation, and where murder and political persecution were forbidden, became the haven for politically ambitious women.

One such site was Yaoguangsi 瑤光寺 (Jeweled Radiance Nunnery) at Luoyang, the capital city of the Northern Wei from 493 to 534. Notably, the nunnery was located to the northeast of the imperial palace. Its curious location, close to the court but disconnected from the rest of the capital city, indicates that it served exclusively female aristocrats. The mingling of political and religious lives was further demonstrated in the case of Empress Feng Run 馮潤 (?-

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<sup>34</sup> Balkwill, "When Renunciation is Good Politics," 227.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

499), who sought asylum in Yaoguansi in response to a threat posed by her political competitor, the Empress Dowager Wenming 文明皇后 (442-490). Whether she was ordained or not, she reentered the political scene when the latter passed away.<sup>36</sup> Another case concerns Empress Fei 廢 (or Feng Qing 馮清, fl. 5<sup>th</sup> century), who mobilized more than twenty female officials for political protest, in which they threatened to disrupt court service by taking tonsure *en masse* if their request was not granted.<sup>37</sup> These instances demonstrate that imperial nunnery was an important part of the fabrics of Northern Wei politics, and that it functioned as the pivotal site where the political ambitions of court women were negotiated.

### Female Bureaucracy under Suiko's Reign

Women were actively involved in the administration of early Yamato court. Commonly known as *uneme* 采女 (“recruited women”) or *nyokan* 女官 (“female officials”), their roles in the Yamato court have been studied in three frameworks proposed by different generations of Japanese historians.<sup>38</sup> As delineated by Ijūin Yōko, they are perceived as 1) political hostages offered by regional chieftains in exchange of political and economic benefits from the Yamato court; 2) shamans who monitored religious and ceremonial activities in court; and 3) those who shouldered similar responsibilities and received equal treatment as their male counterparts under the notion of *danjokyōrō* 男女共努 (“equal responsibilities between men and women”), a system that was only disrupted after the implementation of *ritsuryō* code in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 246-247.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that both the titles of *uneme* and *nyokan* were retroactively deployed to designate female bureaucrats before the Taika Reform in 645. *Nyokan* in particular did not appear in historical document until the 8<sup>th</sup> century. See Ijūin Yōko 伊集院葉子, *Nihon kodai jōkan no kenkyū* 日本古代女官の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2016), 19.

century.<sup>39</sup> Mindful of over-idealizing early Japan as the utopia of gender equality (or the reverse, one of gender exploitation), the third stance offers a more productive avenue to inquire about the status of women and their social advancement before the adoption of continental bureaucracy. Through critical reading of textual sources (especially *Nihon shoki* and local gazetteers known as *fudoki* 風土記), historians supporting the third approach focus on the interaction between male and female bureaucrats in court, the spaces they shared, and the system of their promotions.

As Ijūin observes, female bureaucrats were responsible for a wide array of duties that were once thought of as exclusive to men, these included: pronouncement of edicts, dispatching of officials within and beyond the court, maintenance of granaries and warehouses, and the preparation of meals for daily and ritual purposes.<sup>40</sup> Suiko is recorded to have two *unume* named Kurukuma no uneme Kurome 栗隈采女黒女 (?-?) and Yakuchi no uneme Shibime 八口采女鮪女 (?-?) that served as her retainers (*kinji* 近侍), and it is very likely that they were entrusted with duties over domestic and diplomatic affairs.<sup>41</sup> The continuation and expansion of the *uneme* system during Suiko's times indicates that the introduction of continental bureaucratic model, at least before the implementation of *ritsuryō* code, did not necessarily impede female political advancement.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ijūin, *Nihon kodai jōkan no kenkyū*, 76-80.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-96.

<sup>41</sup> *NS* (prologue for Jomei), *SNKBZ* 3: 24-36.

<sup>42</sup> Yet, at times the *uneme* system did foster a certain kind of gendered biopolitics. Returning to the duties of ritual and food preparation, *Nihon shoki* emphasized on the purity and cleanliness of the officers (both male and female) that carried out the role. In particular, sexual misconduct by or towards such officials was regarded as tainting the body of the sovereign. For example, *Nihon shoki* recorded that in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the 21<sup>st</sup> Great King Yūryaku 雄略 (461), an *uneme* from Baekje in charge of ritual duty was found having an affair. Considered it a serious offense, Yūryaku banned the recruitment of women from the kingdom. Furthermore, in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Yūryaku (465), an *uneme* was sexually assaulted by a male officer before a ritual was conducted, and the offender was banished from the court. That the court's preoccupation of the purity of *uneme* indicates that female bureaucrats were integrated into the symbolic apparatus of the Yamato kingship, and depending on their duties, an infringement of their purity

## Finding Scriptural Resonance

Apart from court administration, Suiko also actively acquired religious symbolism to buttress her rule. In terms of Buddhist scripture, Suiko's reign witnessed the propagation of three sūtras that share the same theme: that all people, regardless of gender and class, are inherently capable of attaining enlightenment in this life. The three sūtras are *Shōmangyō* 勝鬘經 (*The Sūtra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar*), *Yuimakyō* 維摩經 (*The Vimalakīrti Sūtra*), and *Hokkekyō* 法華經 (*The Lotus Sūtra*). In particular, to underscore the all-encompassing nature of the Buddhist teachings, these sūtras regard the female body as ontologically sufficient for reaching enlightenment, which were in stark contrast to medieval discourses that emphasize the necessity of gender change for female practitioners.<sup>43</sup>

For instance, the *Shōmangyō* concerns Queen Śrīmālā, daughter of King Prasenajit of Śrāvastī, who was inspired by Śākyamuni to preach that all people could have the potential to attain Buddhahood.<sup>44</sup> Apparently, Śrīmālā's identity as a queen resonated particularly well with Suiko's circumstances. Likewise, the *Lotus Sūtra* contains an episode that has been interpreted as supporting gender equality: Mañjuśrī once descended to the Dragon King's underwater palace to preach the *Lotus Sūtra* to innumerable dragon beings.<sup>45</sup> After assisting them to become

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would be considered as a direct assault to the Great Ruler's body. See NS 4/461? (Yūryaku 5), SNKBZ 2: 162 and NS 4/465? (Yūryaku 9), SNKBZ 2: 178.

<sup>43</sup> Abé Ryūichi, "Revisiting the Dragon Princess: Her Role in Medieval *Engi* Stories and their Implications in Reading the *Lotus Sutra*," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 38-39; and Heather Blair, "Mothers of the Buddhas: The Sutra on Transforming Women into Buddhas (*Bussetsu Tennyō Jōbutsu Kyō*)."  
*Monumenta Nipponica* 71, no. 2 (2016): 263-293.

<sup>44</sup> For the most recent translation, see *The Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar*, trans. Diana Y. Paul and John R. McRae (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> Though not belonged to three main sutras expounded in Suiko's time, *Kairyūō-kyō* 海龍王經, (*Sūtra of the Dragon King*, T. vol. 15, no. 598, translated by Dharmarakṣa during 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century), was another main text that justifies women innate ability to gain enlightenment. Evidence of the awareness of such episode is proven by the establishment of Kairyūō-ji 海龍王寺 in 745, which originally housed the icon of Eleven-headed Kannon.

bodhisattvas, he returned to the Vulture Peak and accounted for his experience to the assembly of Śākyamuni. In particular, he specifies his encounter with the Dragon King Sāgara's eight-year-old daughter, who possessed the wisdom to comprehend the dharma and thus succeeded in reaching Bodhi swiftly.<sup>46</sup>

With so much at stake for the early years of her rule, Suiko would certainly find the ideas presented in these two sutras particularly relevant. Indeed, *Kokon mokuroku shō* 古今目錄抄 (*Shōtoku Taishi denshiki* 聖德太子傳私記) records that Shōtoku expounded and commented on the three sūtras to the court audience (including Suiko herself) in 611 (*Shōmangyō*), 613 (*Yuimakyō*), and 615 (*Hokkekyō*) respectively.<sup>47</sup> Known as *Sangyō gisho* 三經義疏 (*Commentary on the Three Sūtras*), these events indicate the court's reliance on figures like Shōtoku to decipher Chinese classics and Buddhist texts. Considering the mutual reliance between Suiko and Shōtoku, the commentary events can also be read in two ways: the prince either volitionally conducted the lectures and employed their content on egalitarian salvation to forge a deeper political tie with Suiko, or that he acted under Suiko's order to promulgate these texts to buttress the religious foundation of her realm.

One indicator of Suiko's familiarity with the dragon princess narrative is none other than the lacquer painting of the Tamamushi Shrine, particularly the prominent placement of the underwater palace in the back panel of its dais (Fig. 3.1). The large proportion accorded to this realm, in which a Buddhist triad inhabits the majestic palace, departs remarkably from

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<sup>46</sup> See Abé, "Revisiting the Dragon Princess," 27-70. As Abé has argued, while this episode has been interpreted as one of Māhāyāna's inclusive strategies in expanding its patron network, it should be noted that the notion of female defilement, and the obligation of them to undergo gender transformation to attain salvation, were largely discourses conjured and consolidated in medieval times. That the dragon princess is a non-human female child indicates that the narrative concerns more of a universal form of salvation determined less by gender than one's faith and wisdom.

<sup>47</sup> William E. Deal, and Brian Ruppert, *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 27.



continental precedents that focus on the summit and ledges of Mount Sumeru. If the Tamamushi Shrine was indeed placed on the raised platform in the Golden Hall (or that of its original location, Tachibanadera 橘寺), the scene would be slightly above one's eye-level, and thus visually much more prominent and accessible to beholders when they walk around the shrine. The icon triad framed by the underwater palace might thus represent the dragon princess, or a generic representation of the innumerable dragon beings that attained Bodhi through guidance by Mañjuśrī.<sup>48</sup> However, rather than restricting the interpretation to one specific sūtra, is it possible to consider the triad's ambiguity as intentional, and that it is exactly its indeterminacy that facilitates its audience to project what s/he considered relevant? Much like the juxtaposition of architectural styles as discussed in Chapter Two, the Tamamushi Shrine is an agglomeration of eclectic visual and textual elements that were regarded as efficacious in Suiko's times. The underwater scene might thus belong to a larger program that was gradually codified by the Yamato court like Chinese writing system. In part, such an increasing monopolization of visual and textual literacies defined precisely the contour of Suiko's political and diplomatic visions.

### **The Potency of Pensive Icon**

Suiko's reign also coincided with the proliferation of Buddhist icon in pensive pose, commonly believed to represent Maitreya. While the development of Maitreya cult in East Asia has been discussed extensively, its specific relationship with the Suiko's reign received scant attention. It should be noted that Maitreya, together with Śākyamuni, were the earliest Buddhist icons that gained popularity among the ruling elite across East Asia. The two cults, however, did

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<sup>48</sup> Based on the appearance of a small red-eyed dragon that coils around the head and the shoulders of the central figure, Akiko Walley asserted that the structure is the palace of the Dragon King. See Walley, "Flowers of Compassion," 275.

not take place simultaneously: the devotion of Maitreya only flourished in early Japan in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century, by that time its importance was already overshadowed by Bhaiṣajyaguru and Amitābha in the continental kingdoms.<sup>49</sup> Depiction of Maitreya took mainly three forms: standing; seated in cross-legged pose; or seated in pensive pose with one leg pendant and the other rests on the opposite knee, while the right hand touches the cheek. The second type only appears in Chinese cave temples, whereas the third type become particularly popular in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in early Korea and Japan.<sup>50</sup> As a bodhisattva, Maitreya resides in the Tuṣita Heaven and awaits rebirth as the Future Buddha. His in-between status signifies a new age to come, and offers devotees the prospect of ultimate salvation against the uncertain present. It is exactly such liminality that renders him a potent symbol for political appropriation, especially when ambitious individuals sought to change the political *status quo* and challenge hierarchy based on class, gender, and ethnicity.

With immigrants professionals as her informants of continental culture, Suiko would have been aware of the powerful Northern Wei Empress Feng 馮皇后 (posthumous name as Empress Dowager Wenming 文明皇后; 442-490), who commissioned the largest extant bronze sculpture of a standing Maitreya in China now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 3.2).<sup>51</sup> While art historical studies on female Buddhist patronage in the Northern Wei period remains limited, this statue suggests that by the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the icon of Maitreya was already appropriated

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<sup>49</sup> Denise Patry Leidy, "The Ssu-wei Figure in Sixth-Century AD Chinese Buddhist Sculpture," *Archives of Asian Art* 43 (1990): 33-34.

<sup>50</sup> Rhi Juhung, "Seeing Maitreya: Aspiration and Vision in an Image from Early Eighth-Century Silla," in *New Perspective on Early Korean Art: From Silla to Koryŏ*, ed. Kim Youn-mi (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 93-103.

<sup>51</sup> Scott Pearce has pointed out that both male and female patronage of Maitreya existed in the Northern Wei. See Scott Pearce, "A King's Two Bodies: The Northern Wei Emperor Wencheng and Representations of the Power of His Monarchy," *Frontiers of History in China* 7, no. 1 (2012): 90-105.

by female aristocrats with political ambition (two centuries before Wu Zhao refashioned Maitreya for her own regime).<sup>52</sup> The hollow at the back of this statue indicates that it was originally attached to a mandorla at its back, and possibly an elaborate pedestal below showing the assembly of apsarās, monks, donors, and worshipping bodhisattvas.

The kind of Maitreya icons that were circulated across the East Sea would most likely be the standing or pensive type (no extant work of the seated cross-legged type, which was common in Dunhuang, can be located in early Korea and Japan). For the standing type in Korean context, a representative example is found in Gamsan-sa 甘山寺, Gyeongju, the capital of the Silla kingdom (Fig. 3.3). The length inscription at its back indicates that it was commissioned by a high-ranking officer named Kim Jiseong 金志誠 (652-?) in the hope that his parents and deceased relatives be reborn in the Tuṣita Heaven, and that the merits of erecting the temple and its icons would also guarantee the desirable rebirth for himself. Fluent in Chinese classics, Kim was sent as envoy to Tang China in the third month of 705, and thereby he would have been informed of the kind of Buddhist sculptures popular in China.<sup>53</sup> This might explain why stylistically the Maitreya icon aligns more with continental precedents in terms of its drapery, its round face, and its elaborated halo. Intriguingly, this standing Maitreya was paired with another standing Amitābha of similar style and scale, indicating that at least in the context of Unified Silla, the cult for the Tuṣita Heaven and the Western Pure Land shared equal importance.<sup>54</sup>

Maitreya of the pensive type appeared in varying sizes and materials. Most famous of all are the two bronze statues in the National Museum of Korea (Figs. 3.4-3.5), as well as that in

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<sup>52</sup> Apart from Wu Zhou, another significant female patron of the Maitreya icon in Chinese history was Empress Dowager Liu of Northern Song court, see Liu Heping, "Empress Liu's 'Icon of Maitreya': Portraiture and Privacy at the Early Song Court," *Artibus Asiae* 63, no. 2 (2003): 129-190.

<sup>53</sup> Rhi, "Seeing Maitreya," 85-86.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

Chūgūji 中宮寺 and Kōryūji 廣隆寺 in Japan (Figs. 3.6-3.7). No consensus has been reached on their origins, and much debate surrounding the discrepancies of their materials, styles, headdresses, and garments are overshadowed by nationalistic concerns. Despite *Nihon shoki*'s record of the arrival of stone Maitreya in 584 (Bidatsu 13), none of these extant works are made of stone.<sup>55</sup> Rather, they are small-scaled gilt bronze or wooden images, akin to the meditating icons no. 163 and 164 at the Tokyo National Museum (Fig. 3.8), which are among the 48 Hōryūji gilt bronze icons made of lost-wax casting. It is believed that they were produced based on the same mode.<sup>56</sup>

But do these statues necessarily represent Maitreya? As Lee Junghee points out, as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century both Śākyamuni and Maitreya were often represented in the same meditating pose, and whether intentional or not, the iconographies of the two became increasingly indistinguishable by the late 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup> *Sūtra on the Cause and Effect of the Past and Present Lives* (Ch. *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* 過去現在因果經), which was translated into Chinese in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, is believed to directly engender the popularity of the pensive icon. The pose is associated with an episode in Śākyamuni's life: during the royal ploughing ceremony, the prince witnessed the deity Suddhāvāsa-deva transforming himself into earthworms, but devoured by birds shortly after. Encountering such tragedy, the prince meditated under a Jambu tree, which bent itself to form a shade protecting the prince from a hot summer day. Officials that were

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<sup>55</sup> NS 9/584 (Bidatsu 13), *SNKBZ* 2: 486-488.

<sup>56</sup> McCallum, *Hakuhō Sculpture*, 60-63.

<sup>57</sup> Lee Junghee, "The Origins and Development of the Pensive Bodhisattva Images of Asia," *Artibus Asiae* 53, no. 3/4 (1993): 317-320.

dispatched by the king to beg the prince to return home were said to be struck with awe at this miraculous moment.<sup>58</sup>

As both Hsu Hsiang-Ling and Denise Patry Leidy observe, the mandorla of Śākyamuni statue produced during the Northern Wei period is often incised with an image of a mediating prince beneath a bending tree, indicating that the artisans and patrons were familiar with the aforementioned episode in the *Sūtra on the Cause and Effect*.<sup>59</sup> One such example from Köln (Fig. 3.9) shows a pair of bodhisattva figures in the front and an incised image of the pensive Śākyamuni at the back of the mandorla. Beholders are thus invited to go back in time and contemplate with Śākyamuni over the cause of suffering. In other examples from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries (Fig. 3.10), a kneeling horse, which represents the prince's favorite mount Kantaka, is inserted into the scene to specify the meditating figure as Śākyamuni. As noted by Hsu, marble images of this type were excavated from the site of Xiudesi 修德寺, and they were explicitly marked with the name *siwei taizi* 思惟太子 (“the pensive prince”) to indicate the icon's identity as Śākyamuni rather than Maitreya.<sup>60</sup> In terms of pictorial art, the episode was represented in the handscroll *Illsutrated Sūtra of Cause and Effect (E-ingakyō 繪因果經)* in Japan (Fig. 3.11), thus suggesting the motif's popularity across East Asia during the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>61</sup> Echoing sculptural representation, the scene depicts the Historical Buddha under a tree, contemplating upon the ploughing ceremony. The tragic scene of Suddhāvāsa-deva devoured by a bird, however, is not shown.

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<sup>58</sup> T. vol. 3, no. 189: 629a22-b3.

<sup>59</sup> Hsu Hsiang-ling, “Visualization Meditation and the Siwei Icon in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture,” *Artibus Asiae* 62, no. 1 (2002): 11-12 and Leidy, 24.

<sup>60</sup> Hsu, “Visualization Meditation,” 8-14.

<sup>61</sup> For a detailed study of the iconographic sources and production of this handscroll, see Tsuboi Midori 坪井みどり, *Eingakyō no kenkyū 繪因果經の研究* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2004), 121-184.

Hsu further argues that by the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the pensive icon in China became increasingly generic that it could represent either Śākyamuni or Maitreya, both of them, or simply an idealized image of Buddhist practitioner in meditation.<sup>62</sup> Such ambivalence appeared to accord beholders the agency to project his or her preferred narrative to the icon. Northern Wei Buddhist communities' increasing reliance on crowdsourcing from lay practitioners rather than imperial patronage might have engendered such shift in representation.<sup>63</sup> The seemingly "personalization" of Buddhist icon can thus be considered as an expedient means (Skt. *upāya*), in which an economy of Buddhist iconography was fostered to appeal to a wider range of audience.<sup>64</sup> For example, in the representation of Buddhist assembly in the Tuṣita Heaven (Fig. 3.12), given that Maitreya has already been represented as the crowned figure in the middle, it would be redundant to represent him again in both standing and pensive poses on the side within the assembly. These figures are also unlikely to be Śākyamuni considering that he is seldom represented twice in the same scene. As such, a more plausible scenario would be that the mediating figures on the sides are a generic representation of a pair of bodhisattvas in deep reflection, or two idealized Buddhist practitioners to which owners of the icons could project his or her presence into the moment of sacred assembly.

That the mediating figure gradually became the stand-in for pious devotees is further supported by other representations of Maitreya assembly (Fig. 3.13). As Leidy and Hsu argue, the paired pensive figures flanking the central triad at the back of the Cleveland example should

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<sup>62</sup> Hsu, "Visualization Meditation," 25.

<sup>63</sup> Lin Wei-Cheng, *Building a Sacred Mountain: The Buddhist Architecture of China's Mount Wutai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 36.

<sup>64</sup> For the intersection of *upāya* and visual representation, see Kaminishi Ikumi, "Dead Beautiful: Visualizing the Decaying Corpse in Nine Stages as Skillful Means of Buddhism," in *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture*, ed. Rebecca M. Brown, et al. (Chichester: Wiley, 2015), 513-536.

be read as the embodiment of the donors that practiced visualization ritual.<sup>65</sup> The development was attributed to the rise of Dilun Sect 地論宗 in 6<sup>th</sup>-century China and Korea, which actively promoted the benefit of rightful visualization (*guan* 觀) as expounded in *Shidi jing* 十地經 (*The Sūtra on the Ten Spiritual Levels*; Skt. *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*).<sup>66</sup> In particular, Hsu interprets the paired pensive figures as projecting their donors' wish for a speedy rebirth to the Tuṣita Heaven through repeated practice of visualization.<sup>67</sup> While Hsu's argument remains debatable, it can be ascertained that at least by the late 6<sup>th</sup> century in the continental context, the identity of the pensive figure became malleable, indicating a major shift in patronage and cultic practices.

For early Japan, *Nihon shoki* contains several entries regarding the Korean kingdoms offering stone or bronze Maitreya icons as diplomatic gifts to the Yamato court. One of such events took place in Bidatsu's reign, leading to the construction of the aforementioned residential worship hall by Soga no Umako.<sup>68</sup> During Suiko's reign, two other such icons were presented to the court.<sup>69</sup> Although the entries on Maitreya gifting in Suiko's reign were relatively brief, considering the prophetic nature of Maitreya, its use in diplomatic exchange was twofold: on one hand, it symbolized the Korean kingdom's recognition and political allegiance to the new Yamato ruler. On the other hand, the competing Korean kingdoms also deployed the gifting of Maitreya to demand the Yamato court to recognize their statues as an important military and economic ally. The pensive icon thus operated to confer power to both its sender and receiver.

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<sup>65</sup> Hsu, "Visualization Meditation," 7-8; Leidy, "The Ssu-wei Figure in Sixth-Century," 23; and Rhi, "Seeing Maitreya," 102-111.

<sup>66</sup> Bruce C. Williams, "Seeing through Images: Reconstructing Buddhist Meditative Visualization Practice in Sixth-Century Northeastern China." *Pacific World* 7 (2005): 33-34.

<sup>67</sup> Hsu, "Visualization Meditation," 16-24.

<sup>68</sup> *NS* 9/584 (Bidatsu 13), *SNKBZ* 2: 486-488.

<sup>69</sup> *NS* 7/616 (Suiko 24), *SNKBZ* 2: 572 and *NS* 7/623 (Suiko 31), *SNKBZ* 2: 578.

Moreover, the elastic identity of the pensive figure might function as a crucial factor that contributed to its use in diplomacy. In particular, its regal appeal resonated with the royal image that the Yamato court sought to consolidate at home and abroad. What is more, Leidy argues that visualization practices promulgated by the Dilun sect also spread to the Korean kingdoms, and thereby the Yamato court would have been aware of related sūtras and icons related to this movement in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>70</sup>

### **Discourses on Auspicious Omens**

Suiko also mobilized the mechanism of omen as a discursive tool to justify her promotion of Buddhism.<sup>71</sup> Intriguingly, a majority of these omens center around the discovery of miraculous wood (either sandalwood or camphorwood). Three accounts, two from *Nihon shoki* and one from the 9<sup>th</sup>-century *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 (*Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*) written by monk Keikai 景戒 (fl. 9<sup>th</sup> century), relate Suiko with the discovery of the omen. The first account from *Nihon shoki* takes place in 553 (Kinmei 14), one year after the Baekje ambassador presented the “first” Buddhist statue to the Yamato court:

The 5<sup>th</sup> month, summer

It was reported that from Kawachi that the sound of chanting had been heard and a glory like the sun’s seen to seaward. The Emperor was curious and sent Ikehe no Atai to investigate, who found a radiant camphorwood log afloat on the waves. He took the log and presented it to the Emperor, who gave orders to a painter to make two images of the Buddha out of it.

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<sup>70</sup> Leidy, “The Ssu-wei Figure in Sixth-Century,” 33-34.

<sup>71</sup> For continental precedents, see Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, 89-147.



These are the two radiant camphorwood images now in the temple at Yoshino.<sup>72</sup>

夏五月戊辰朔 河内國言 泉郡茅渟海中 有梵音 震響若雷聲 光彩晃曜  
如日色 天皇心異之 遣溝邊直 此但曰直 不書名字 蓋是傳寫誤失矣 入  
海求訪 是時 溝邊直入海 果見樟木浮海玲瓏 遂取而獻天皇 命畫工 造  
佛像二軀 今吉野寺放光樟像也

In this narrative, Kinmei instigated the discovery of the miraculous camphorwood (*kusunoki* 楠 or 樟) – the same material for the staircase and sculpted lotus petals of the Tamamushi Shrine. Kinmei was also credited with the commissioning of two radiant statues (of unknown iconography) out of the sacred log for an unknown temple at Yoshino. It is worth noting that Kinmei, who initially expressed hesitation (recalling his reservation for endorsing Buddhism the year before), was portrayed here as actively promoting the foreign religion at court.

The second account from *Nihon shoki* took place in the third year of Suiko's reign (595). The incidence centers on the discovery of an aromatic sandalwood log off the Awaji Island 淡路嶋:

The 4<sup>th</sup> month, summer

A log of sandalwood was found afloat on the shore of Awaji Island. It measures one *i*. The locals there did not know anything about sandalwood. When they burnt in the hearth, its fragrant odor permeated widely. [The locals] thus offered the log [to the court] for its peculiarity.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> NS 5/553 (Kinmei 14), *SNKBZ* 2: 421; Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 68.

<sup>73</sup> NS 4/595 (Suiko 3), *SNKBZ* 2: 532; Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 123.

夏四月 沈水漂著於淡路嶋 其大一圍 嶋人不知沈水 以交薪燒於竈  
其烟氣遠薰 則異以獻之

Although the entry is relatively brief, it departs significantly from the mode of narration in previous omen records: first, unlike Kinmei, Suiko's response and action were not provided, as if the discovery was a routine occurrence in her reign that did not need elaborate description. Moreover, the site of the discovery, Awaji Island, is highly significant: it is the first island ever created by *kami*. The shift of location from Kawachi to Awaji Island appears to correspond to the shift of material from camphorwood to sandalwood. Given that sandalwood was deployed to make the first image of Śākyamuni, the material was considered ontologically sacred, and thereby the icon carved out of it was often worshipped as the bodily manifestation of the Buddha.<sup>74</sup> That the sacred wood found its way from the birthplace of Buddhism to the Awaji Island was thus hardly accidental: the miraculous event was staged to skillfully bridge Buddhism with *kami*-worship. Such juxtaposition during Suiko's reign thus positions her as the authoritative figure overseeing the harmony between both belief systems.

Of equal significance is the portrayal of regional people (*shimabito* 嶋人) as unable to comprehend the sacred nature of sandalwood. Such framework appears to cast the regional chieftains as intellectually incapable of comprehending Buddhism in comparison to the Yamato court under Suiko. Yet, as demonstrated in the next chapter, it is more likely that the former spearheaded the spread of Buddhism through their close contact with continental culture. Perhaps the urgency for the Yamato court to claim such role is best manifested in terms of the bureaucratization of Buddhist establishment that occurred in 624 (Suiko 32), with the

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<sup>74</sup> James McHugh, *Sandalwood and Carrion: Smell in Indian Religion and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 214-216.

establishment of the Prelate's Office (*sōgō* 僧綱) and a survey of the number of Buddhist monasteries, monks, and nuns in the same year.<sup>75</sup> Such development might explain the seemingly detached, matter-of-fact tone of the 595 entry, which portrays the omen of sandalwood discovery as something *accustomed* rather than extraordinary. In part, the “everydayness” of Buddhism-related omens operated as a function of Suiko's authority, which might have inspired similar entries during the reigns of other female sovereigns such as Kōken/Shōtoku.<sup>76</sup>

*Nihon ryōiki*'s account of similar omen portrays Suiko as actively pursuing the investigation. The story, entitled “The Karmic Bond that Generates This-worldly Benefit for Those that Revere the Three Jewels” (信敬三寶得現報緣), is set in an unknown year during the reign of Bidatsu: Lord Ōtomo no Yasunoko 大部屋栖野古, who revered the Three Treasures, reported to Bidatsu of strange sounds in the daytime off the coast of Izumi that resembled rolls of thunder and the sounds of stringed instruments, and which transformed into a bright light spread to the east at night. While Bidatsu was indifferent to the report, Suiko ordered Yasunoko to investigate, and he discovered a camphorwood log at the beach at Takashi 高脚濱 that had been struck by lightning. Suiko granted the Yasunoku's request for making Buddhist images out of the log. Under his order, Ikebe no atai Hita 池邊直冰田 was commissioned by Shima no Ōomi 嶋大臣 (Soga no Umako) to carve three bodhisattva statues, which were then installed in the Toyura Hall 豊浦堂 (the same site where Suiko was enthroned).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> 49 temples, 816 priests, and 569 nuns were recorded. See *NS* 9/624 (Suiko 32), *SNKBZ* 2: 586.

<sup>76</sup> See Ross Bender on the “normalization” of omen record. Ross Bender, “Auspicious Omens in the Reign of the Last Empress of Nara Japan, 749-770,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40, no.1 (2013): 45-76.

<sup>77</sup> *NR* vol. 1: 5, *SNKBZ* 10: 39-46; Watson 2013: 21-25. Watson translated the chapter title as “On Having Faith in the Three Treasures and Gaining an Immediate Reward.” For further analysis of the story, see Michael Como, *Weaving and Binding: Immigrant Gods and Female Immortals in Ancient Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 68-72.

In this story, Suiko is refashioned as the agent that actively pursued the omen investigation. In contrast, Bidatsu displayed poor judgment and was relegated to a secondary role. While it remains unclear why sandalwood was replaced by camphorwood, the latter material was indeed employed to produce part of the Tamamushi Shrine and other famous works such as the Maitreya images at Chūgūji 中宮寺 and Kōryūji 廣隆寺 (the smaller one; the larger one in the same temple with the simplistic crown was made in red pine instead). Given that the supply of sandalwood from India could hardly meet its demand across East Asia, as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century it became acceptable to substitute it with local species, and discursive frameworks that justifying the efficacy of such replacement ensued.<sup>78</sup>

Suiko's role in these omen narratives, however, was gradually supplanted by Shōtoku from the late Heian period onwards. The development is particularly striking in *Shōtoku Taishi denryaku* 聖德太子傳曆 (*Chronological Legend of Prince Shōtoku*) datable to 1223. It combines and modifies the omen records on miraculous wood in both *Nihon shoki* (the 595 entry) and *Nihon ryōiki*. Not only does Shōtoku replace Suiko in recognizing the sacred nature of sandalwood, the resultant icons made from the log also shifted from Amitābha to Avalokiteśvara.<sup>79</sup> This modification seems to take advantage of the wording of the 595 entry in *Nihon shoki*, whose omission of Suiko's response and action offers the compiler of *Shōtoku Taishi denryaku* the creative license to superimpose Prince Shōtoku as the main agent in the narrative. Such intended marginalization of Suiko's role was further reinforced by other quasi-

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<sup>78</sup> Christian M. Boehm, *The Concept of Danzō: "Sandalwood Images" in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture of the 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London: Saffron Books, 2012), 89-95.

<sup>79</sup> STD vol. 1 3/595 (Suiko 3), ZGR 8a: 15-6. The book was compiled around the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Prince Shōtoku's death.

historical texts such as the 11<sup>th</sup>-century *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 (*Abbreviated Chronicle of Japan*) as well as the 14<sup>th</sup>-century *Teiō hennenki* 帝王編年記 (*Chronicle of the Emperors*).<sup>80</sup>

To normalize the gender hierarchy, *Shōtoku Taishi denryaku* also fabricates Suiko's rationale in choosing Prince Shōtoku as regent. The compiler had Suiko declare "Because I am a woman, I am ignorant of [political] matters. Please report daily to the prince on all matters related to the running of the state (吾是女人也 性不解物 萬機日慎 國務滋多 宜天下之事 皆啓太子)."<sup>81</sup> In such a twist of political imaginaries, the compiler's bias was made internalized by Suiko's statement, as if she willingly gave up active involvement of politics in favor of decisions made by the male regent. The fallacy of Suiko's reign as "intermediary" is thus rooted in this motivated distortion of history, which obliterates the authority of female rulers in the political and religious lives of early Japan so as to justify such discrimination in medieval times.

## Conclusion

This chapter delineated the socio-political contexts underlying Suiko's enthronement and her Buddhist patronage. Unlike previous scholarship that approached Asuka period Buddhism solely from the perspective of Prince Shōtoku or other members of the Soga clan, I argued against the bias of Suiko as merely a political figurehead, and analyzed her Buddhist patronage in relation to her domestic and diplomatic policies. The iconography of the Tamamushi Shrine, together with icons and scriptures propagated in this period, suggest a motivated reconfiguration of Buddhism that aligned with Suiko's repositioning of the Yamato court in Japan and in East Asia at large. While Buddhism did in part consolidate Suiko's authority, this chapter considered

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<sup>80</sup> See abridged translations of the same story in these texts in Alexander Soper, "Notes on Hōryūji and the Sculpture of the 'Suikō Period'," *The Art Bulletin* 33, no. 2 (1951): 78.

<sup>81</sup> STD vol. 1 4/593 (Suiko 1), ZGR 8a: 13.

the reverse as equally crucial: that aspects of continental Buddhism were selected and emphasized so as to render the religion relevant to the local context, a dialectical process that was necessary for the foreign religion to take root in the archipelago.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Literacy and Mobility**

In conjunction with its eclectic architectural forms and pictorial programs, the Tamamushi Shrine is also remarkable for its juxtaposition of a broad range of technologies and artistic media available of the time. It involved not only artisans specialized in wooden architecture, lacquer painting, and metal casting, but also those with relevant managerial experience to handle the logistics of its production. The Tamamushi Shrine can therefore be read as the material manifestation of both the power and resourcefulness of both the Yamato court and that of the immigrant artisans it employed. Yet, instead of interpreting the shrine as a product of political hegemony, such impulses of collocating disparate forms, styles, and motifs can also be interpreted as a symptom of political anxiety. In particular, this chapter argues that the Tamamushi Shrine registered the court's attempt to address its diplomatic and domestic precariousness through the opportunities posed by Buddhism. The shrine thus operated less as resolution than a trial for ways to assimilate and maximize the potential of the foreign religion.

Multiple factors constituted the political precarity of the Yamato court during the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Diplomatically speaking, the period witnessed the rise of Silla in the Korean peninsula, which conquered the kingdom of Gaya 伽耶 (or 加羅) – where the Yamato court allegedly established a military outpost – in 562. Although Suiko did dispatch forces in 600 to deter Silla from annexing Baekje, further military expedition was deemed too costly and eventually abolished – the Yamato court simply could not afford a continuous war on the other side of the East Sea. Moreover, the Sui dynasty, which reunified China in 581, actively sought to subjugate

the Korean kingdoms through its military campaign against Goguryeo from 598 to 614. To avoid direct confrontation with the Sui, the diplomatic policy of the Yamato court leaned towards the practical: rather than territorial conquest, efforts were put to ensure a continuous influx of material goods and technologies, as well as to discern ways to capitalize on the new wave of immigrants from the Korean kingdoms to strengthen the court's foundation.

Internally, it should be noted that a rigorous centralization program only began to take shape after the Taika Reform in 645. As such, regional lords across the confederate remained largely autonomous from the Yamato court during Suiko's reign. While the 527 Iwai Rebellion 磐井の亂 in Tsukushi 筑紫國 directly led to the establishment of royal estates (*miyake* 屯倉) as a new unit of political control across the archipelago, its power remained a function of regional consensus rather than military dominance.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, the court commanded presence largely through diplomacy, which allowed it to oversee the flow of information, resources, and technologies from the continent. The court's legitimacy and bureaucratic efficiency were thus heavily dependent on the cooperation of provincial lords and different clan families, who expected in return rewards such as rank promotion and land ownership. As Michael Como argues, even though historical texts such as *Nihon shoki* painstakingly portrayed the Yamato court as a hegemonic force, such an image was not a given but at best an ideological construct "in the making."<sup>2</sup> The power exercised by the Yamato court was therefore less hegemonic than *contractual*; one that was composed of horizontal networks of mutual recognition rather a vertical axis predicated on a rigid hierarchy that pitted political center against peripheries.

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<sup>1</sup> Delmer M. Brown, "The Yamato Kingdom," in *The Cambridge History of Japan Volume 1: Ancient Japan*, ed. John Whitney Hall, Marius B. Jansen, Kanai Madoka, and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 152.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Como, "Ethnicity, Sagehood, and the Politics of Literacy in Asuka Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30, no. 1/2 (2003): 62.



It was against such a backdrop that Buddhism became closely intertwined with diplomacy and political self-fashioning during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Through examining both textual and archaeological materials, this chapter draws upon Bryan Lowe’s theory of situational Buddhism, and explores a range of micro-narratives concerning the networks of technocrats, artisans, and itinerant monks in early Japan.<sup>3</sup> I argue that their cultural capital and social mobility fostered an alternative pattern of Buddhist diffusion that was unbounded by state sponsorship, sectarian lineage, or even monasticism. These case studies question the validity of “state Buddhism” as the sole model for approaching religious practices in early Japan, and foreground social actors whose roles remain insufficiently addressed in existing scholarship.

### **Buddhism as Cultural Technology**

Two entries from the court chronicle *Nihon shoki* vividly demonstrate the interdependency between the Yamato court and the network of immigrant artisans. It is recorded that in 606, Suiko confronted a logistical problem: the sixteen-foot Buddha sculpture that she commissioned for Gangōji 元興寺 was too large to pass through its Golden Hall’s entrance. The problem was resolved with the help from a member of the Kuratsukuri clan (literally means “saddle maker”) named Tori 鞍作鳥. The entry states that:

Summer, 8<sup>th</sup> day.

Both the sixteen-foot copper and embroidery images of the Buddha were completed, and on this day the copper image was installed in the Golden Hall of Gangōji. However, the statue could not enter the building as it was taller than its door. The workers discussed the problem and proposed to

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<sup>3</sup> Bryan D. Lowe, “Empty Temples and Nameless Monks: A New Take on Early Heian Buddhism,” paper presented at *Reassessing Kodai: An Interdisciplinary Workshop on Approaches to the Cultural History of Early Japan and its Historiography*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, February 2016. Unpaginated.

break down the door. But eventually, through the technical mastery of Kuratsukuri no Tori, the statue was installed successfully without dismantling the door. A maigre feast was given on the same day, which gathered innumerable people. Starting this year, maigre feasts were held in all temples on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month and the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.<sup>4</sup>

夏四月乙酉朔壬辰 銅繡丈六佛像並造竟 是日也 丈六銅像坐於元興寺金堂 時佛像高於金堂戶 以不得納堂 於是諸工人等議曰破堂戶而納之 然鞍作鳥之秀工 以不壞戶得入堂 即日設齋 於是會集人衆不可勝數 自是年初每寺 四月八日 七月十五日設齋

After the successful installation of the statue, Suiko expressed her appreciation of the contribution from generations of the Kuratsukuri clan:

5<sup>th</sup> month, 5<sup>th</sup> day.

[The Great Ruler Suiko] issued an edict to Kuratsukuri no Tori, stating: “When I wanted to promote the Inner Texts (*naiten*) by building Buddhist temples and collecting relics, your grandfather Shiba Tatto offered me the relics. When there was no monk or nun in this land, your father, Tasuna, for the sake of the Emperor Tachibana no Toyohi [Yōmei], took the tonsure and revered the Buddhist law. Your aunt Shima also took the tonsure and became the first nun to promote the Buddhist teaching. This time I wanted to commission a sixteen-foot statue and sought a good image of it, you provided a model that I liked. When the image was completed, it could not enter the hall. No craftsman could figure out a solution without breaking the doorway. But you managed to install the icon without doing so. As a recognition of your contribution, I grant you the rank of Dainin, and reward you twenty *chō* of paddy fields in the

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<sup>4</sup> NS Summer/606 (Suiko 14), *SNKBZ* 2: 551-553. English translation modified from Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 134-135.

Sakata district of the Afumi (Ōmi) state.” Tori then established the Kongōji temple on the granted land for the emperor, now known as the nunnery Minabuchi no Sakata no Amadera.<sup>5</sup>

五月甲寅朔戊午 勅鞍作鳥曰 朕欲興隆內典 方將建佛刹 肇求舍利  
時汝祖父司馬達等便獻舍利 又於國無僧尼 於是汝父多須那爲橘豐日  
天皇出家 恭敬佛法 又汝姨嶋女 初出家爲諸尼導者 以修行釋教  
今朕爲造丈六佛以求好佛像 汝之所獻佛本 則合朕心 又造佛像既訖  
不得入堂 諸工人不能計 以將破堂戶 然汝不破戶而得入 此皆汝之功  
也 則賜大仁位 因以給近江國坂田郡水田廿町焉 鳥以此田爲天皇作  
金剛寺 是今謂南淵坂田尼寺

These two entries offer a rare glimpse into the many challenges involved with the dissemination of Buddhism in early Japan, and the interdependency between the Yamato court and the immigrant networks involved. Moreover, four major figures of the Kuratsukuri clan were mentioned: Kuratsukuri no Tori 鞍作鳥 (also known as Tori Busshi 止利佛師; full title as Shiba no Kuratsukuribe no Obito Tori Busshi 司馬鞍作部首止利佛師; active ca. late 6<sup>th</sup> to early 7<sup>th</sup> century), who was associated with the production of the Shaka Triad in the Golden Hall of Hōryūji; his grandfather Shiba Totto 司馬達等 (active early 6<sup>th</sup> century), who was recorded in *Fusō ryakki* for constructing the first Buddhist worship space in Japan in 522; Tori’s aunt Shima 嶋 (monastic name Zenshinni 善信尼; 574-?), who took tonsure at the age of eleven with two of her female attendants in 584, the first in the Yamato court to undertake monastic life, as well as the first nun in the history of Japan; and lastly, Tori’s father Tasuna 多須奈 (那) (monastic name Tokusai Hōshi 德齊法師; active mid-6<sup>th</sup> century), who became the first male to take tonsure in

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<sup>5</sup> *NS* Summer/606 (Suiko 14), *SNKBZ* 2: 551-553. English translation modified from Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 134-135.

the Yamato court in 590 for the health recovery of Yōmei 用明 (518?-587).<sup>6</sup> To propagate Buddhism, members of the Kuratsukuri clan were portrayed in history as offering more than just technical skills to the court, for they literally sacrificed their personal lives for the mission. That Suiko issued an edict addressing an artisanal family directly – rare throughout the chronicle – also underscores the specific bond that the court sought to cultivate with the Kuratsukuri clan, and vice versa.

Yet, the entries also curiously omit some important details: which clan family (or families) was responsible for the logistical mishap in the first place? When Tori came to the rescue, what did he exactly do to install the oversized icon in just one day? Given that the term “model” (*tameshi* 本) was deployed, was it a common practice for artisans of the time to deploy small-scaled icons as models for the larger one? Withholding such information appears to aggrandize the miraculous ability of the Kuratsukuri clan in solving the major technical challenges of the time. Moreover, by detailing the logistics of icon production, and the reward system involved, the entries also foreground the religious economy fostered by Buddhism in early Japan.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Buddhism was attractive to the court precisely for its practicality: it was perceived as a gateway to acquire the latest cultural and technological knowledge from the continent. Furthermore, for

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<sup>6</sup> See *NS* ‘this year’/584 (Bidatsu 13), *SNKBZ* 2: 488-489; and *NS* 3/590 (Sushun 3), *SNKBZ* 2: 522. It should be noted that Zenshinin was officially ordained only after she traveled to Baekje in 588. Also, while the characters for Shiba 司馬 is the same as the Chinese surname Sima, Donald F. McCallum argues that it was not uncommon for immigrants to refashion themselves by adopting prestigious Chinese surname. See Donald F. McCallum, “Tori-busshi and the Production of Buddhist Icons in Asuka-Period Japan,” in *The Artist as Professional in Japan*, ed. Melinda Takeuchi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 29.

<sup>7</sup> By “religious economy,” I refer to Max Weber’s analysis of how one’s religious inclination and degree of participation are governed by a rational assessment of the costs and benefits involved, and that religious organizations are largely the precursors of modern capitalist system through its control of properties and labors. See Rachel M. McCleary, “The Economics of Religion as a Field of Inquiry,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Religion*, ed. Rachel M. McCleary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2-5. See also Gustavo Benavides, “Economy,” in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 92.

the clan families and immigrant communities involved, propagating Buddhism offered them the opportunity of social advancement that would otherwise be obstructed by existing political and religious structures.

The dual nature of Buddhist icons as religious artifacts and technological wonders in early Japan also resonates with Alfred Gell's notion of "technology of enchantment," which argues that the design and craftsmanship of an artifact are embedded with the agency to negotiate social relations or engender actions.<sup>8</sup> By "enchantment," Gell refers to works whose aesthetic and technical intricacies are refined to the degree that beholders lack a referential point to comprehend their existence.<sup>9</sup> Perplexed and overwhelmed, the beholders become subjugated to the power of the works and their makers. Gell's analysis deems appropriate for the reception of Buddhist art in early Japan. Returning to the 606 Gangōji story in *Nihon shoki*, it is apparent that the Kuratsukuri members successfully impressed the court with their technical mastery, and that by withholding details of how they actually accomplished the seemingly impossible task in one day, the records inject an almost miraculous quality to their labor and productivity.

That the court relied on the Kuratsukuri clan not only on technical skills but also the interpretation of Buddhism coincides with Jesse D. Palmer's notion of Buddhism as a form of "cultural technology," which structured social relationships and the acquisition of knowledge and resources.<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, the history of Buddhism in East Asia involved the dissemination of otherworldly concepts as much as practical goods and technologies. In particular, the Kuratsukuri clan was rewarded precisely by offering the court a range of artisanal and

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 43-49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>10</sup> Jesse D. Palmer, "Searching for the Law: Ennin's Journal as a Key to the Heian Appropriation of Tang Culture" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2009), 22-30.

managerial skills related to metal-casting, carpentry, architecture, and embroidery, as well as by their literacy of Chinese writing system and Buddhist iconography. Amassing cultural, technical, and religious authorities, the Kuratsukuri clan established a reciprocal and contractual relationship with the court: in return for sharing their expertise, the clan expected reward in terms of higher social status and economic rights.

### **Networks of Power in Early Japan**

As the case of the Kuratsukuri clan demonstrates, the development of Buddhism in early Japan cannot be simplified as a top-down or bottom-up process. Rather, I argue that it operated as an open system that was responsive to changes in domestic and international orders, as well as the peculiarities of individual regions and communities. To approach Buddhism as an open system is to reconceptualize the religion as operating through a plenitude of networks unbounded in its permutations, and to redistribute agency to the many human and non-human actors involved. As Michel Callon observes, a network is itself an actor that constantly connects and redefines the heterogeneous elements that compose it. In other words, it is a dynamic system capable of transforming what it is made of.<sup>11</sup> Yet, my skepticism towards structural explanation

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<sup>11</sup> Michel Callon, "Society in the Making: The Study of Technology as a Tool for Sociological Analysis," in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes, and Trevor J. Pinch (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), 93. In a similar vein, Callon's idea complicates the notion of "generalized symmetry" in Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Instead of confining relationality to communications among human subjects, ANT takes into consideration "non-human actors" such as material culture and technologies, and accords them the agency to engender actions and social changes. By paying equal attention to humans and non-humans actors, the principle of generalized symmetry delineates their interaction in a network of relationality. More importantly, ANT approaches the social not as an enclosed, structured entity, but as an open web of relations between humans and things. Against imposing any generalized framework or mono-causal explanation of social interactions, ANT focuses on delineating small-scale actions and phenomena that do not seem to explain themselves. In so doing, such mode of analysis often collapses the boundary between description and explanation. By undercutting structural explanations of social change, the empiricism of ANT dissolves and refutes the ideal of the social wholes as putatively uniform, homogenous, and bounded. As Ignacio Fariás observes, ANT "emphasizes the material, the actual, and the assembled without misrepresenting the emergent, the processual, and the multiple." ANT thus echoes with Palmer in approaching

should not be misconstrued as denying the existence of power. Quite the contrary, I seek to deploy theories on network to complicate the notion of power as one predicated on modulation and flexibility rather than subjugation and intransigence. As Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker argue, network cannot operate without a protocol, which is both an apparatus that facilitates exchanges within networks and a logic that regulates how people and things are connected within that apparatus.<sup>12</sup> The twofold nature of protocol underscores how power and control are maintained through distributed, horizontal networks rather than a centralized, hierarchical one. As Galloway and Thacker explains further:

Networks always have several protocols operating in the same place at the same time. In this sense networks are always slightly schizophrenic, doing one thing in one place and the opposite in another. The concept of protocol does not, therefore, describe one all-encompassing network of power..... Protocological control challenges us to rethink critical and political action around a newer framework, that of multi-agent, individuated nodes in a metastable network. This means that protocol is less about power (confinement, discipline, normativity) and more about control (modulation, distribution, flexibility).<sup>13</sup>

In other words, Galloway and Thacker reconfigure power as centerless and distributed, and that it is maintained less by suppressing than accommodating nonuniformity. Protocol is therefore

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“Buddhism” not merely as a belief system, but as a mode of cultural technology that actualizes different political and social aspirations. Moreover, in light of ANT, Buddhism in early Japan can be reconceived as an assemblage of heterogeneous humans, things, spaces, and social situations. Instead of bracketing Buddhist practitioners in this period as a homogenous group, ANT calls attention to the multitudinousness of religious experience, and foregrounds a relational rather than hierarchical understanding of religious formations. See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 94-100; and Ignacio Fariás, “Introduction: Decentering the Object of Urban Studies,” in *Urban Assemblages: How Actor-Network Theory Changes Urban Studies*, ed. Thomas Bender and Ignacio Fariás (London: Routledge, 2010), 14-15.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, “Protocol, Control, and Networks,” *Grey Room* 17 (2004): 7-10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

neither an exercise of power from above, nor its emancipation from below, for the primary function of protocol is to regulate the flows of ideas and things, whether material or immaterial.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Foucauldian disciplinary society, networks under “protocollogical control” are sustained precisely by its flexible modulation of heterogeneity.

By analyzing power as distributed and unbound by a fixed locale or directionality, the theory of “protocollogical control” is significant to this chapter on two levels: first, it reconfigures network and power as oriented horizontally rather than vertically; and in so doing, it circumvents not only the binaries between top-down and bottom-up analyses, but also the validity of the center-periphery model regarding the spread of religion. I argue that the theory is particularly relevant to the study of Buddhism in early Japan. In particular, I seek to demonstrate how Buddhism was developed through a network of regional lords, clan families, and immigrants professionals groups across Japan prior to receiving full endorsement from the court. Before and during Suiko’s reign, there existed no “center” of Buddhist development, but rather nodes of Buddhist spheres across the archipelago that reconfigured the religion for different purposes.

Given the rich amount of textual and archeological materials, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a comprehensive account of the origins and activities of these social actors. Moreover, it is not my intention to portray them as a monolithic group. Rather, case studies are selected precisely for their defiance to homogenization, and their resonances with network theory and the notion of Buddhism as cultural technology. The micro-narratives explored below foreground two main aspects that the immigrant communities performed in early Japan: namely, managerialism and literacy. More importantly, tracing the details of their activities debunks the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 20.



myth of the so-called “Buddhist” and “anti-Buddhist” factions at court, for it reveals how engagement with Buddhism was contingent upon the political climate and the aspirations of individual kinship groups.

Here, I want to offer a brief overview of the social structure in early Japan. As Suzuki Masanobu observes, the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a proliferation of regional chieftains (*kuni no miyatsuko* 國造) that expanded from modern-day Kyūshū to eastern Honshū.<sup>15</sup> Though in theory their titles required the court’s approval, and that their power was balanced by the installment of royal overseers (*tomo no miyatsuko* 伴造), in practice these chieftains were largely autonomous in their political and economic activities.<sup>16</sup> These regional governors were selected from members of powerful clan families, whose names consisted of two components: *uji* 氏 and *kabane* 姓. *Uji* is noble titles bestowed by the court that indicates the clan’s stronghold and occupation (e.g. Kuratsukuri as “saddle maker”), while *kabane* is hereditary title that indicates the clan’s position in court (e.g. *kimi* 君 and *ason* 朝臣).<sup>17</sup> The granting of *uji* and *kabane* was initiated by the court around the 5<sup>th</sup> century as a gesture of goodwill in recognition for the services they received from these families, and very often a major clan would be consisted of multiple cognate clans indicated by their composite surnames (*fukusei* 複姓).<sup>18</sup> Each state (*kuni*

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia: 221 BC-AD 907* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), 198.

<sup>16</sup> Suzuki Masanobu, *Clans and Religion in Ancient Japan: The Mythology of Mt. Miwa* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 61. The oldest genealogy in Japan is a 115-character inscription on eight generations found on an iron sword excavated from Inariyama Tumulus in 1978, often referred to as *Inariyama tekkenmei keifu* 稻荷山鉄劍銘系譜. See also Suzuki Masanobu, *Clans and Genealogy in Ancient Japan: Legends of Ancestor Worship* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 2-8.

<sup>17</sup> Yoko Williams, *Tsumi - Offence and Retribution in Early Japan* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 32-33.

<sup>18</sup> Suzuki, *Clans and Religion in Ancient Japan*, 60. It should be noted that from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, clans were formed more often by paternal line rather than the inheritance of political position. In particular, before the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the term *ko* 子(児) would meant both one’s biological child and a successor to a

國) were further subdivided into multiple districts (*agata* 縣), each with its own local chieftain (*agatanushi* 縣主). Supporting these local chieftains were production groups (*inagi* 稻置) and cultivator groups (*tabe* 田部) – a majority of them were recruited from continental immigrants.

Concurrent with the chieftain networks was the *hito* 人 system that classified laborers based on their occupational specialization. The system underwent two stages of transformation: first, during the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the court classified government officials as civil officers (*tensōjin* 典曹人) and military officers (*jōtōjin* 杖刀人). Yet with the gradual expansion of bureaucratic units, by the late 5<sup>th</sup> century titles ended with *hito* were introduced to specify the occupation of individual officers, such as those for storage management (*kurahito* 倉人), wine preparation (*sakahito* 酒人), hunting and meat preparation (*shishihito* 宍人).<sup>19</sup> Inspired by the bureaucratic structure in Baekje, the *hito* system was gradually absorbed into the *bemin* 部民 system in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century, which organized laborers with similar expertise into individual *be* 部.<sup>20</sup> Artisans under the *bemin* system were not necessarily privatized laborers. Rather, they often worked for multiple patrons that valued their technical expertise. The distribution of material goods such as

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political position regardless of bloodline. But by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, these terms came to be used exclusively to refer to one's biological children. See Suzuki, *Clans and Genealogy in Ancient Japan*, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Suzuki Masanobu, "Development and Dispersal Process of Ancient Japanese Clan," *Waseda daigaku kōtō kenkyūjo kiyō* 早稲田大学高等研究所紀要 8 (2016): 73.

<sup>20</sup> Suzuki, *Clans and Religion in Ancient Japan*, 59. See also See also Shinokawa Ken 篠川賢, *Mononobeshi no kenkyū* 物部氏の研究 (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 2009), 26-36 and Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia*, 197-198. As Roy Andrew Miller argues, the character *be* was a direct loanword from early Tungusic. The Chinese character for *be* (pronounced as *bu*) was employed in writing as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to refer to the Xianbei tribal divisions at the northern part of the Gulf of Bohai. In Han times, *bu* appeared in the compound noun *buqu* 部曲 to designate a military unit in the imperial army, as well as privatized militia for self-defense in peripheral areas. See Roy Andrew Miller, "Linguistic Evidence and Japanese Prehistory," in *Windows on the Japanese Past: Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*, eds. Gina Lee Barnes, Karl L. Hutterer, and Richard J. Pearson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1986), 113.

stoneware utensils (*sueki* 須恵器) also indicated that artisanal groups in regional areas were connected with those working directly for the court (*shinabe* 品部).<sup>21</sup>

What is more, some immigrant artisans were bestowed or took for themselves names akin to the Japanese language, or climbed the social ladder through intermarriages with local elites. As the aforementioned case of the Kuratsukuri clan indicates, it was not uncommon for immigrant families to formulate their own *be* through their technical specialties, and subsequently obtained the prestigious *uji* and *kabane* titles through cultivating favorable attention from the court. As a matter of fact, it was recorded that in 757, Emperor Kōken granted all name change requests from more than two thousand immigrant applicants from the Korean kingdoms, and they were reorganized into about 50 *uji*.<sup>22</sup> The entry indicates that at least by the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, the distinction between elitist political clans and prominent artisanal families became increasingly blurred.

For the most part, immigrant artisans performed the role as the gatekeepers of continental culture. Apart from mediating access and dissemination of such knowledge, they also served as its authoritative interpreters. For instance, members of the Aya clan 漢氏 was recorded to act as interpreters that recruited women skilled in weaving (*kinunuibe* 衣縫部) for the Yamato court.<sup>23</sup> The mediating role of the Aya clan – as the representatives for both the Yamato court and the

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<sup>21</sup> Ishibashi Chie, “Hakuho Sculpture: Its Development as Viewed in the Context of the Chronology of Roof-tile Motifs” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1990), 169-171. See also Richard J. Pearson, *Ōsaka Archaeology* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 39-46.

<sup>22</sup> *SNG 4/757* (Tenpyō-hōji 1), *SNKBZ 14*: 184-185. See also Herman Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty, 650-800* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009), 103.

<sup>23</sup> Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjūkoku Shūchō Mandara*, 102-103. See also Omura Mari and Kizawa Naoko, “The Textile Terminology in Ancient Japan,” in *Textile Terminologies: From the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD*, ed. Salvatore Gaspa, Cécile Michel, and Marie-Louise Nosch (Lincoln: Nebraska Zea Books, 2017), 451-482.

continental kingdoms in the negotiation process – also underscores how immigrant clans could accumulate their cultural capital less by making the works themselves than monitoring their production. Another clan with managerial expertise was the Hata 秦氏, which was known for being skillful in administering the inventory of the royal storehouses (*kura* 藏/倉/掠).<sup>24</sup> Given that the Hata clan was also involved with the import of foreign goods, it is plausible that the storehouses they monitored were not simply royal granaries but also the kind that was built for medicine, armory, or diplomatic gifts – the precursor of the 8<sup>th</sup>-century Shōsōin 正倉院.<sup>25</sup> Taken together, the immigrant clans championed the role as the mediator for the transmission of goods, labor, and ideas from continental kingdoms to Japan. Whether offering artisanal or managerial expertise, they successfully refashioned themselves as the indispensable member for the burgeoning Yamato court.

That continental immigrants were valued for both their manual and intellectual labors foregrounds the limit of labels such as “artisans” or “craftsmen” in encapsulating their activities and contribution to the Yamato court. Moreover, there were many crossings between newly arrived immigrant networks and the established clan families: on one hand, clans such as the Aya and the Hata were very much invested in claiming continental lineages in the distant past; on the other hand, already during Suiko’s reign, immigrant groups such as the Kuratsukuri had accumulated enough political and cultural cachets to obtain major bureaucratic positions at court, bypassing the distinction between *be* and *uji*. Against this backdrop, I argue that the term

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<sup>24</sup> Nakamura Shūya 中村修也, *Hata-shi to Kamo-shi: Heiankyō izen no Kyōto* 秦氏とカモ氏：平安京以前の京都 (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1994), 103.

<sup>25</sup> For a critical study of the inventory and function of Shōsōin, see Yoshimizu Tsuneo, “The Shōsōin: An Open and Shut Case,” *Asian Cultural Studies* アジア文化研究 17 (1989): 15-44.

“professionals” is more appropriate in delineating the activities and aspirations of these social actors.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of early Japan, clan families such as the Aya and the Hata performed the role as the go-between among court and provincial bureaucrats, diplomats, scholar-monks, and skilled laborers from the continent. They redefined the primary criteria for leadership from one centered on birth and hereditary title to one on occupational specialties and managerial efficiency. Their rise to prominence thereby fundamentally challenged the prerogatives of political structure in early Japan. Furthermore, composed of members from diverse backgrounds, they constantly renewed themselves by recruiting new immigrants who felt excluded from existing power structure. Their continuous exposure to foreign culture allowed them to lay claim to being the authoritative interpreters of such knowledge. As the case of the Kuratsukuri clan indicates, by amassing control over the access and distribution of things, ideas, and manpower, these clan families actively appropriated titles and privileges once reserved for the political elites.

### **Literacy as Political Currency**

Apart from their managerial skills, immigrant technocrats also exerted their agency through their competency in reading and writing Chinese scripts. Yet, it was not merely a matter

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<sup>26</sup> Here, I take clue from Janis Mimura and Magali Sarfatti Larson’s notion of “technocrats,” who meditate the intersection of administrative and technological advances. As Mimura argues, technocrats operate as “techno-bureaucrats,” who pride themselves by possessing “a holistic vision” that oversees both the application of technology and its administration. Performing duties that are neither purely bureaucratic nor technical, they are skillful in mobilizing their political capital to envision and actualize such vision. In other words, their authority is derived from their *managerial* efficiency, and that they gain power from a bureaucratic machine by strategically infiltrating its fundamental positions. Moreover, as Larson argues, technocrats often come from a diverse background that enables them to approach the problem of planning from a multidimensional perspective. In contrast to craftsmen or artisans whose identities are largely determined by their distinctive skill sets, technocrats climb the social ladder not by being overspecialized but “functionally polyvalent.” See Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire: Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 12-13; and Magali Sarfatti Larson, “Notes on Technocracy: Some Problems of Theory, Ideology and Power,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 17 (1972-73): 11-17.

of translation. As David Lurie argues, the development of *kundoku* 訓讀 since early Japan – a reading system that involves the logographic use of Chinese characters in Japanese syntax – unsettles the schism between purely “Chinese” or “Japanese” languages.<sup>27</sup> This reading system also problematizes the binary between phonographic and logographic languages, which is of particular urgency given that the latter is often considered as more efficient and “advanced” for its susceptibility to romanization. To move beyond these frameworks, at stake is to acknowledge the multivalence of Chinese scripts in early Japan that foregrounds the productive rather than derivative process of language adaptation.

Apart from mythical and historical texts, Lurie examines Chinese inscriptions found on a variety of objects ranging from shells, ritual bells (*dōtaku* 銅鐸), bronze mirrors (*dōkyō* 銅鏡), sword (*dōken* 銅劍), stoneware (*sueki* 須惠器), wooden tablet (*mokkan* 木簡), and even embroidery.<sup>28</sup> Legibility, however, might not be germane to the reception and efficacy of these inscriptions. Consider, for instance, the 6<sup>th</sup>-century bronze mirror from the Suda Hachiman Shrine 隅田八幡宮, Wakayama prefecture (Fig. 4.1). As Lurie observes, the malformed Chinese characters in its inscription, combined with the crude execution of figures, suggest that it was

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<sup>27</sup> David B. Lurie, *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> One of the earliest examples that demonstrates the paramount role of Chinese scripts in East Asian diplomacy is the 4<sup>th</sup>-century Seven-branched Sword (*Shichishitō* 七支刀) discovered from the Isonokami Shrine 石上神宮 in 1874. That the sword was bestowed to the Yamato court by the Korean kingdom of Baekje underscores two possible scenarios: either the Baekje king initiated the sword conferral to declare the Yamato ruler as his equal, or that he acted on behalf of possibly Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420) to acknowledge the Yamato polity. In either case, it is clear that there existed an alternative diplomatic network across the East Sea that operated indirectly from the Chinese tributary system. Given that similar swords for diplomatic use, such as the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Eta Funayama Sword (*Eta Funayama Kofun tekken* 江田船山古墳鉄劍), contain similar inscriptions that were marked with continental names as their writers, it is highly probable that the text on the Seven-branched Sword was written and inscribed by Chinese immigrants employed by Baekje. See Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 85-88; Christopher Seeley, *A History of Writing in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), 24-25.

manufactured by a local scribe or caster, and that the comprehensibility of the inscription seems to be of little concern to both its makers and patrons.<sup>29</sup> The alegible characters also point to the performativity of text for possibly talismatic function common for bronze mirrors and other ritual artifacts.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the *presence* of Chinese scripts mattered more than their legibility.

Lurie's study of alegible inscription echoes with Fabio Rambelli's approach to the multivalence of text in Buddhist material culture, in which he argues that the orality of Buddhist texts is often more important than their comprehensibility.<sup>31</sup> For instance, in rituals that involve the recitation of sūtra (such as the speed reading ritual known as *tendoku* 轉讀), one can accumulate merit not only by sponsoring the event, but also simply by participating as listeners.<sup>32</sup> Similar case can be made for the reproduction of Buddhist texts. In his study of Buddhist manuscript culture in early Japan, Bryan Lowe discusses how the labor involved in sūtra reproduction, or even the act of commissioning others to complete the copying, can generate merit for a better rebirth.<sup>33</sup> In both cases, the comprehension of text is often relegated to secondary importance in comparison to the act of reciting, copying, or commissioning. Besides, in *Nihon shoki*, entries before the 8<sup>th</sup> century seldom specify the names of continental texts used in diplomatic exchange or ritual. This further suggests that most of these imported texts were acquired but not widely read in the Yamato court. A more expansive definition of literacy is

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<sup>29</sup> Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 100; and Seeley, *A History of Writing in Japan*, 17-19.

<sup>30</sup> Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 99-103.

<sup>31</sup> Fabio Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 94.

<sup>32</sup> Lori R. Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 121.

<sup>33</sup> Bryan D. Lowe, "Texts and Textures of Early Japanese Buddhism: Female Patrons, Lay Scribes, and Buddhist Scripture in Eighth-century Japan," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 73, no. 1 (2011): 18.

therefore germane for analyzing how immigrant professionals accumulated their cultural capital. In what follows, I deploy four case studies of Buddhist artifacts produced during Suiko's reign to demonstrate the intersection of technology, literacy, and religion in early Japan.

Inscriptions on Buddhist icons offer a fruitful entry point for complicating the issue of literacy in early Japan, but they are often relegated to secondary importance in comparison to “proper” historical texts. One such example is the mandorla of an unknown Śākyamuni statue dated 594 (Suiko 2) from Hōryūji (Fig. 4.2). The inscription states that:

On the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of the 51<sup>st</sup> year of the cycle [594],  
Buddhist disciple Wang Yansun (or Wang Yeonson) reverently makes a  
gilded bronze image of Śākyamuni on behalf of his honored parents in this  
life. His wish is that his parents will gain this merit; that they will be safe  
in their current incarnation; and that in successive rebirths and generations,  
they will not experience the three evil realms, will be remote from the  
eight difficulties, will quickly be born in the Pure Land, and will see the  
Buddha and hear his teaching.<sup>34</sup>

甲寅年三月廿六日 弟子王延孫 奉為現在父母 敬造金銅釋迦像一軀 願  
父母乘此功德 現身安穩 生生世世 不經三塗 遠離八難 速生淨土 見佛  
聞法

While Wang's occupation cannot be determined, it is believed that he was of either Chinese or Korean descent, and that his ability to sponsor an inscribed icon underscores his resourcefulness

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<sup>34</sup> Translation modified from Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 132-135. For an alternative translation, see Akiko Walley, *Constructing the Dharma King: The Hōryūji Shaka Triad and the Birth of the Prince Shōtoku Cult* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 24-25.



and affluence.<sup>35</sup> The inscription thus suggests that Buddhism was practiced by individuals and communities beyond the Yamato court.

Apart from mandorla, inscriptions are also found at the base of gilt bronze statues. Consider, for example, the pensive bodhisattva icon dated 606 (Suiko 14) (Fig. 4.3). The text is incised sideways along the edge of its pedestal. It states that:

[On the] 18<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month, when Jupiter was in the Fire-Tiger direction, Takaya no Maetsugimi commissioned this statue for his deceased Korean wife Amako. In homage to [the pensive bodhisattva]<sup>36</sup>

歲次丙寅年正月生十八日記 高屋大夫 爲分韓婦夫人名阿麻古  
願南無頂禮作奏也

Both Wang Yeonson and Takaya no Maetsugimi might belong to what Stanley Abe called “subelites”: lower officials or people of some means that were not part of the aristocratic circle.<sup>37</sup> While these two inscriptions might appear personal, the artifacts themselves tell a different story. That they became part of Hōryūji’s holdings suggests at least two possible scenarios: either these icons were specifically commissioned in dedication to a temple’s construction (whether it was Hōryūji, Tachibanadera, or other state-sponsored temple); or, as part of their afterlives, these icons were transferred to Hōryūji as gifts to forge stronger ties between individual kinship groups and the court. Whichever the case, the reception and circulation of these icons call into question

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<sup>35</sup> Walley, *Constructing the Dharma King*, 25.

<sup>36</sup> Translation modified from *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Stanley K. Abe, *Ordinary Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 2-3.

the binary between public and private devotions, a framework that has often been uncritically assumed in Buddhist art scholarship.<sup>38</sup>

Further complicating the matter is the famous inscription at the back of the Shaka triad at the Golden Hall of Hōryūji (Fig. 4.4). Dated 623 (Suiko 31), the bronze triad was made of lost-wax technique with a “boat-shaped” (*funagata* 舟形) mandorla as adornment. The literature conducted on its meaning and dating are too extensive to be encapsulated here, and thus for the interest of this chapter, I focus mainly on its connection with immigrant professionals. The inscription (Fig. 4.5) states that:

In the 31<sup>st</sup> year from the arising of the Law, when Jupiter was in the Fire-Snake direction, in the 12<sup>th</sup> month, the Empress Consort passed away. In the following year, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month, the Dharma King of the Upper Palace (*Jōgū hōō*) [Prince Shōtoku] was confined to bed due to illness. The Princess of Kashiwade also fell ill from exhaustion. At that time, the royal wife, sons, and retainers all were deeply worried, so together they made a vow: “Hail the Three Treasures. We now create a statue of Śākyamuni in the size of the prince [Shōtoku]. May the power of this vow restore the prince to health and extend his life, so that he will live peacefully in this world. Should it be his karmic destiny to depart from this world, then may he ascend to Pure Land and swiftly attain the ultimate awakening.” On the day of the Water-Rooster, the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, the princess passed away. On the following day, the Dharma King ascended to the heavens. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of the Water-Sheep year, according to the vow, the statue of the Buddha, together with his two attendants and adornments, was completed. For this humble benevolence, this group of followers of the Law (*shindō chishiki*) will spend their time in this world in peace; and when the time comes to end this life and accept

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<sup>38</sup> Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 141.

death, may they follow the three lords in perpetuating the Three Treasures, and at last join them on the other shore, escaping from the eternal six realms of sentient existence and suffering, and together entering into the ultimate awakening. The statue was commissioned from Shiba no Kuratsukuri no Obito Tori, the Buddha master (*busshi*).<sup>39</sup>

法興元卅一年歲次辛巳十二月 鬼前太后崩 明年正月廿二日  
上宮法皇枕病弗愈 干食王后仍以努疾 並著於床 時王后王子等  
及與諸臣 深懷愁毒 共相發願 仰依三寶 當造釋像 尺寸王身  
蒙此願力 轉病延壽 安住世間 若是定業 以背世者 往登淨土  
早昇妙果 二月廿一日癸酉 王后即世 翌日法皇登遐 癸未年三月中  
如願敬造釋迦尊像并狹侍及莊嚴具竟 乘斯微福 信道知識 現在安隱  
出生入死 隨奉三主 紹隆三寶 造共彼埠 普遍六道 法界含識  
得脫苦緣 同趣菩提 使司馬鞍首止利佛師造

This inscription is significant on two levels: first, it informs us the group of people that commissioned the triad as *chishiki* 知識, a type of religious “fellowship” that was crucial in disseminating Buddhism across Japan.<sup>40</sup> Second, it is the earliest document that specifies the maker of Buddhist icon as *busshi*, here translated by Walley as “Buddha master.”<sup>41</sup> The *busshi* mentioned in this inscription is no other than the aforementioned Kuratsukuri no Tori (hereafter Tori Busshi), who was rewarded by Suiko for successfully installing the oversized icon in the

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<sup>39</sup> Modified translation based on Walley, *Constructing the Dharma King*, 18-19.

<sup>40</sup> I follow Lowe in translating the term as “fellowship” rather than the generic term “followers.” See Bryan D. Lowe, “The Discipline of Writing: Scribes and Purity in Eighth-Century Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 39, no. 2 (2012): 221.

<sup>41</sup> Tanaka Tsuguhito 田中嗣人, *Nihon kodai busshi no kenkyū* 日本古代仏師の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1983), 27.

Golden Hall of Gangōji in 606 (Suiko 14). It appears that the Yamato court had long recognized Tori Busshi's technical mastery before the Shaka triad was made.

While the political underpinning of this text in relation to the cult of Prince Shōtoku has been studied extensively, that the inscription is bracketed by the names of royal figures at the beginning and a *busshi* at the end certainly warrants examination. This unprecedented pairing indicates the close connection between Tori Busshi and the powerful Soga clan, and I concur with McCallum's observation that he was less the hands-on sculptor than the production supervisor of the triad.<sup>42</sup> The seemingly "intimate" nature of the inscription, however, does not necessarily mean that the image and the text it contains are restricted within the "private" realm. Like modern-day artist-entrepreneurs that employ studio assistants to execute their works, Tori Busshi would have operated similarly with his political connection, artisanal knowledge, literacy, and managerial skills – in other words, he was the technocrat par excellence in early Japan. Seen in this light, the triad's inscription was commemorative of the prince as much as declarative of Tori's political and social achievements, which was all the more unusual considering that he belonged to the *be* rather than *uji* class.

The last case study concerns the aforementioned Embroidered Curtain of the Land of Heavenly Lifespan (*Tenjukoku shūchō* 天壽國繡帳; hereafter the Curtain) at Chūgūji 中宮寺, Nara (Fig. 4.6). The inscription indicates that the Curtain was commissioned during Suiko's reign, and more precisely after the passing of Prince Shōtoku (622) and before Suiko's death (628). The first half of the inscription details the lives of court members connected to Prince Shōtoku, and the second half concerns the historical events leading up to the production of the Curtain. The latter states that:

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<sup>42</sup> McCallum, "Tori-busshi and the Production of Buddhist Icons in Asuka-Period Japan," 34.

In the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> day of *mizunoto-tori* of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the year *kanoto-mi* (621, Suiko 29), the queen mother (*haha no miko*) Anahobe Hashihito passed away. The following year, in the middle of the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of *kinoe-inu* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, the prince passed away. The devastated Princess Tachibana went to see the Heavenly Sovereign [Suiko, her grandmother] and said, “I grieve the loss of my prince and the queen mother. My prince said, ‘This world is empty, the only truth is the Buddha.’ He appreciated this teaching. As a reward, my prince must have been born in ‘The Land of Heavenly Lifespan.’ But, I cannot visualize the land. Please, somehow create an illustration of the place to which my prince was transported (or where he resides).” The Heavenly Sovereign was deeply moved and said, “I cannot see my grandchild suffering.” She commanded a group of lady attendants of the court (*uneme*) to make two panels of embroidered curtains. The designers (*egakerumono*) were Yamato no Aya no Makkan, Koma no Kasei, and Aya no Nukakori, with Kurahitobe Hata no Kuma as the production supervisor (*tsukasadorerumono*).<sup>43</sup>

辛巳十二月廿一癸酉日入孔部間人母王崩明年二月廿二  
 日甲戌夜半太子崩于時多至波奈大女郎悲哀嘆息白畏天  
 皇前曰啓之雖恐懷心難止使我大皇與母王如期從遊痛酷  
 無比我大王所告世間虛假唯佛是真玩味其法謂我大王應  
 生於天壽國之中而彼國之形眼所叵看悒因圖像欲觀大王  
 往生之狀天皇聞之悽然告曰有一我子所啓誠以為然勅諸  
 采女等造繡帳二張畫者東漢末賢高麗加西溢又漢奴加己  
 利令者棕部秦久麻

(the inscription is arranged according to their placement on the turtle-shaped patches woven in the Curtain)

<sup>43</sup> Modified translation based on Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjūkoku Shūchō Mandara*, 88.

Pradel's seminal study proposes that the Curtain was originally designed to frame a "spirit seat" (Fig. 4.7).<sup>44</sup> The entire inscription was broken down into a total of one hundred segments, each containing four characters woven into a turtle-shaped patch (Fig. 2.27). Together, they float above other embroidered pieces containing mythical animals, heavenly beings, and other Buddhist narratives. Division of labor is clearly stated, detailing members from the Yamato no Aya, Koma, and Aya clans as responsible for the composition and design, and Kurahitobe Hata no Kuma from the Hata clan as the production manager (*tsukasadorerumono* 令者). Compared to the Hōryūji Shaka triad, the inscription is much more visible and integrated to the artifact. Such prominence accorded to text underscores how its makers and patrons took pride in their command of Chinese scripts. Moreover, considering the size and arrangement of these texts, one needs to walk around the Curtain and scrutinize each turtle-shaped patch in order to make sense of the inscription. The fragmentation of the inscription patternizes the Chinese scripts to the degree that they dissolve into the overall ornamentation schema. As such, it is doubtful whether the inscription was meant to communicate with anyone besides the patrons and professionals involved. The legibility of this text thus appears to matter much less than their performative *presence*. Together, these case studies underscore the varying modes of literacy that immigrant professionals commanded for their social-political advancement. Much like a book that can be read at one's leisure or shelved for interior decoration, the same text can function in different ways simultaneously. Modes of literacy are thus *situational*. Moreover, whether legible or illegible, thaumaturgic or commemorative, these inscriptions are performative in that they declare the immigrants' literacy of Chinese writing system at a time when such skill was highly valued by the Yamato court.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 117.

That the title *busshi* contains the word *shi* 師 (meaning “master” or “teacher”) further demonstrates the respect these professionals commanded from the political elites. To a large extent, their ascendance operated alongside the continental discourse over sage counselors (*sakashihito* 賢人 or 賢) reconfigured by the Yamato court. Erudite in canonical texts, ancient histories, and the meaning of omens, sage counselors are often portrayed in continental texts as originated from an otherworldly space and time, and that it requires an equally wise and open-minded ruler to “identify” and “recruit” them. This political trope was ideal for the self-fashioning of immigrant professionals. As Como argues, given that prominent kinship groups were heavily involved with the compilation of historical records such as *Nihon shoki*, it was only natural that the discourse on *sakashihito* was refashioned to legitimize their position at court.<sup>45</sup>

From the perspective of the Yamato court, the discourse proved to be equally advantageous. In Chinese tributary system, literacy was often deployed as a benchmark to classify cultures as “civilized” or “barbaric.” Illiteracy would certainly shed unfavorable light on a ruler, especially considering the fact that ancient tyrants were often portrayed as the archenemy of the educated. But in early Japan, these discourses had yet to gain currency during Suiko’s reign. This is not to say that the Yamato court slighted the importance of literacy. Rather, I argue that the discourse of sagehood allowed its rulers to bypass literacy as the foundation of their authority. To put it differently, as long as the Yamato rulers were wise and enlightened enough to solicit sagely help, it did not matter whether or not she or he could read Chinese scripts.

As a matter of fact, in historical texts such as *Nihon shoki*, incapability to decipher continental texts was never mobilized as a pretext to criticize rulers. For example, it was reported that in 572, the Great Ruler Bidatsu assembled all the scribes to decipher a memorial from

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<sup>45</sup> Como, “Ethnicity, Sagehood, and the Politics of Literacy in Asuka Japan,” 66.

Goguryeo written on crow's feathers, but none of them were able to make sense of it. Eventually the text was explained by Wang Shinni 王辰爾 (?-?), the founder of the scribe group Fune (Fune no Fuhito 船史; later became the Fune clan 船氏). Impressed with his ability, Bidatsu promoted Wang to be his palace attendant – another incident of court promotion that bypassed existing social stratification.<sup>46</sup> In this case, Bidatsu's mobilization of a Goguryeo scribe to explain Chinese scripts was portrayed positively as an act of openness rather than shortcoming. In a similar fashion, Suiko was mentioned twice in *Nihon shoki* as a sage ruler (*hijiri no kimi* 聖王 or *hijiri no mikado* 聖帝): in 604 (Suiko 12) in one of the seventeen articles proclaimed by Shōtoku, and in 609 (Suiko 17) when a Baekje monk reached the shore of Higo state 肥後國.<sup>47</sup> Alluding the immigrant professionals as sages thus served to aggrandize the sagehood of the ruler, while allowing the professionals to cross social barriers and advance politically.

### Rescaling Early Buddhism in Japan

By reconfiguring the sagehood discourse in Chinese classics, the immigrant professionals conjured a win-win situation for them and the Great Rulers, in which both sides could further accumulate their political clout by circumventing existing social structure and expectation for rulership. It would be an oversimplification, however, to assume that the networks of professionals operated in tandem with that of Buddhism in early Japan. While there were

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<sup>46</sup> 丙辰 天皇 執高麗表疏 授於大臣 召聚諸史令讀解之 是時 諸史 於三日內皆不能讀 爰有船史祖王辰爾 能奉讀釋 由是 天皇與大臣俱爲讚美曰 勤乎辰爾 懿哉辰爾 汝 若不愛於學 誰能讀解 宜從今始近侍殿中 既而 詔東西諸史曰 汝等 所習之業 何故不就 汝等雖衆 不及辰爾 又高麗上表疏 書于烏羽字隨羽黑 既無 識者 辰爾乃蒸羽於飯氣 以帛印羽 悉寫其字 朝廷悉之異 NS 5/572 (Bidatsu 1), *SNKBZ* 2: 466-467. English translation modified from Aston [1896] 1972, 2: 91.

<sup>47</sup> As Como argues, such emphasis placed on sagehood invoked the famous saying from the *Book of Wei* (*Wei shu* 魏書, compiled ca. mid-6<sup>th</sup> century): “Only a wise man knows a wise man. Only a sage knows a sage (惟賢知賢 惟聖知聖).” See Como, “Ethnicity, Sagehood, and the Politics of Literacy in Asuka Japan,” 78.



certainly overlaps, Buddhism played a somewhat belated role in such socio-political negotiations. The support or rejection it received from the professionals and the court was largely contingent upon specific political circumstances. Drawing from Lurie's radical rethinking of literacy, in this section I pose similar questions to the literacy of Buddhist visual culture: what constituted a space or an object as "Buddhist" in early Japan? In what follows I examine how provincial participants engaged their own production of Buddhist practices, both to create the impression of compliance with preexisting religious protocols and to conceal departure from such stipulations.

As aforementioned, an absolute hegemony had yet to exist in the Japanese archipelago during Suiko's reign, and to the many regional chieftains, collaboration with the Yamato court was largely a political *option* rather than an *obligation*. In contrast to historical texts, Buddhism could hardly operate as a "state religion" in such circumstances. Moreover, recalling the 606 Gangōji incident, in which Tori Busshi established the nunnery Kongōji as a gesture of goodwill to Suiko, it appears that immigrant professionals and clan families could erect their own Buddhist temples without court's supervision. As such, it is more accurate to approach Buddhism during Suiko's reign as developed less vertically than laterally via networks of practitioners across and beyond the Nara Basin.

Following this line of inquiry, the form, shape, and scale of the Tamamushi Shrine might offer us clues to this question. As discussed in Chapter Two, the use of micro-architectural objects for funerary purposes had been practiced in continental cultures long before Buddhism reached Japan. In particular, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, two house-shaped funeral urns from Sui China and the Unified Silla warrant specific attention (Figs. 4.8-4.9). At first glance, both objects share similar stylistic and structural elements with that of the Tamamushi Shrine, most notably in the use of the hip-and-gable roof (*irimoya-zukuri* 入母屋造), the fishtail-shaped ridge

end tiles (*shibi* 鴟尾), or bracketing system (though drastically abridged) (Fig. 4.10). Although in designing the Tamamushi Shrine, the technocrats involved might have been inspired by these precedents, the resultant work bears some striking differences: first, the shrine's body is made of wood rather than clay. Second, it is composed of three detachable parts (palace, dais, and pedestal) rather than one integral piece. More importantly, it contains no bodily remains or relics, nor was it buried underground. Meant to be examined by and interacted with the living, its intricate metalwork and narrative panels done in reflective lacquer surface compel one to circumambulate and appreciate it in the round. Such structural and functional departures from continental examples therefore underscore the need for an alternative approach that operates beyond the prototype-copy framework. Of particular urgency is to grapple with this question: instead of looking west for a possible "prototype" in continental East Asia, why not dig deep and look at what had been existing within Japan around the time when the Tamamushi Shrine was made?

In 2002, an unglazed terracotta house in the shape of a palace, which closely resembles the upper section of the Tamamushi Shrine, was discovered in an ancient kiln site located at the forest of the Iga city, Mie prefecture (hereafter the Iga house) (Fig. 4.11). In the context of early Japan, the site would be within the domain of the Iga state 伊賀國, east of the Yamato region, it would take more than twelve hours on foot to travel from this kiln site to the palaces in Asuka. Given its remote location, the regional governor (*kuni no miyatsuko* 國造) of Iga would have maintained a certain degree of political and economic autonomies. More importantly, the kiln site is adjacent to the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Mihakayama Tumulus 御墓山古墳, the largest burial mound found in the Mie prefecture. While the tomb owner has yet to be confirmed, it is believed to be

one of the regional governors in the area named Ōhiko no Mikoto 大彦命 (?-?).<sup>48</sup> The proximity between these two sites thus indicates strongly the intersection of funerary and material cultures between the late Kofun (ca. 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE in current consensus) and the Asuka periods.<sup>49</sup>

In particular, the Iga house shares the same material and manufacturing process with a type of object known as *haniwa* 埴輪 (“clay circle”) that was placed around the burial mounds of the political elites. Often built as part of a cluster, these tombs are of varying sizes and shapes. Most famous of all is the so-called keyhole-shaped tombs (square or rectangular in the outer prescient, and round in the inner) that were erected across the archipelago during the Kofun period.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, *haniwa* also takes a multitude of forms. While those depicting animals, weapons, or figures in ceremonial or military outfits are believed to ward off robbers and malevolent spirits, those in micro-architectural forms (Fig. 4.12) mimicking storehouse or palatial structures are believed to symbolize the ideal afterlives of the deceased or the abode of the sacred such as the clan-related tutelary deity known as *ujigami* 氏神. In either case, the architectural *haniwa* consolidated the tomb owner’s social status to eternity, and extended their affluence from this life to the afterlives. Yet, in contrast to *mingqi* in continental context, they were not buried but rather installed above ground. In the reconstruction diagram of a typical mid-Kofun period tomb (Fig. 4.13), *haniwa* in architectural forms were notably inserted at the center of the upper section of the mound, with those of other motifs radiating out along the contour of

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<sup>48</sup> Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 奈良国立博物館, ed., *Kenchiku wo hyōgensuru: Yayoi jidai kara Heian jidai made* 建築を表現する：弥生時代から平安時代まで (Nara: Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 2008), fig. 13.

<sup>49</sup> I follow Simon Kaner’s periodization, which dates the Kofun period from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. See Simon Kaner and Werner Steinhaus, eds., *An Illustrated Companion to Japanese Archaeology* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 166-167.

<sup>50</sup> On the regional variations of the size and shape of keyhole-shaped tombs, and their connection to similar development in the Korean peninsula, see Lee Hyun-Seung Dennis, “Keyhole-shaped Tombs and Unspoken Frontiers: Exploring the Borderlands of Early Korean-Japanese Relations in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Centuries” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2014), 4-14. See also Pearson, *Ōsaka Archaeology*, 23-26, 33-38.

the tomb. Such arrangement intriguingly echoes with the Tamamushi Shrine, in which the palace section sits above the dais that contains the pictorial representation of Mount Sumeru (Fig. 4.14). Whether installed for the deceased or the sacred, it is significant that micro-architectural object was located at the highest point of a tomb structure, bridging the world of the sacred and the secular.

Measured 90 centimeters in height, the Iga house shares with the Tamamushi Shrine structural elements such as the use of *shibi* and abridged bracketing system. Yet, while both objects appear to evoke the hip-and-gable roof, the hip roof (*yosemune yane* 寄棟屋根) and the gable roof (*kirizuma yane* 切妻屋根) of the Tamamushi Shrine are separated by the placement of the roof tiles, while that of the Iga house are rather uncomfortably conjoined: its gable roof is strikingly enlarged to the degree that it engulfs the hip roof below, forming a shape that expands rather than contracts upwards. The peculiar silhouette of the Iga house, together with features such as its smooth and unglazed façade, the absence of roof tiles and movable doors, strongly resonate with that of *haniwa* houses with which 6<sup>th</sup>- and 7<sup>th</sup>-century artisans in Japan would have been familiar with. Take, for instance, terracotta houses excavated from the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Nagahara Takamawari mounded tomb No. 2 長原高廻り 2 号古墳, Osaka prefecture (Fig. 4.12), whose upward-expanding bargeboards (*hafu* 破風) render the roof in the shape of an inverted trapezoid. Invoking storehouse structures in Kofun-period settlements, this architectural form also appeared in a wide range of material culture such as mirror (Fig. 4.15) and weapon head (Fig. 4.16) to symbolize the otherworldly realm.

The Iga house thus appears to juxtapose preexisting and imported architectural practices. However, this does not mean that I position the Iga house as an experimental or transitional work between “pre-Buddhist” and Buddhist Japan. As a matter of fact, much like the case of the cloud-

shaped bracket system discussed in Chapter Two, a teleological account could hardly be established, for the Iga house were produced at a kiln that also manufactured *haniwa* houses – a practice that continued after the official patronage of Buddhism. As a matter of fact, in less than six kilometers from the kiln site is the location of Tōkōji 東光寺 (or Miedahaiji 三田廢寺), which was established in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. That the kiln site was situated between a burial mound and a Buddhist temple indicates strongly the commingling of Buddhist or non-Buddhist practices in this area. Moreover, given the labor and resources required for the establishment of these sites, artifacts produced in the Iga kiln would very likely to be produced by the same group of people from similar professional networks, and to be commissioned and consumed by the same circle of political elites.

The case of the Iga house thus reveals the limit of periodization in the study the Buddhist art in early Japan. In current art-historical research, pedagogy, and curatorial practices, objects from the Kofun and the Asuka periods have often been examined separately, the rationale being that people in the Kofun times had no direct engagement with continental Buddhism, and that they practiced shamanism or nature-worship that gradually institutionalized into Shintō in medieval times.<sup>51</sup> However, Buddhism did not disseminate across Japan overnight, and there is sufficient evidence from material culture that indicates the overlapping of these two periods. Apart from the case of the Iga house, it should be noted that burial mounds for the political elites had continued to be constructed until the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, decades after Buddhism gained the court's support. As in the case of octagonal tomb, there is evidence that late-Kofun period tombs were inspired or even attempted to compete with wooden octagonal structure that was

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<sup>51</sup> Helen Hardacre, *Shinto: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 22-27.

often associated with Buddhism.<sup>52</sup> As such, by distorting the spread of Buddhism in Japan as an *event* rather than a *process*, the Kofun/Asuka bifurcation unhelpfully reduces “Buddhism” into a static, unchanging entity that was merely transposed from the Asian mainland to Japan. Such periodic binary also serves to reinforce certain nativist discourses, which identifies “pre-Buddhist” culture as pristinely “local” or “Japanese” in contrast to a “Buddhist” one that was quintessentially “non-Japanese.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Records of Regional Heterogeneities**

To move beyond such misconceptions, at stake is to address one fundamental question: how was Buddhism practiced in different parts of Japan before its endorsement by the court? This line of inquiry calls into question the framework of “state Buddhism” in previous scholarship, which presumes the court as instigating the spread of Buddhism for political purposes. Historians that purport this view, such as Inoue Mitsusada and Kuroita Katsumi, tend to position events stated in *Nihon shoki* – most notably the court’s reception of Buddhist statue from Baekje in 552, or Suiko’s edict in 594 – as historical watershed that heralded the beginning of Buddhism in the archipelago.<sup>54</sup> Yet, as Lowe argues, given the lack of properly trained monks and spaces for ordination ritual, Buddhism in early Japan was perhaps less monastic than situational.<sup>55</sup> Echoing the network theories explored above, the point here is not to replace a top-

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<sup>52</sup> Nancy S. Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*, 297-298 and 336-342. See also Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan*, 44-46.

<sup>53</sup> One radical example is artist Okamoto Tarō’s theorization of Jōmon period culture. See Jonathan M. Reynolds, *Allegories of Time and Space: Japanese Identity in Photography and Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015), 54-85.

<sup>54</sup> Bryan D. Lowe, “Rewriting Nara Buddhism Sutra Transcription in Early Japan” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012), 5-25.

<sup>55</sup> Lowe, “Empty Temples and Nameless Monks: A New Take on Early Heian Buddhism,” unpaginated.

down with a bottom-up approach, but rather to highlight the networks of exchange and interdependency of Buddhist development across different social actors in early Japan, who all attempted to claim the understanding of what Buddhism could offer.<sup>56</sup> In other words, rather than assuming the spread of Buddhism as programmed from a bureaucratic machine, at stake is to follow how individuals, sites, and objects engaged in their own production of Buddhist practices in early Japan that both complied and departed from known stipulations.

Religious historian Jacques H. Kamstra in particular argues that geography was the main coincidental factor to the Yamato court's exposure to Buddhism.<sup>57</sup> During the reign of Keitai 繼體 (r. 507-531), the court was located at Kusuha 樟葉 (507-518) and then Otokuni 弟國 (518-526), where clans such as the Mononobe, Nakatomi, Ōtomo, and Kose were based. On the other hand, the Aya, Hata, and Soga clans that were more active in acquiring continental cultures were settled around the Takaichi district 高市郡 in the Yamato state, which was about 60 miles away from Kusuha and Otokuni. As such, even if Buddhism had already been practiced in the latter area, the court would hardly notice the development. But when Keitai decided to move the capital further south to Iware 磐余 in 526 (modern-day Sakurai district, Nara prefecture), the court shared with the Soga clan the same mountain slope, and the interactions it had with the immigrant communities became much more frequent. As noted by Kamstra, Takaichi reflected a microcosm of continental cultures, in which immigrant groups from different continental kingdoms settled and became acquainted with each other.<sup>58</sup> The rapidity and scope of cross-

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<sup>56</sup> Recalling Latour's ANT analysis, social actors do not behave with a script imposed from above. The manifold combinations of human and non-human actors thus constantly reformulate known contexts, and generate feedback loops that foster larger patterns of cultural changes. See footnote 11 in this chapter.

<sup>57</sup> Jacques H. Kamstra, *Encounter or Syncretism: The Initial Growth of Japanese Buddhism* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 246-263.

<sup>58</sup> Kamstra, *Encounter or Syncretism*, 263.

cultural interactions in such a small district was certainly remarkable, and it might explain the highly eclectic styles and materials in Buddhist artifacts circulated during Suiko's reign.

Consider, for instance, the semantic indeterminacy of how Buddhist worship space was called in early Japan. Both textual and material evidence indicate a lack of uniformity in the naming and organization of temples even till the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Take, for instance, the proliferation of terms such as *tera/ji* 寺, *dō* 堂, *bussha* 佛舎, *butsudō* 佛堂, *butsuden* 佛殿, and even *dōjō* 道場 in referring to Buddhist structures from different sources ranging from court chronicles, local gazetteers (*fudoki* 風土記), Buddhist popular literature (*setsuwa bungaku* 說話文學), and inscribed earthenware (*bokusho doki* 墨書土器) (Fig. 4.17). As Fujimoto Makoto points out, in early Japan the terms *tera/ji* and *dō* were not consistently differentiated.<sup>59</sup> Especially in areas far from the court, *dō* or *butsudō* could refer to small-scale temples donated by local elites that had no monk in residence, or a simple hut built from makeshift materials such as wood or terracotta for icon veneration.

In fact, such lack of terminological standardization continued even after the Taika Reform, when Buddhism became increasingly centralized in the Nara Basin and its vicinity. For instance, in 685 (Tenmu 14) an edict was issued that in every household of all the states, a shrine (*bussha* 佛舎) should be installed, a Buddhist image (*butsuzō* 佛像) with scriptures should be placed therein, and that worship and offerings (*raihai kuyō* 禮拜供養) should be made at these shrines.<sup>60</sup> Based on the large amount of small-scaled Buddhist icons survived from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, MaCallum translates the term *bussha* as “shrine box” rather than temple, and argues that

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<sup>59</sup> Fujimoto Makoto 藤本誠, *Kodai kokka Bukkyō to zaichi shakai: Nihon ryōiki to Tōdaiji fujumonkō no kenkyū* 古代国家仏教と在地社会：日本靈異記と東大寺諷誦文稿の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2016), 187-200.

<sup>60</sup> 諸國每家 作佛舎 乃置佛像及經 以禮拜供養 NS 3/685 (Tenmu 14), SNKBZ 3: 444-445.



*busssha* is akin to *zushi*.<sup>61</sup> Not long after Tenmu's edict, Jitō declared to her ministers in 691 that the court should “zealously uphold” its support of Buddhism: the rationale being that previous rulers had continuously patronized the building of Buddhist halls (*butsuden* 佛殿) and scripture repositories (經藏).<sup>62</sup> Making recourse to the past to justify her extensive Buddhist patronage, Jitō's use of the term *butsuden* rather than *ji/dera* appeared intentional: the same term was used in the 552 incident when Soga no Iname installed the Buddhist icon from Baekje in his residence where Suiko grew up in her childhood.<sup>63</sup> The entire residence later became the Toyura Palace 豊浦宮 where Suiko was enthroned and presided, and the worship space became Toyuradera 豊浦寺 or Kōgenji 向原寺 that is believed to be the first nunnery established by the court. The term *butsuden* thus conflated the private worship space installed at the residence of political elites and the large-scale temples that they erected to declare allegiance to the court.

Provincial gazetteers known as *fudoki*, compiled during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, further demonstrates the multitude of forms under which Buddhism could take.<sup>64</sup> For example, in the 732 *Gazetteer of the Izumo State* (*Izumo no Kuni fudoki* 出雲國風土記), three entries concerning the local temples in Yamashiro 山代 state that:

*Kyokoji Temple*. It is situated in the township of Tone, 8.4 miles east of the district office (*gūke*). A five-story pagoda has been erected there. (Buddhist priests also live there.) The temple was built by the monk

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<sup>61</sup> McCallum, *Hakuhō Sculpture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 11-14, 99-100 and 111.

<sup>62</sup> 天皇詔公卿等曰 卿等 於天皇世 作佛殿經藏 行月六齋 天皇時々 遣大舍人問訊 朕世亦如之 故當勤心 奉佛法也 NS 2/691 (Jitō 5), SNKBZ 3: 514-515.

<sup>63</sup> NS 10/552 (Kinmei 13), SNKBZ 2: 416-419.

<sup>64</sup> On the dating and compilation of *fudoki*, see Aoki Michiko Y., *Records of Wind and Earth: A Translation of Fudoki, with Introduction and Commentaries* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 1997), 1-33.

Kyoko (?-?). (He is the grandfather of Oshiwi of the Uehara no Obito clan, who is an [unofficial] village chief with the rank of the Greater Initial Rank, Lower Grade.)

*A new temple (in).* It is located in the township of Yamashiro. It is 1.5 miles northwest of the district office. A temple (*gondō*) has been erected there. (No priest lives there.) The temple was built by Mare of Heki no Kimi. (He is the forebear of Shikamaro, of the Heki no Kimi, who is a resident of Izumo Kamube.)

*A new temple (in).* It is located in the township of Yamashino, 7 miles northwest of the district office. A temple (*kyōdō*) has been constructed there. (A Buddhist priest resides there.) It was built by Otoyama of the Izumo no Omi. Otoyama is the vice district governor (*suke no miyatsuko*) of Iishi.<sup>65</sup>

教昊寺 有山國鄉中 郡家正東廿五里一百廿步 建立五層之塔也 (在僧)  
教昊僧之所造也 (散位大初位下上腹首押豬之祖父也)

新造院一所 山代鄉中 郡家西北四里二百步 建立嚴堂也 (無僧) 日置君  
目烈之所造 (出雲神戶日置君鹿麻呂之父)

新造院一所 有山代鄉中 郡家西北二里 建立教堂 (住僧一軀) 飯石郡少  
領出雲臣弟山之所造也

Four different terms (*ji* 寺, *in* 院, *gondō* 嚴堂, and *kyōdō* 教堂) are deployed in these entries to describe a Buddhist worship space. Given that these records were compiled by local governors under the court's request, such semantic discrepancies within only one state call into question the

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<sup>65</sup> *Fudoki*, SNKBZ 5: 148-149. Modified translation based on Aoki, *Records of Wind and Earth*, 88-89. I thank Bryan Lowe for directing me to these entries.

extant and scale of “state Buddhism” in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The lack of consistency is all the more striking considering that Yamashiro state was not far from the Nara Basin at all. As Lowe argues, the fact that the latter two “temples” are unnamed (both simply called *in* 院), and that one of them has no monk in residence, further indicates that they are ritual sites for lay patrons rather than full-scale temple complexes.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, it would be hardly sustainable to maintain a monastery at a local level without enough ordained monks and willful local patrons. Such possibility calls attention to an alternative pattern of Buddhist diffusion supported not by monasticism but by itinerant monks “on demand” that traveled to serve different provincial communities.

That Buddhism in early Japan was less monastic than situational is further supported by Lowe’s reading of stories from the Buddhist popular literature *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan* (*Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記). One such story dated in the 640s concerns a regional lord that hired an itinerant monk for a domestic religious service. The story goes:

In the central village of Yamamura in Sou upper district, Yamato state, there was once a man who was called Lord Kura no Iegimi. In the 12<sup>th</sup> month he wanted to atone for his past sins by having a Mahayana scripture recited. Therefore he ordered his servant, “Go and call a monk.” The servant asked, “From which temple should I summon a monk?” The master answered, “I have no preference; invite whomever you meet.” Thereupon the servant found a monk traveling on the road and brought him home. The master put faith in this monk and made offerings.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Lowe, “Empty Temples and Nameless Monks: A New Take on Early Heian Buddhism,” unpaginated.

<sup>67</sup> *NR, SNKBZ* 10: 55-58. Modified translation based on Nakamura, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition*, 120-121. I thank Bryan Lowe for directing me to this story.

大和國添上郡山村中里、昔有云椋家長公、當十二月、依方廣經、欲懺先罪。告使人云：「應請一禪師。」其使人問曰：「請何寺師？」答曰：「不擇其寺、隨遇而請。」其使隨願、請得路行一僧歸家。家主信心供養。

Given that a Buddhist service by traveling monk could be requested “on demand” by lay people, it appeared that Buddhism without a monastic setting could operate equally well by itinerant monks at any space and time – even at the comfort of one’s home.

The physical scale of the Iga house further supports Lowe’s hypothesis. Given that it was discovered in a kiln among other types of funerary goods, there could be at least two possible scenarios: first, the house could be a new variation of architectural *haniwa* to be installed on top of a burial mound. Yet, as far as I know, a terracotta house with such a remarkable trace of continental element has yet to be discovered *in situ* on top of any keyhole-shaped tombs excavated in Japan. The second scenario, which I argue to be more plausible, is that the Iga house might have functioned as a home altar or a roadside worship space for people in transit, or in relation to the story above, for itinerant monks to conduct Buddhist ritual for private household or communal group when requested. Its lack of adornment of any specific Buddhist motif (Fig. 4.11) renders it a flexible worship space that could accommodate a range of Buddhist icons at different social occasions. Furthermore, size-wise, the Iga house would be ideal to enshrine the majority of portable Buddhist icons circulated in early Japan. Together, these artifacts point to an alternative pattern of Buddhist diffusion that was underrepresented in the official narrative: one that was efficacious precisely because of its detachment from a specific site, and one whose material culture deployed the human actors involved as its vehicle of mobility. The case of the Iga house thus cautions us about reducing the Tamamushi Shrine to a minor cog in the state’s top-down religious apparatus, as we cannot rule out the very likelihood

of the alternative scenario: that it was the court who reconfigured pre-existing Buddhist ritual and architectural practices from different regional areas before its “official” endorsement of the religion.

## **Conclusion**

Taken together, this chapter seeks to rethink the social scale of how Buddhism operated in early Japan by exploring the networks of immigrant professionals and itinerant monks. For the former, I delineate how they refashioned themselves as gatekeepers of continental knowledge, and accumulated political and cultural capitals through their literacies in both continental texts and Buddhist culture. Akin to Suiko’s Buddhist patronage, these social actors discerned ways in which the religion could be reconfigured to realize their aspirations. As evident in the inscriptions on Buddhist artifacts, the interdependency between the court and the immigrant professionals calls attention to the lateral and decentralized modes of religious diffusion that operated beyond the framework of “state Buddhism.” With reference to textual and archaeological materials, I continue with this inquiry by exploring the second type of networks that centers on mobility, itinerant monks, as well as religious artifacts that are functionally multivalent and situational. Together, the micro-narratives I deploy question the centrality of historical text for art-historical analysis, and expand the scope of primary sources to archaeological materials from sites that were not directly associated with any monastic complex. As a matter of fact, a majority of materials examined in this chapter refuse to be subservient to a particular context or preexisting periodization. Their defiance to known classifications compels us to confront the limit of textual and contextual readings, and the contingencies upon which rituals and religious identity were constituted in early Japan.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation can be understood to operate on three levels. First, it delineates the formal, stylistic, and iconographic eclecticism of the Tamamushi Shrine, challenging the reading of Asuka period Buddhist art as the belated derivative of its continental counterpart. Second, it argues that such discrepancies underscore Suiko's political authority and the social aspirations of immigrant professionals involved in the shrine's production, whose contribution have often been suppressed in extant scholarship. Finally, it explores how these marginalized narratives create fissures in current periodization of Japanese art, the framework of state Buddhism, and the diffusionist approach in Buddhist art scholarship in general.

Chapter Two addressed the stylistic heterogeneities of the Tamamushi Shrine, interpreting them in the context of Northeast Asian cross-cultural exchanges of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Calling attention to the diplomatic intricacies of this period as well as to the role of immigrants as intermediaries, I argued that the flow of artistic currents in early Japan was spatiotemporally disjunctive rather than unidirectional. To bracket the Tamamushi Shrine under a specific "period style" passively derived from continental Asia (whether Northern Wei, Sui, Tang, or Silla) is to disregard the unevenness of cultural flow that characterized early Japan's encounters with its neighbors in this period. The "prototype-copy" framework is not only inaccurate, but it also unhelpfully treats Buddhist artifacts in early Japan as the belated derivatives of their continental counterparts. Moreover, in stressing on sameness over difference, scholars have tended to caricaturize any element from the shrine that deviates from continental

precedents as the result of technical incompetence or mistranslation. By addressing the cultural heterogeneities embedded in the Tamamushi Shrine, this chapter recovers the complexities of religious landscape in early Japan that cannot be encapsulated by reference to only one belief system. The connections that I established between the shrine and mortuary artifacts in the continent, as well as that between Buddhist and Daoist rituals, point to the multivalence of meanings that the Tamamushi Shrine embodied for its audience in early Japan.

Chapter Three delineated the socio-political contexts underlying Suiko's rise to power and her reconfiguration of Buddhism. In contrast to previous scholarship that approached Asuka period Buddhism solely from the perspective of the Soga clan or Prince Shōtoku, this chapter argued against the misconception of Suiko as merely a nominal ruler, and analyzed her Buddhist patronage in light of her domestic and diplomatic policies. The Tamamushi Shrine, alongside other icons and scriptures propagated in this period, indicate a purposeful reinterpretation of Buddhism that aligned with Suiko's vision of the Yamato court in Japan and in East Asia as a whole. While Buddhism did partially buttress Suiko's authority, this chapter considered the reverse as equally important: that aspects of continental Buddhism were selected and emphasized to render the religion relevant to the local context, a dialectical process that was essential for Buddhism to take root in early Japan.

The last chapter turned to the experience of immigrant professionals, whose technical skills and familiarity with Buddhist texts and visual culture were indispensable for the production of the Tamamushi Shrine. They were valued by political elites of the times not only for their artisanal and artistic skills, but also for their knowledge of Chinese writing system and managerial abilities. Textual and material evidence indicates that they enjoyed high social status and significant recognition from the court. Tracing the social lives and activities of immigrant

professionals in and beyond the Nara Basin also allows one to chart an alternative pattern of Buddhist diffusion in early Japan. In particular, the proximity of early Buddhist temples and tumuli for local elites indicates that Buddhism was practiced at the regional level before its official endorsement by the court. Rather than presuming the necessity of a religious center and bureaucratic support for the dissemination of Buddhism, the case of early Japan compels us to consider an alternative pattern of such development on a horizontal level that operated through traveling monks, immigrant communities, and portable artifacts.

This dissertation is not meant to offer a coherent account of Buddhist art in early Japan, nor is that necessarily productive. In fact, if we trace the cultural biographies of each artifact and edifice of any temple complex in this period, a web of conflicting narratives appears. Yet it is precisely such a cacophony that instigates a critical evaluation of the methodologies and presumptions brought to the study of Buddhist art in early Japan, and to the field of Buddhist art in general. For example, did regional discrepancies of Buddhist material culture in the archipelago exist to the extent that particular regions would configure Buddhist practice to fit their local needs? How should we rechart the religious landscape of early Japan if the boundary between Buddhism and Daoism in continental context and that between public and private forms of worship within Japan was relatively fluid and at times indistinguishable? Furthermore, on a grander level, is it possible to reimagine the history of the Silk Road such that Japan is one of the nodes among its interlocking networks rather than its “endpoint”?

To account for the heterogeneities of religious experience in early Japan, more work remains to delineate the precise geographical configuration of Buddhist practices. As indicated by the Iwai Rebellion in 527, regional chieftains in areas such as Tsukushi were able to maintain political autonomy in defiance of the Yamato court, and a majority of them actively sought out



elements of continental culture. Their engagement with immigrant communities and the kind of mortuary and religious practices existed in these areas are germane to deciphering the networks of Buddhist devotion in early Japan. A comparison of these data with those discovered among the Korean kingdoms and the Nara Basin would provide more insight into how the immigrant professionals reconfigured continental cultures for their socio-political advancement.

In terms of historiography, much of what we know about the Tamamushi Shrine is largely filtered through medieval records, which were composed almost six centuries after the original work. Why were these medieval inventories written and how did Buddhist communities in Kamakura times engage with the material culture they inherited from the past? Was there an “art-historical” consciousness in medieval Japan? Likewise, plural temporalities also condition the legacy of Suiko, for our understanding of her reign is shaped by chronicles and documents written from the perspective of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Given that these texts were produced during the reign of other female rulers, did the image of Suiko portrayed in historical sources serve to legitimate the policies and positions of later rulers? How can we best integrate archaeological materials as primary sources when they refuse to support the image of a centralized polity? Any further rewriting of early Buddhist art in Japan would pay particular attention to the way that individuals, ranging from the political elites to the immigrant professionals, actively asserted their authority in the political, cultural, and religious spheres. What has emerged from the present study is but a rough sketch to such endeavor.

**Fig. 1.1** Tamamushi Shrine, ca. 7<sup>th</sup> century, Asuka period, cypress and camphorwood (lotus petal ornament and staircase) with lacquer painting, beetle's wing cases, copper *repoussé* panels, and gilt bronze fittings, 233.3 x 136.7 x 119.1 cm, Hōryūji, Nara prefecture



**Fig. 1.2** Tamamushi Shrine, left side



**Fig. 1.3** Tamamushi Shrine, back



**Fig. 1.4** Tamamushi Shrine, right side



**Fig. 1.5** Jewel beetle (*tamamushi*)



**Fig. 1.6** Tamamushi Shrine, palace section, front doors (guardian kings)



**Fig. 1.7** Tamamushi Shrine, palace section, left sides doors (bodhisattvas)

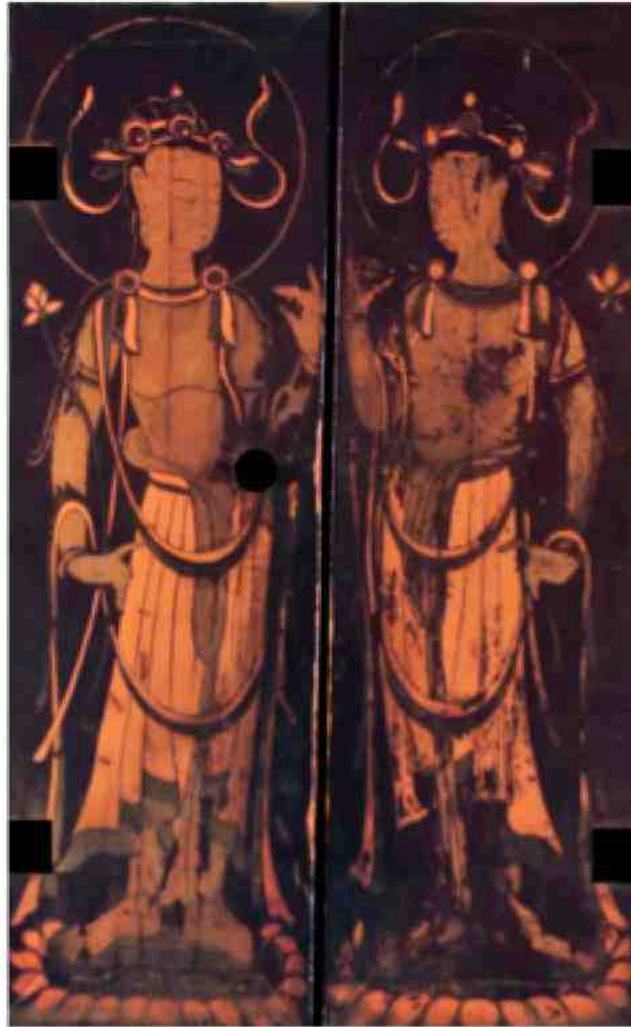




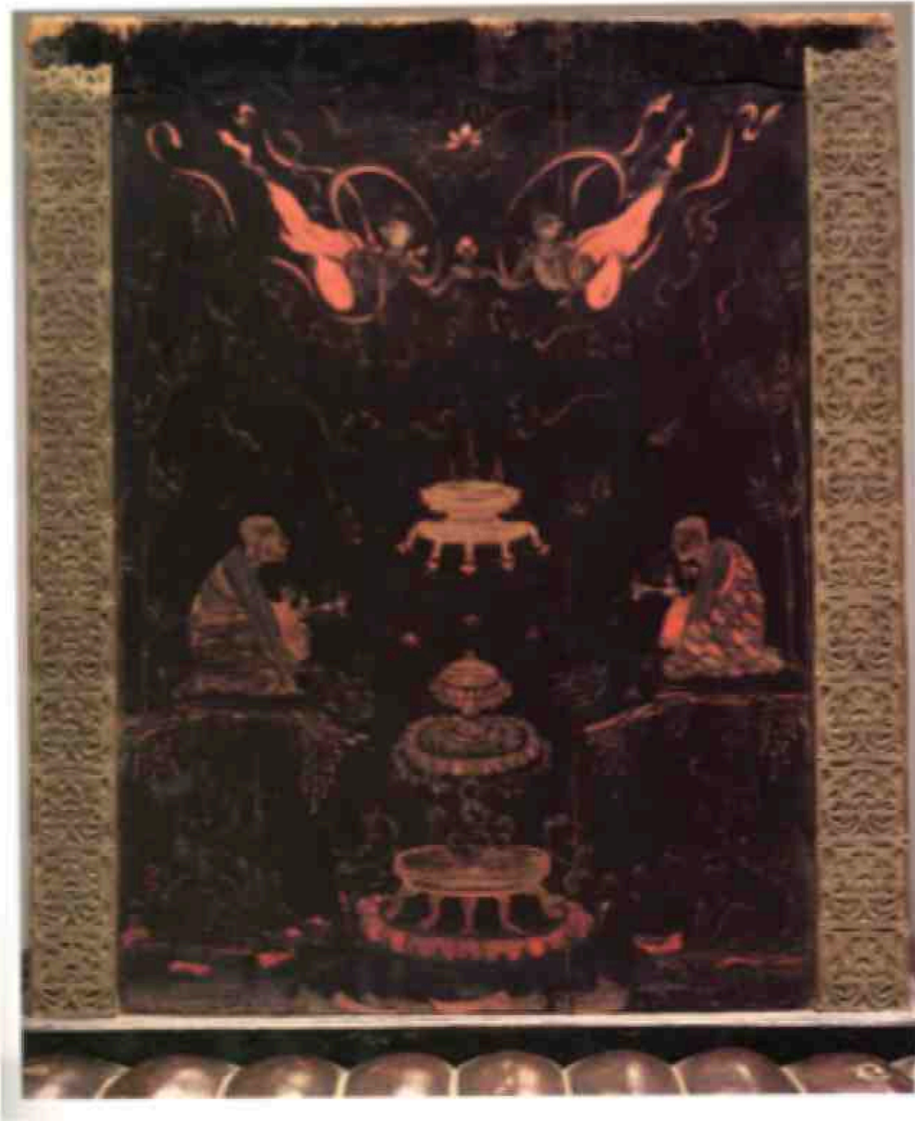
**Fig. 1.8** Tamamushi Shrine, palace section, back panel (Śākyamuni preaching at the Vulture Peak)



**Fig. 1.9** Tamamushi Shrine, palace section, right sides doors (bodhisattvas)



**Fig. 1.10** Tamamushi Shrine, dais section, front panel (relic worship and transformation)



**Fig. 1.11** Tamamushi Shrine, dais section, left panel (Indra's test)



**Fig. 1.12** Tamamushi Shrine, dais section, back panel (cosmological diagram)



**Fig. 1.13** Tamamushi Shrine, dais section, right panel (the hungry tigress tale)



**Fig. 1.14** Detail from the catalogue of the 1876 Nara Exposition (*Nara hakurankai*), featuring the Tamamushi Shrine (source: National Diet Library, Tokyo)



**Fig. 1.15** Pagoda with Famous Scenes, Komai Workshop, ca. 1915, steel, silver, copper, gold, and enamel, 111.1 x 31.5 x 31.5 cm, Walters Art Museum





**Fig. 1.16**

Illustration of the Tamamushi Shrine in Ernest F. Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese & Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design*, 1912, pages 46-47

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tributary than an independent leader in the whole group. No doubt it can be made the object of a separate study; and yet, especially for the purposes of Art, there is sound value in regarding its work as a variation, though a very unruly one, upon the Chinese norm.

Closer to China than is Japan, closer in spirit if not in race, because closer in communication, lies the peninsula of Corea, originally a wealthy, prosperous, and progressive country, though now so feeble. Corea has only in part, and then for very short periods, been included within the limits of the Chinese empire. At other periods she has been dominated, and now seems finally to be dominated, by the Japanese. But in the early days of her civilization, from the 4th to the 7th centuries of our era, she betrayed so much of independent vigour and genius as to make her art, though only for a short illumination, a special and important centre of creation. This happened, too, at a time when Japan, still in the grasp of semi-barbarism, was prepared to take her first great step out into the light. That the neighbouring states of Corea, only a few days' sail across the narrow straits, should have become the special tutor of Japan at the time of Japan's most critical youth, is a circumstance so fortunate as to make at least a brief study of her early Art a part of the study of Chinese and Japanese. Corea, in some real sense, was a link between the two; and for a moment, about the year 600, her Art flared up into a splendour which fairly surpassed the achievements of her two chief rivals.

A still juster view of the relationship is found, if we consider the juxtaposition of three important land projections into the China Sea: the peninsula of Corea pointing south-east, the Southern islands of Japan sweeping to the south-west, and the Chinese province of Go projecting to the north of east. Between these three early sea communication had been easy, and both Corea and Japan had been influenced by the Art of Go while they were still in their barbarous beginnings.

Some European writers have appeared to hold that Korean Art in the 6th century must have been influenced quite specially by the Art of Persia. This seems to be due to their assumption that Persian Art in the 6th century was like what it became after contact with Mongolic races in the 13th century and onward. The Persian Art of this day was Sassanian, which can be described as a mixture of debased Assyrian with debased Roman. We have already seen that

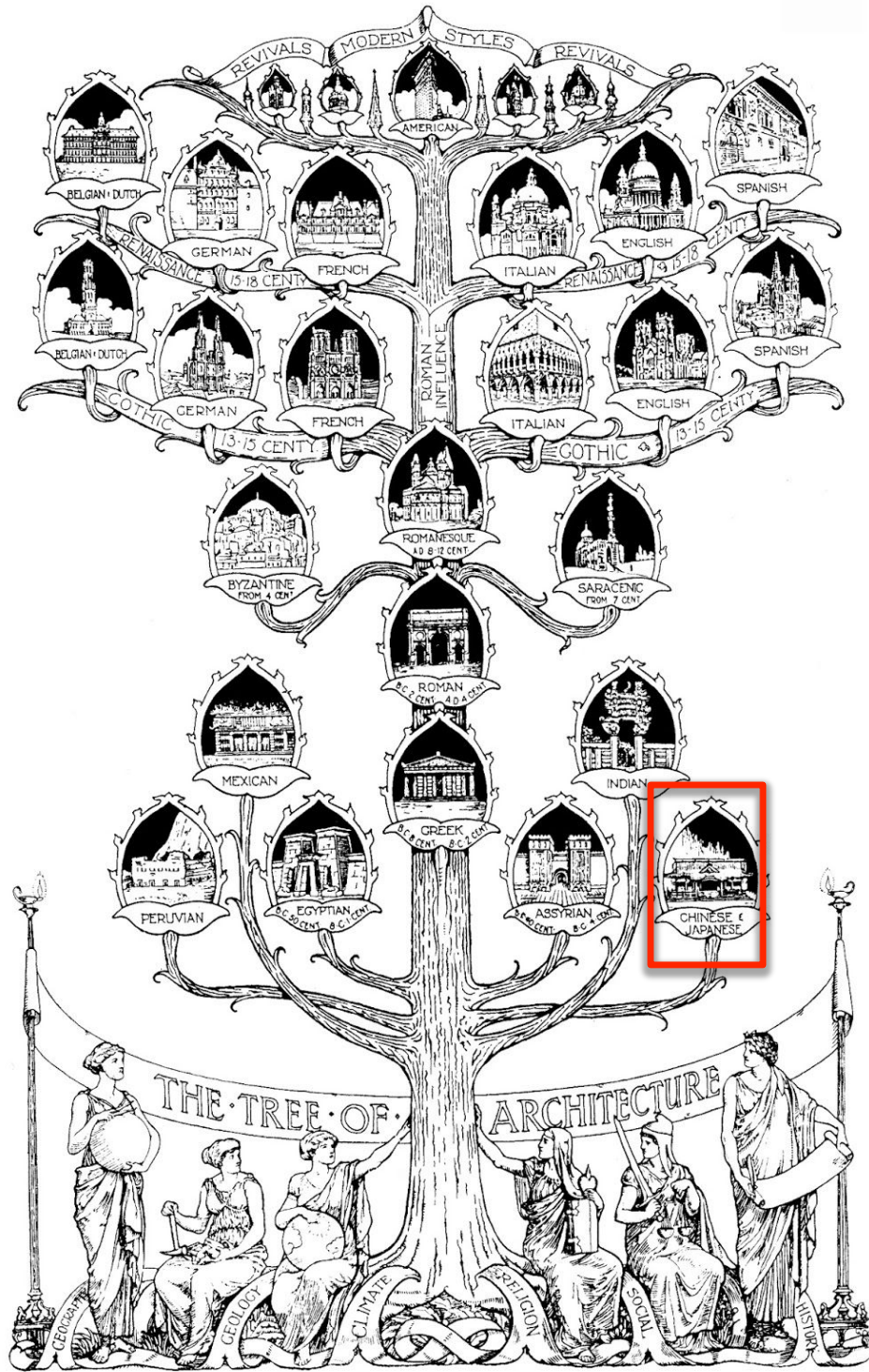


THE FAMOUS COREAN TAMAMUSHI SHRINE  
at Horiuji.

**Fig. 1.17** Tamamushi Shrine, details of beetles' wing cases underneath metal openwork



**Fig. 1.18** "The Tree of Architecture," frontispiece from Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture*, 1896

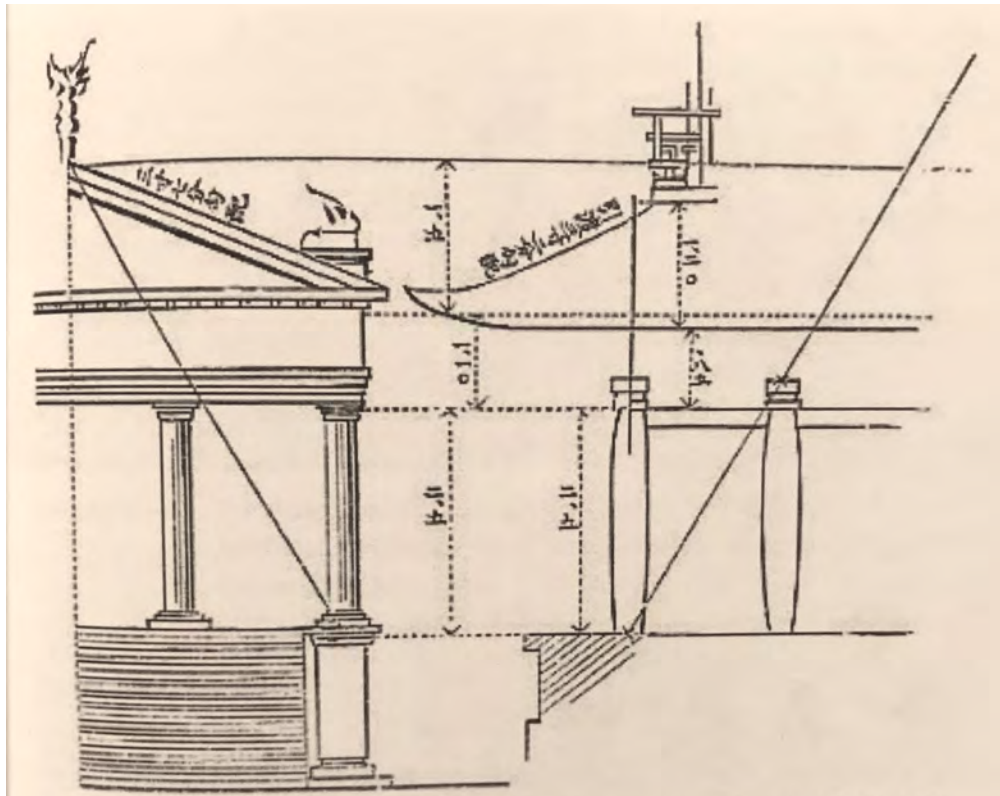


BANISTER FLETCHER. INV.

**Fig. 1.19** Curvilinear column, Golden Hall (Kondo), Hōryūji



**Fig. 1.20** Comparison of proportions between columns in Etruscan temple and Hōryūji Kondo, drawn by Itō Chūta, 1893





**Fig. 1.22** Tamamushi Shrine, side view of hip-and-gable roof



**Fig. 2.1** Golden Hall (Kondo), Hōryūji, Nara Prefecture, view from the west, ca. second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, 18.2 x 15.2 x 17.8 m





**Fig. 2.2** Pagoda, Hōryūji, Nara Prefecture, view from the west, ca. late 7<sup>th</sup> to early 8<sup>th</sup> century, 31.55 m (height), 10 x 10 m (stone podium)



**Fig. 2.3** Golden Hall, Hōryūji, close-up of bracketing system



**Fig. 2.4** Tamamushi Shrine, palace section, close-up of the “cloud-shaped” bracketing system



**Fig. 2.5** Pagoda, Hokkiji, Nara Prefecture, frontal view, dated 706, h. 24.27 m

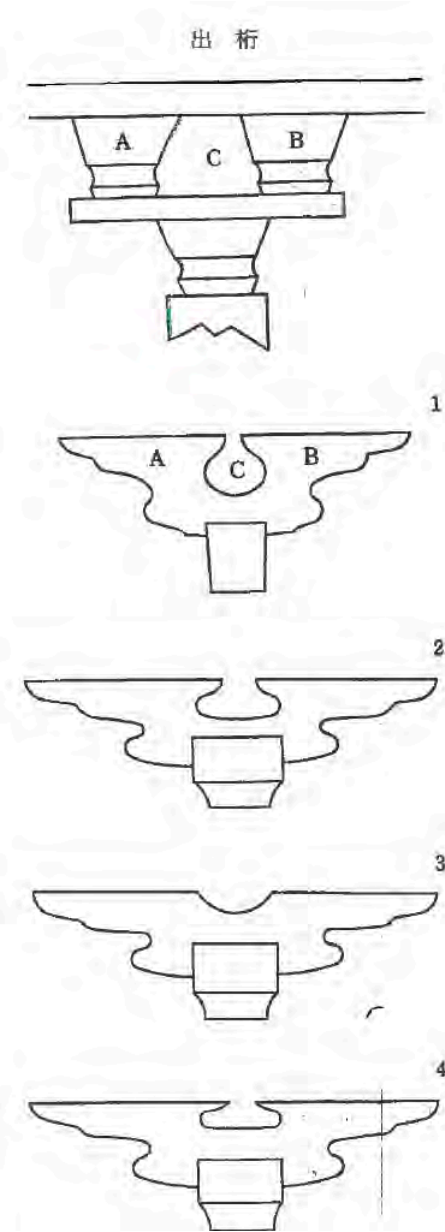


**Fig. 2.6**

Pagoda, Hōrinji, Nara Prefecture, frontal view, ca. 7<sup>th</sup> century (rebuilt in 1975),  
h. 23.8 m



**Fig. 2.7** Diagram of the development of bracketing system in Japanese Buddhist architecture, drawn by Uehara Kazu, 1991



**Fig. 2.8** Twin gate-towers (*que*), Tomb of Gentlemen Shen, detail of cloud-shaped bracketing system, Han dynasty, stone, Quxian, Sichuan province



**Fig. 2.9** Pagoda, Hokkiji, close-up of bracketing system





**Fig. 2.10** Yicihui Pillar, ca. 560-570 CE, Northern Qi dynasty, limestone, h. 4.54 m (overall height), Shizhu village, Dinxing county, Hebei province



**Fig. 2.11** Golden Hall, Hōryūji, close-up of rafter support in the shape of mythical beast



**Fig. 2.12** Xiangtanshan Grottes, North Cave, detail of beast pillar base, Northern Qi dynasty



**Fig. 2.13** Golden Hall, Hōryūji, central canopy, ca. 7<sup>th</sup> century, 275 x 246 cm



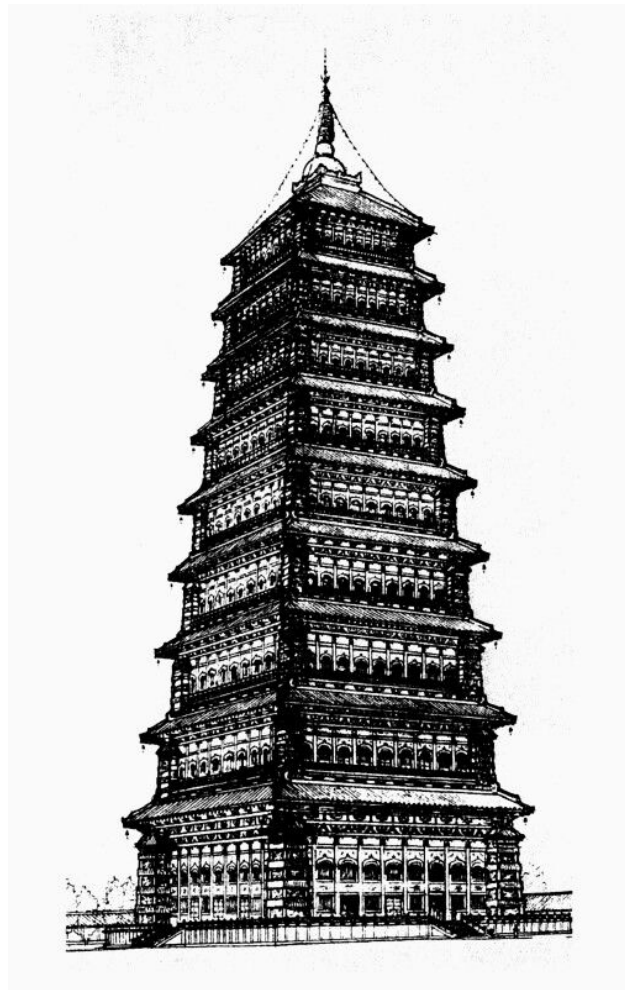
**Fig. 2.14** Reliquary set discovered at Songnim-sa, ca. 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century, Unified Silla period, gilt bronze, glass, h. 14.2 cm (outermost container)



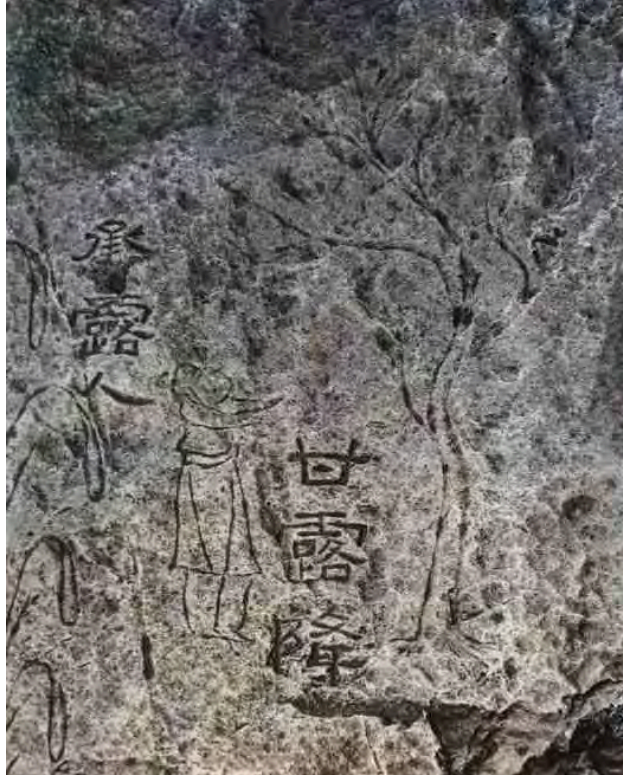
**Fig. 2.15** Watchtower, ca. 1<sup>st</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Eastern Han dynasty, earthenware with green lead glaze, 104.1 x 57.5 x 29.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



**Fig. 2.16** Pagoda, Yongningsi (reconstruction drawing), ca. 516 (burnt down in 534), Northern Wei dynasty, Luoyang, Henan province



**Fig. 2.17** Western Passage (Xixia), Xianbian, Gansu province, omen showing figure collecting the heavenly dew (*chenglu ren*), 171 CE, Han dynasty

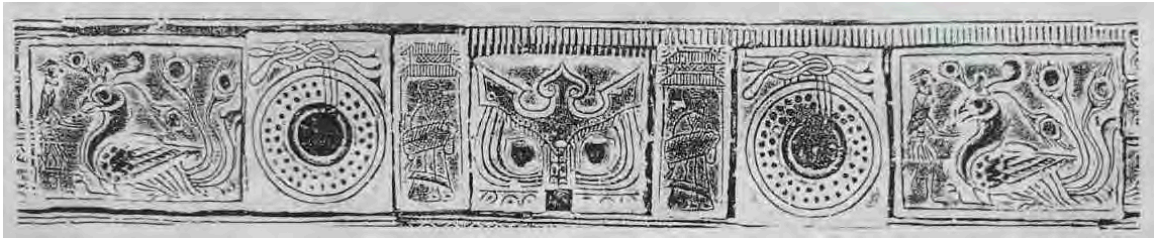




**Fig. 2.18** “Model” architecture showing the *jinggan* structure, bronze, mid-2<sup>nd</sup> to mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Han dynasty, bronze 12 x 9 x 7 cm, excavated from Tomb 3 at Shizhaishan, Yunnan province



**Fig. 2.19** Gate of Heaven, ink rubbing of decorated brick, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, Han dynasty, excavated from Xihua, Henan province



**Fig. 2.20** Upper section of painted banner, ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, Han dynasty, silk, 205 x 92 cm, unearthed from Tomb 1 of Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan province



**Fig. 2.21** Decorated brick showing gate-pillars with a phoenix, 25-220 CE, Han dynasty, unearthed in Dayi, Sichuan province



**Fig. 2.22** Gate of Heaven on a bronze plaque, ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, Han dynasty, gilt bronze, dia. 23.5 cm, excavated from Wushan, Sichuan province



**Fig. 2.23** Votive offering of two seated figures and attendants, dated 515, Northern Wei dynasty, sandstone, 28.3 x 28.3 cm, location unknown, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



**Fig. 2.24** Votive triad of Laozi, dated 587, Sui dynasty, limestone, 24 x 15 x 11.5 cm, location unknown Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



**Fig. 2.25** *Embroidered Curtain of the Land of Heavenly Lifespan (Tenjukoku shūchō)*, ca. between 622 and 628, Asuka period, silk, 88.8 x 82.7 cm, Chūgūji, Nara





**Fig. 2.26** Alchemical hare, detail of Fig. 2.25



**Fig. 2.27** Turtle with inscription, detail of Fig. 2.25



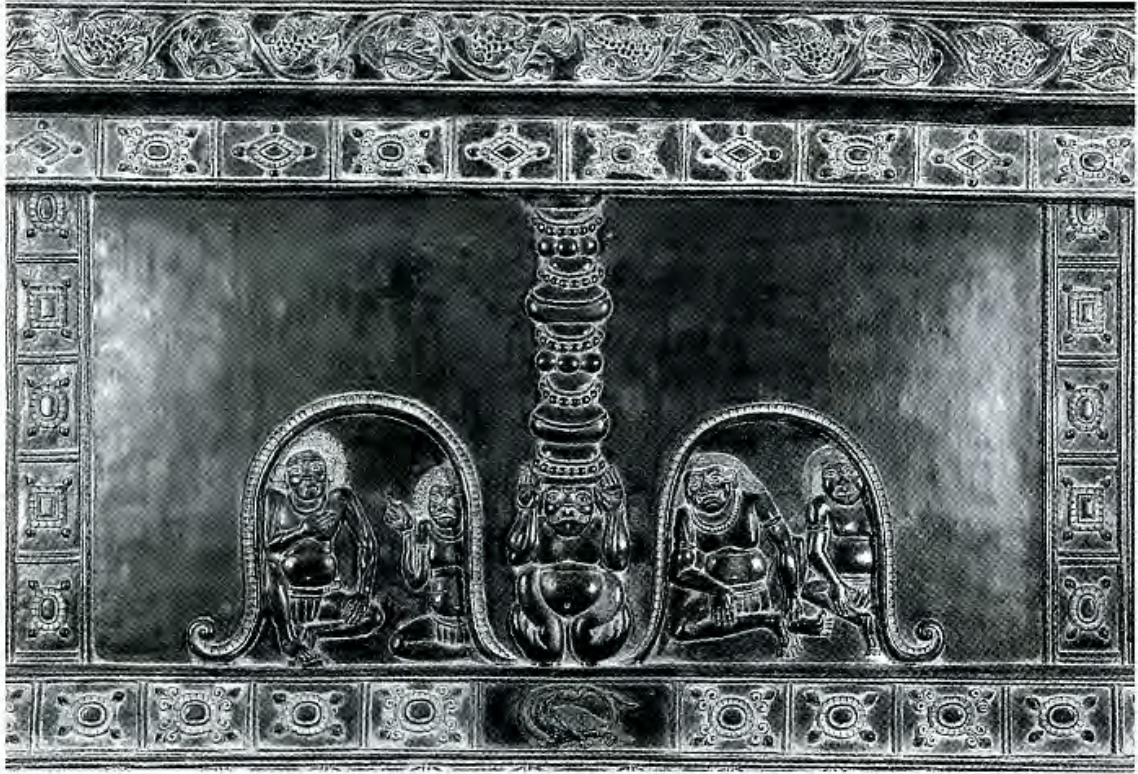
**Fig. 2.28** Red bird, detail of Fig. 2.25



**Fig. 2.29** Reliquary in the form of a miniature sarcophagus, ca. 8<sup>th</sup> century, Tang Dynasty, metalwork, probably from Henan province, Freer Gallery of Art



**Fig. 2.30** Detail of pedestal for seated Yakushi, late 7<sup>th</sup> to early 8<sup>th</sup> century, Nara period, bronze, h. 254.7 cm, Golden Hall, Yakushiji, Nara



**Fig. 2.31** *Mingqi* cabinet, detail of mural painting, Bangtaizi Tomb, Eastern Han dynasty, Liaoyang



**Fig. 2.32** *Mingqi* storehouse with movable doors, Eastern Han dynasty, green-glazed pottery, 38 x 27.5 x 13 cm



**Fig. 2.33** Red-lacquered cabinet made of *zelkova* (Jp. *kanboku*), ca. 8<sup>th</sup> century, Nara period, h. 102 cm, collection of the Shōsōin





**Fig. 2.34** The Buddha in Meditation, ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Gandhāra region, gray schist, 28.6 x 31.3 x 51 cm



**Fig. 2.35** Seven Buddhas of the Past, Yungang Cave 13, ca. 480s, Northern Wei dynasty, h. 3.05 m, Datong city, Shanxi province



**Fig. 2.36** Central pillar, Yungang Cave 2, ca. 5<sup>th</sup> century, Northern Wei dynasty, h. 5.40 m, Datong city, Shanxi province



**Fig. 2.37** Portable Buddhist Shrine of Assembled Deities (*Shoson butsugan* or *Makura honzon*), ca. late 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century, Tang dynasty China, sandalwood with traces of pigments, h. 23.1 cm, d. 10.9 cm (when closed), Kongōbuji Temple, Mount Kōya



**Fig. 2.38** Tamamushi Shrine, dais section, back panel (cosmological diagram)



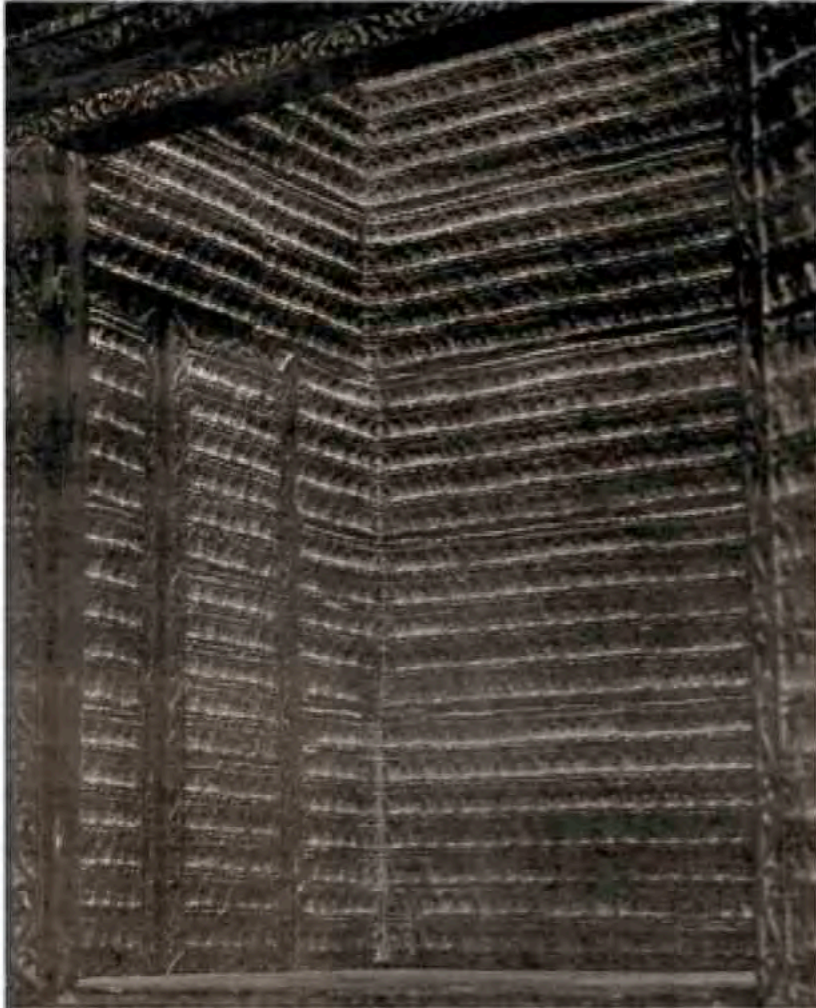
**Fig. 2.39** Mount Sumeru, Mogao Cave 249, Northern Wei period



**Fig. 2.40** Detail of Mount Sumeru, The Cosmic Buddha, ca. 6<sup>th</sup> century, Northern Qi dynasty, limestone, 151.3 x 62.9 x 31.3 cm, probably Henan province, Freer Gallery of Art



**Fig. 2.41** Tamamushi Shrine, palace section, interior (Three-Thousand buddhas)





**Fig. 2.42** Wall of the Thousand Buddhas, Yungang Caves 39, ca. 460-505, Northern Wei dynasty, Datong city, Shanxi province



**Fig. 2.43** Queen Mother of the West on a painted plate, 69 CE, Han dynasty, unearthed from Wagn Yu's Tomb in Lelang Commandery



**Fig. 2.44** Queen Mother of the West on a money tree, mid-2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, bronze, 27 x 13.5 cm, unearthed from Gaocao, Xichang, Sichuan



**Fig. 2.45** Ink rubbings of carvings on a sarcophagus: side panel (a, b), front panel (c), rear panel (d), 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, 232.79 cm (side panel a), 138 x 78 cm (side panel b), 79 x 70 cm (front and rear panels), unearthed from Xingjing, Sichuan province



**Fig. 2.46**

Scene of Queen Mother of the West and her entourage at the back of a pottery house, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Han dynasty, 30.2 x 26.8 x 36.8 cm (house), 5 x 24 (ink rubbing), unearthed from Tomb 37 at Fanji, Xinye, Henan province



**Fig. 2.47** Queen Mother of the West incised on a bronze mirror, ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century, unearthed from the Kanmakikudo Tumulu, Nara Basin



**Fig. 2.48** “Mount Sumeru” Rock, Asuka period, h. 3.4 m, Asuka Historical Museum



**Fig. 3.1** Tamamushi Shrine, dais section, back panel (cosmological diagram, detail of underwater palace)





**Fig. 3.2**

Maitreya, dated 486, Northern Wei dynasty, gilt leaded bronze with traces of pigment (piece-mold cast), h. 140.5 cm, Shanxi province, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



**Fig. 3.3** Maitreya bodhisattva, date 719, Unified Silla, granite, h. 270 cm, from Gamsansa, Gyeongju, collection of the National Museum of Korea



**Fig. 3.4**

Bodhisattva in pensive pose (possibly Maitreya), ca. late 6<sup>th</sup> century, Kingdom of Silla or Baekje, gilt bronze, h. 83.2 cm, National Museum of Korea



**Fig. 3.5** Bodhisattva in pensive pose (possibly Maitreya), ca. late 6<sup>th</sup>-early 7<sup>th</sup> century, Kingdom of Silla, gilt bronze, h. 93.5 cm, National Museum of Korea



**Fig. 3.6**

Bodhisattva in pensive pose (possibly Maitreya), ca. late 7<sup>th</sup> century, Asuka period, painted camphorwood, h. 87 cm, Chūgūji, Nara



**Fig. 3.7** Bodhisattva in pensive pose (possibly Maitreya), ca. 7<sup>th</sup> century, Asuka period, Japanese red pine, h. 123.3 cm, Kōryūji, Kyoto



**Fig. 3.8** Meditating bodhisattva (possibly Maitreya), ca. 7<sup>th</sup> century, Asuka period, gilt bronze, h. 23.6 and 21.9 cm, Tokyo National Museum



**Fig. 3.9** Stele with meditating figure at the back, ca. 565-569, Northern Qi dynasty, white marble, h. 94.5, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln





**Fig. 3.10** Siddhārtha with Kanthaka, Yungang Cave 6, ca. 480s-490, Northern Wei dynasty, Datong city, Shanxi province



**Fig. 3.11** *Illustrated Sūtra of Past and Present Karma (E-ingakyō)*, Siddhārtha with the Kneeling King Suddhodana, ca. mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, Nara period, handscroll with ink and color on paper, collection of Jōbon Rendiji



**Fig. 3.12** Maitreya, dated 524, Northern Wei dynasty, gilt bronze, 76.8 x 40.6 x 24.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



**Fig. 3.13** Stele of Maitreya, ca. 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century, Northern Qi dynasty, marble, 86.4 x 50.8 cm, Hebei province, Cleveland Museum of Art



**Fig. 4.1** Bronze mirror, 6<sup>th</sup> century, Kofun period, dia. 20 cm, Suda Hachiman Shrine, Wakayama prefecture



**Fig. 4.2** Wood-Tiger Year Mandorla, dated 595, Asuka period, bronze, h. 25.1 cm, Tokyo National Museum (Hōryūji Treasure N196)



**Fig. 4.3**

Pensive bodhisattva, dated 606, Asuka period, bronze, h. 41.5 cm, Tokyo National Museum



**Fig. 4.4** Seated Śākyamuni Buddha and his attendants (Shaka triad), dated 623, Asuka period, bronze, lost-wax technique, h. 87.5 cm (Buddha), 134.2 cm (with mandorla), Golden Hall, Hōryūji, Nara





Fig. 4.5 Inscription at the back of Fig. 4.4

法興元年一年歲次辛巳十二月鬼  
前太后崩明年正月廿二日上宮法  
皇執病弗愈于食王后仍以勞疾並  
善於床時王后王子等及與諸臣深  
懷愁毒共相發願仰依三寶前造釋  
像尺寸王身蒙此願力轉病延壽安  
住世間若是定業以背世者往登淨  
土早昇妙果二月廿一日癸酉王后  
即世翌日法皇登遐癸未年三月中  
如願敬造釋迦尊像并供侍及莊嚴  
具竟乘斯微福信道知識現在安隱  
出生入死隨奉三主紹隆三寶遂共  
彼岸普遍六道法界含識得脫苦緣  
同趣菩提使司馬鞍首止利佛師造

**Fig. 4.6**

*Embroidered Curtain of the Land of Heavenly Lifespan (Tenjukoku Shūchō), ca. between 622 and 628, Asuka period, silk, 88.8 x 82.7 cm, Chūgūji, Nara*



**Fig. 4.7** Reconstruction of Fig. 4.6 around a “spirit seat”



**Fig. 4.8**

House-shaped funeral urn, ca. late 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, Sui dynasty, earthenware, 76 x 53.3 x 65.3 cm, excavated from a Sui-dynasty tomb at Henan, Henan Provincial Museum



**Fig. 4.9**

House-shaped funeral urn, Unified Silla, earthenware, h. 43.3 cm, excavated from Bukgun-dong, Gyeongju, Gyeongju National Museum



**Fig. 4.10** Tamamushi Shrine, side view of hip-and-gable roof



**Fig. 4.11** Terracotta house in palatial form, ca. 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century, Asuka or Nara period, h. 90 cm, 61.6 x 62 cm (roof), 46.6 x 39 cm (base), excavated from a kiln site in Iga city, Mie prefecture



**Fig. 4.12** Terracotta house model (*haniwa*), ca. mid-3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, Kofun or Asuka period, size varies, excavated from Nagahara, Osaka, collection of the Agency for Cultural Affairs





**Fig. 4.13** Reconstruction diagram of haniwa arrangement, Ishiyama mounded tomb, Mie prefecture, ca. late 4<sup>th</sup> century, Kofun period



**Fig. 4.14** Tamamushi Shrine, back



**Fig. 4.15** Bronze mirror with representations of storehouses, 4<sup>th</sup> century, Kofun period, dai. 22.9 cm, excavated from Samita-Takarazuka Tumulus, Kawai city, Nara prefecture



**Fig. 4.16** Decorative bronze sword pommel decorated in the shape of a house, ca. second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Kofun period, 10.8 cm, excavated from the Tōdaijiyama mounded tomb, Nara prefecture



**Fig. 4.17** Earthenware with inscription of the character *dō* 堂, ca. 8<sup>th</sup> century, Nara period, excavated from Shikakurayama site, Izumo city, Shimane prefecture



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### KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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- DZ *Daozang* 道藏 (numbered according to Schipper 1975)
- EQ *Ershisishi quanyi* 二十四史全譯, edited by Xu Jialu, An Pingqiu, et al. Shanghai: Hanyu Dacidian Chubanshe, 2004.
- HI *Heian ibun* 平安遺文
- KT *Kokushi taikai* 国史大系, edited by Kuroita Katsumi. Tokyo: Kokushi Taikai Kankōkai, 1897-2007.
- NI *Nara Ibun* 寧樂遺文, edited by Takeuchi Rizō, Tsuji Zennosuke, et al. Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1968.
- NS *Nihon shoki* 日本書記
- Pelliot Pelliot manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale de France
- SNKBT *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai* 新日本古典文学大系, edited by Aoki Kazuo, Nisho Minoru, et al. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1999-2005.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, edited by Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaigyoku, et al. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924-1932.
- ZZDJ *Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua* 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (<https://ctext.org/zh>)

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