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## **Korean Contributions to Japanese Buddhism**

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## Korean Contributions to Japanese Buddhism

Historians have long supported some version of the story found in the *Nihon shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*, also called the *Nihongi*) of the so-called “official introduction” of Buddhism to Yamato, ancient Japan. According to that imperially compiled record, which is the second oldest book of Japanese history, in 552 CE or 538 by some calculations, King Seong (r. 523–554) of the Korean kingdom of Baekje (traditionally dated BCE 18–CE 663) sent emissaries to the ruler of Japan, either Emperor Senka (r. circa 536–539) or Emperor Kinmei (r. circa 539 through 571). The emissaries presented the emperor with a Buddhist statue, the specifics of which are also variously interpreted, and a number of sūtras. This marks the official introduction often cited by historians as *the* introduction of Buddhism to Japan.

However, before the date of this transmission, Buddhism had already been introduced to Japan through a mass influx of immigrants from Baekje as well as China. The conversion of the powerful Soga clan leader, Soga no Iname (d. 570), who had close contact with the immigrant groups, would greatly contribute to the formation of Buddhism in Japan. This is because Soga clan leaders Soga no Iname and his son Soga no Umako (d. 626) came to dominate the political stage of Japan throughout the second half of the sixth century and into the beginning of the seventh century through their descendants at the imperial court. At the time, the Soga clan incorporated figures from the Buddhist pantheon into their indigenous Japanese family tutelary deity belief system.

Without question, the *Nihon shoki* is an invaluable source for research on early Japanese Buddhism. Modern scholars have recognized, however, that what is recorded therein and what important information is omitted resulted from nationalistic biases and antiimmigrant sentiments.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, it appears that the compilers of the text wanted to hide the cultural and political influence of the immigrant group that literally and figuratively built Japan. In this way, the real origin of Japanese Buddhism is absent from the oldest historical texts and its traces all but disappeared for centuries to come. Using

1 See Kim Yeongtae, *Baekje bulgyo sasang yeongu* (The Study of Buddhist Thought in Baekje) (Seoul: Dongguk Daehakgyo chulpanbu, 1985), 324–332; and J.H. Kamstra, *Encounter for Syncretism: The Initial Growth of Japanese Buddhism* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1967), p. 463.

these texts as source materials and thereby becoming a continuing part of their tradition, Gyōnen begins the second fascicle of his *Transmission of the Buddha Dharma*, the fascicle that reports the origins of the schools of Japanese Buddhism, with a description of the official transmission without mention of the underlying immigrant base. It is clear today that contrary to records such as the *Nihon shoki* and Gyōnen's *Transmission of the Buddha Dharma*, the role of Crown Prince Shōtoku (574-622) has been exaggerated while that of the immigrants has been downplayed or ignored, as has the role of Empress Suiko (r. 593-629) and Soga clan leader Soga no Umako in the transmission of Buddhism to Japan.<sup>2</sup>

## 1 Korea as the Political Bridge

For centuries, Korea was a political, cultural, and material bridge between China and Japan. Likewise, Korea was continually attacked or occupied by China or by Japan. Since 108 BCE, Chinese emperors had their own four prefectures in the central and northern areas of Korea. At the beginning of the Common Era, only the Lolang prefecture in the north of the Korean peninsula near present-day Pyongyang remained under Chinese occupation. In 313, Goguryeo (traditionally dated 37 BCE-668 CE) conquered the areas and terminated Chinese rule. Goguryeo then merged many minor states in the north part of the peninsula. In addition, a few large states and many minor states were rapidly merged into three separate federations in the south of Korea. These were the Mahan federation, consisting of 54 tribes in the west; the Jinhan federation, made up of 12 tribes in the east; and the Gaya (Byeonhan) federation, composed of six states between these two federations. In the third century, the Mahan federation in the southwest of Korea developed into the kingdom of Baekje, owing to the initiative of the Baekje tribe. Of all of the Korean states, Baekje maintained the best relations with Japan during the fifth and sixth centuries. The sound relations between Baekje and Japan are reflected in the large number of Baekje immigrants to Japan. These amicable relations with Japan were largely the result of the political situation on the peninsula. Baekje and Goguryeo continued to extend their territory and had confrontations where their states bordered. Baekje relied on its friendship with Japan in order to be free to fight Goguryeo and later Silla (traditionally dated, 57 BCE-935 CE). The latter was a new state growing from the Jinhan federation in the southeast of Korea. Originally, this

<sup>2</sup> Michael I. Como, *Shōtoku: Ethnicity, Ritual and Violence in the Japanese Buddhist Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

state was called Saro after the head tribe of the federation. From the beginning of the sixth century it was called Silla and began to integrate with Chinese culture. From that time on, the southern Korean area was in a condition of continual unrest. In 562, Silla incorporated Gaya, and in 663 and 668, occupied Baekje and Goguryeo respectively.

## 2 The Introduction of Korean Buddhism into Japan

Because of the close ties between Baekje and Japanese courts, the Buddhism of Baekje was the first to be transmitted to Japan. Only after the first transmission of Buddhism from Baekje to Japan did Japan have contact with the influential Buddhists of Goguryeo, who are also overlooked by Gyōnen and earlier historians. The Buddhism that was revered by the Soga clan was primarily that of Baekje. Additionally, the Buddhist tradition of Silla entered Japan during the reign of Empress Suiko. During the same century, Buddhism from China entered Japan through monks who returned after having been sent to study abroad during the Sui dynasty (581-618).

As mentioned, records say that in 552, Buddhism was transmitted from King Seong to Japan. King Seong ordered an envoy to carry a bronze image, which Gyōnen and other historians identify as Śākyamuni Buddha, pennants, canopies, sūtras and śāstras with a letter in which he praised the great merit of Buddhism to Emperor Kinmei (r. 531-572). However, according to the *Jōgu Shōtoku hōō teisetsu* (Biography of Crown Prince Shōtoku, King of the Dharma), the date of transmission was earlier, in 538. At that time, the three kingdoms were at war with one another. The king of Baekje must have seen the political expediency of recommending his religion to the Japanese court and friendship with Japan was of real advantage in its conflicts with rivals. The Japanese court likely considered this an opportunity to import the advanced culture and technology of Baekje.

Since 372, Baekje had maintained direct relations with China. These diplomatic contacts also lasted throughout the Song, Ji, and Liang periods (420-557). They undoubtedly went hand in hand with cultural and religious influence from China that greatly outshone those of Baekje. Japan wanted to benefit from this cultural and religious renovation that was progressing steadily in Baekje. After the occupation of Gaya's four districts by Baekje in 512, Japan welcomed the opportunity to demand that cultural and religious experts be sent from Baekje.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> J.H. Kamstra, p. 232.

There were four mass immigrations from Korea to Japan.<sup>4</sup> The first of these came from the Gaya area. The Gaya federation had a close relationship with Japan since Daegaya was invaded by neighboring states in 369. Increasing evidence of this relationship is being uncovered through Korean archeology, for example the appearance of keyhole tombs in both Japan and Gaya at the time.<sup>5</sup> The first wave of immigrants arrived around the year 400. The second mass immigration came after Silla's conquest of Gaya in 562. The third and last wave occurred after the official arrival of Buddhism in Japan. In 663 and 668, Silla overtook Baekje and Goguryeo respectively. The conquests by Silla produced mass refugees who found a new home in Japan. These immigrants contributed to the formation of Japanese Buddhism up to the sixth century. They also introduced very many reforms and innovations. Thus, in 645, they were the prime movers behind the scene that brought about the end of the antiquated structure of Japanese society and made room for the bureaucracy inspired by China, through the Taika reform. This reform finally broke the supremacy of the powerful clans.

According to the *Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters)*, in 285 Baekje sent Ajiki and Wang'in, two scholars of Chinese culture to Japan.<sup>6</sup> The *Kojiki* specifically mentions that they brought *The Analects of Confucius*<sup>7</sup> and *Qianziwen* (The Classic of One Thousand Chinese Characters). However, this is doubtful since the latter work, *Qianziwen*, is believed to have only been completed during the Liang Dynasty (502-557). This also throws suspicion on whether *The Analects of Confucius* really reached Japan in Emperor Ōjin's time. In 513, Baekje is said to have sent Danyang'i, a scholar of the five classics, to Japan. In 516, another Confucian scholar of the five Classics, Goanmu came from Baekje. However, there is no agreement as to what the five Classics were.<sup>8</sup>

4 Ibid., p. 219.

5 Hong Bosik, "Hanbando nambu jiyek ui Waegye yoso" (Japanese Elements in the Southern Area of the Korean Peninsula), *Han'guk godaesa yeon'gu* (Research on Ancient Korean History) 44 (December 2006): 21-57.

6 Basil Hall Chamberlain, *A Translation of the "Ko-ji-ki" or Records of Ancient Matters* (Yokohama, Japan: R. Meiklejohn and Co., 1882); Donald L. Philippi, trans., *Kojiki* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968/1969); and Gustav Heldt, trans., *The Kojiki: An Account of Ancient Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

7 Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Pub. Group, 1998); Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects* (New York: Knop, 2000); and James Legge, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (Auckland, New Zealand: Floating Press, 2010).

8 Depending upon the period and scholars, the five classics have been defined differently.

The flow of monks from Korea to Japan continued after the official introduction of Buddhism. In 554, Damhye came to Japan with nine other monks. Prior to the arrival of this group, there is a record stating that Dosim and seven other monks were already in residence there. Damhye was housed in a newly constructed temple. We do not know with any certainty the type of Buddhism taught by these two masters. The *Nihon shoki* records that there were not only Buddhist monks but also specialists in medicine, soothsaying and calendar making, who traveled back and forth between Baekje and Japan.

In 577, Baekje sent many Buddhist texts by means of the returning emissary, along with a discipline (vinaya) master, a meditation master, a nun, a *dhāraṇī* master, an artist of Buddha images and a temple architect, a total of six specialist in various aspects of Buddhism. They were all lodged in Ōwake no ōkimidera temple in Naniwa (modern Osaka). In 583, the Baekje monk Illa came to Japan. Crown Prince Shōtoku considered him to be a divine being and revered him as an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Though receiving scant attention from historians, this is somewhat analogous to the later consideration by Tibetan and Mongolian political leaders of the Tibetan Dalai Lama as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara. Illa lived on Mt. Ken'ō in Settsu (modern Osaka and Hyogo), where he was assassinated by a Sillan enemy. These Baekje monks, who were held in high regard, were true pioneers in the process of planting the seeds of Buddhism to Japan.

In 584, Hyepyeon became the first Goguryeo monk to come to Japan. Because Buddhism in Japan at that time was still rudimentary, he thought it was best to live as a layman at first. Around that time, however, Soga no Umako built a small temple in which he kept two Buddha statues received from Baekje. He was looking for a monk who could stay in the temple, offer incense before the statues, and chant and invited Hyepyeon to do so. Here, Hyepyeon ordained the first three Japanese Buddhist nuns, Eizen, Zenshin, and Zensō. Gyōnen mentions the three nuns at the beginning of the third fascicle of *The Transmission of the Buddha Dharma* in reference to the formation of the Ritsu (Vinaya) School in Japan.

In 587, a Baekje monk named Pungguk was invited by Prince Anaobe, the younger brother of Emperor Yōmei (r. 586-588), to teach the Dharma. In order to help the ailing emperor, Kuratsukuri no Tasuna built Sakataji Temple and commissioned a Korean monk to construct a six foot tall image of the Buddha. However, the emperor's health continued to decline and he died on the ninth day of the fourth month of that year. When afterwards, members of the Mononobe clan called for Buddhism to be expunged from Japan, Shōtoku and Soga no Umako called on what they saw as the power of Buddhism in battle to defeat their rivals. The *Nihon shoki* records the event as follows.

The Army of the Imperial Princes and the troops of the Ministers were timid and afraid, and fell back three times. At this time the Imperial Prince Mumayado (i.e. Shōtoku), his hair being tied upon the temples ... followed in the rear of the army. He pondered in his own mind, saying to himself: - "Are we not going to be beaten? Without prayer we cannot succeed." So he cut down a nuride tree, and swiftly fashioned images of the four Heavenly Kings. Placing them on his topknot, he uttered a vow: - "If we are now made to gain victory over the enemy, I promise faithfully to honour the four Heavenly Kings, guardians of the world, by erecting to them a temple with a pagoda. The Oho-omin Sogano Mumako (i.e. Umako) also uttered a vow....<sup>9</sup>

After Shōtoku and the Soga clan defeated their rivals for control of the Yamato court, the Mononobe, Umako built of Shitennōji temple in fulfillment of his vow to the four heavenly deities of Buddhism, whom he had petitioned for help in the battle as seen above. He then invited the Baekje monk Pungguk to conduct the ritual ceremony commemorating the completion of the building and afterwards installed him as the first abbot to the temple. From this we can see that the introduction and propagation of Buddhism in Japan had more to do with politics and the perception of gaining earthly power than Gyōnen and others represent.<sup>10</sup>

In 588, Baekje monk Hyechong presented sacred relics of the Buddha to Emperor Sushun (r. 587-592). Hyechong was accompanied by architects Taeryang Maltae and Munga Goja as well as by the painter Baekga and an anonymous tile expert. Besides these architects, carpenters, metal workers and other artisans, Hyechong had a group of monks traveling with him, including Yeongeun, Hyesik, Yajo, Yeongwi, Hyejung, Hyesuk, Doeom and Yeonggae. These artisans and monks were involved in building Hōkōji temple and Hyechong became a resident in that site. In 595, Goguryeo monk Hyeja came to Japan. He taught Shōtoku when the prince was engaged quite actively in the nation's internal administration as well as in the creation of foreign policy. In 615, he returned to Goguryeo.

9 W.G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to AD 697* (London: Pub. for the Society by K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896) (Rpt. Rutland, VT: C.E. Tuttle Co., 1972), Vol II, 113-4.

10 Ronald S. Green, "Institutionalizing Buddhism for the Legitimation of State Power in Japan" in Mun, Chanju, ed. *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking*. Honolulu: Blue Pines Books, 2007, 221-31.

There were two more influential teachers of Prince Shōtoku who were likely Korean. Kakka was his teacher of Confucianism and Hata no Kawakatsu was one of his close associates. The homeland of Kakka is unknown. He seems to have been from Baekje since he had the title of *Baksa*, “a man of knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> It is believed that the system of granting the academic title, *Baksa*, was established in Baekje in the 6th century. The Hata clan was of Sillan descent.<sup>12</sup> At the time when the messenger and his parties from the Silla Dynasty visited Japan, Hata no Kawakatsu was appointed as the government official to receive them. In short, Crown Prince Shōtoku had these three men closely affiliated with him: one from Goguryeo, one from Baekje, and the other of Sillan descent. According to Tamura Enchō,<sup>13</sup> Crown Prince Shōtoku might have considered the fact that three countries in Korea were struggling against one another at that time. Those three associates seem to be concerned with the policies being created by Crown Prince Shōtoku as well as the gathering of information about the foreign countries.

In 597, the 3rd son of King Seong, Prince Imseong came to Japan and introduced the belief in Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva Miao Chien of Ursa Major, and amulets.<sup>14</sup> In 602, Baekje Madhyamaka scholar Gwalleuk arrived in Japan. He brought documents on astrology, geography, the almanac, the occult arts, and necromancy. While Shōtoku and Umako appear to have focused on the politic uses of Buddhism, we find a breadth of interests among Korean scholar monks. With the blessing of the emperor, Gwalleuk lived at Gangōji temple in Asuka, present-day Nara, built by Soga no Umako as Asukadera. There he gathered a group of thirty-four students. Among them were Yagonofubito no Oyatamafuru who studied calendar making, Ōtomo no Sugirikoso focusing on astronomy, divination and numerology, and Yamashiro no Omihitate who was trained in numerology.<sup>15</sup> In 609, eleven Baekje monks, including Hyemi and Doheum, while on their way to the Wu court in China under imperial order, were shipwrecked in a severe storm and drifted into the

11 *Samguk sagi*, 24, King Geunchogo, the 30th year; and *Ibid.*, 26, King Seong, the 19th year.

12 Tamura Enchō, “The Influence of Shilla Buddhism on Japan during the AsukaHakuho Period,” in Chun Shinyong, ed., *Buddhist Culture in Korea* (Seoul: International Cultural foundation, 1974), p. 70.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Kim Youngtae, “Buddhism in the Three Kingdoms,” in Korean Buddhist Research Institute, ed., *The History and Culture of Buddhism in Korea* (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1993), p. 52.

15 Kamata Shigeo, “The Transmission of Paekche Buddhism to Japan,” in Lewis R. Lancaster and C.S. Yu, eds., *Introduction of Buddhism to Korea New Cultural Patterns* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1989), p. 152.



Ashikita Bay of Higo (modern Kumamoto in Kyūshū). The local prefect reported this event to the military headquarter at Dazaifu along with the request from the monks to be given asylum. This was granted and the eleven monks were likewise received at Gangōji Temple. The support that Gwalleuk had from the court is shown clearly in the thirty-second year of Empress Suiko (624), when he was appointed to the office of “Bishop.” At the same time, the Goguryeo monk Deokjeok was made the “Overseer of the Saṅgha.” This was the inception of the Buddhist ecclesiastical hierarchy in Japan.<sup>16</sup>

In 602, two more monks from Goguryeo, Seungyung and Unchong, arrived in Japan. In 610, Goguryeo monks Damjing and Beobjeong came to the country. Damjing was well versed in the five Classics as well as in Buddhism. He also excelled in making colors, papers, inkstones, and millstones, and at drawing, all of which he taught these to Japanese students. He also helped the country by making a grinding stone and a millstone that could be worked by a horse or an ox. In 625, Goguryeo monk Hyegwan came to Japan after returning from Sui Dynasty China. In Sui, he had learned the abstruse teachings of the Sanlun (J. Sanron, the three Mādhyamaka śāstras) from Jizang (549-623). Known in Japan as Ekan, he succeeded Gwalleuk to be appointed as the second Sōjō, that is, the highest monastic position in Japan. The title Sōjō predates that of Dai-sōjō as the designation for the supreme patriarch of the country. He also became the founder of the Sanron School in Japan.

In 608, a great number of people migrated from Silla to Japan as Silla was invaded by Goguryeo. This mass immigration must have also brought with it Buddhism from Silla. In 610, Silla sent a messenger to Japan and on this occasion the government of the Yamato Court welcomed him by appointing an official to receive him and another to have dinner with him. In 611, a messenger was dispatched to Japan from Silla. In 616, Silla sent a Buddhist image and in 621 sent another courtier to Japan. In 632, messengers from Silla were sent to Japan, carrying with them an image of the Buddha and some other articles for a Buddhist shrine. As mentioned before, no monk was sent to Japan from Silla until the end of the era of Prince Shōtoku. But the images of bodhisattva and other Buddhist articles for shrines, which were brought over with them, were placed Shitennōji temple and Kōryūji temple, alleged to be the oldest temple in Kyoto, built in 603 by the aforementioned Hata no Kawakatsu.

<sup>16</sup> Kamata Shigeo, p. 154; and Mok Jeongbae, *Samguk sidae ui bulgyo* (Buddhism in Three Kingdoms of Korea) (1989, Seoul: Dongguk daehakgyo chulpanbu, 1991), p. 75.

In 688, there was a drought that affected the entire nation. The emperor ordered Baekje monk Dojang,<sup>17</sup> who had arrived in Japan during the Hakuho reign period (673-685), to perform a rainmaking ritual. It is said that as soon as he started to chant, rain began to fall. Dojang was a scholar of the Sattvasiddhi School, and he composed a commentary to the *Sattvasiddhi śāstra* in sixteen fascicles. The monks for Tōdaiji temple always consulted his commentary whenever they studied the *Sattvasiddhi śāstra*. The transmission of Baekje Buddhism and culture continued until Silla conquered Baekje in 663. During this period, many Korean monks were granted permanent residence in Japan. In addition to the study of the Buddhist texts, they performed thaumaturgic rites such as rain making and healing. In 639, they contributed to construction of Kudara Ōdera temple (Great Baekje Temple). Kudara Ōdera was considered one of the four great temples in early Japanese Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> It was renamed Daikan Daiji, Great Official Temple, and served as the model for the central state temple system, predating Tōdaiji temple in this role.<sup>19</sup>

In 587, three Japanese nuns Zenshin, Zensō and Eizen traveled to Baekje in order to study Buddhist discipline. They pursued their studies for three years before returning home. Back in Japan, they were housed in Sakuraji temple in present-day Nara prefecture, where other nuns were later ordained. The layman Kuratsukuri no Tasuna, mentioned above as having built Sakataji Temple, joined the order and took full ordination in 588. Tasuna was the son of an immigrant to Japan said to be Chinese or Korean. The family was known as saddle makers, as the name “Kuratsukuri” indicates, and was famous as makers of Buddhist images as well, particularly Tori Busshi the favorite sculptor of Soga no Umako and Prince Shōtoku who shaped Japanese Buddhist sculpture of the Asuka period and defined it for later generations. Other immigrants including Zensō, Zentsu, Myōtoku, Hōjōshō, Zenchisō, Zenchie, Zenkō, Zentoku, Zenmyō and Myōkō also joined the Buddhist order.

Thus, for one hundred years after the official introduction of Buddhism to Japan, the relationship with Baekje was very close. Even after the defeat of Baekje in 663, there were numerous refugees who sought sanctuary in Japan. Among these were many monks who exerted influence even after the fall of the kingdom. Thus, we can certainly say that Baekje monks and immigrants

17 In 663, Silla conquered Baekje. So, he can be thought as a refugee who came to Japan from Baekje after the occupation of Silla.

18 Donald F McCallum, *The Four Great Temples: Buddhist Art, Archaeology, and Icons of Seventh-Century Japan*.

19 William E. Deal and Brian Rupper, *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism*. NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015, 49.

were prime movers in initiating Japanese Buddhism. A census count of the Buddhist activity during the reign of Empress Suiko records that there were 46 monasteries, 816 monks, and 569 nuns. Monasteries thus had an average of 30 residents. We may assume that among these more than one thousand monks and nuns, many were from Korea.<sup>20</sup>

Just before and after the fall of the Baekje Dynasty in 663, many people of that area took refuge in Japan. Some of them were appointed to the important posts in the government as experts in the fields of military strategy, medicine, Confucianism, and law.<sup>21</sup> There seemed to have been a deep divide between the Baekje descendants who settled in Japan and the people of Korean who united the territories. We can say justifiably that the antiSilla sentiment of the immigrants from Baekje influenced the Yamato court in framing Japan's policy towards Silla.

After 667, messengers from Silla were sent to Japan almost every year, but the Yamato court was so cautious that they were received and entertained in Chikushi, where the local government of the Yamato Court was located. Only after 690, messengers from Silla were received in Naniwa. In 668, the allied forces of Tang (618-907) and Silla overthrew the Goguryeo Dynasty. Immediately afterwards, the struggle between Tang China and Silla began. Tang had the intention of establishing its domination over all of Korea from the beginning and after Baekje and Goguryeo were overthrown, China did not withdraw its armed forces from Korea, but went into battle with the Silla army. In 676, Silla succeeded in driving back its enemy from the area of the Han River, and established its domination over the whole Korean territory.

The conflict with Tang prompted Silla to improve relations with Japan. In 668, immediately after the fall of the Goguryeo Dynasty, Silla sent the messenger Kim Dong'eum to Japan. The minister Nakatomi no Kamatarō, also known as Fujiwara no Kamatari, presented a boat to Kim Yusin (595-673) of Silla. Kim Yusin was credited for having defeated Baekje in the famous Battle of Hwang-sanbeol, and for uniting all of Korea. Kamatari was the founder of the Fujiwara clan and fought against the introduction of Buddhism to Japan along with the Mononobe clan. Meanwhile, Emperor Tenchi (r. 661-671) presented King Munmu (r. 661-681) with a ship. In the same year, the Yamato Court appointed two officials to accompany the messenger home to Silla.

Subsequently, messengers from Silla visited Japan almost every year, and Japan sent its own envoys to Silla. In 676, the first Japanese ambassador to Silla was appointed and his assistants. During Hakuho period of Emperor Tenmu's

<sup>20</sup> Kamata Shigeo, p. 155.

<sup>21</sup> Tamura Enchō, p. 73.

reign, Japan adopted a very positive attitude for importing and disseminating Buddhism of Silla. From 670 to 710, Japanese monks went to either Tang or Silla. Among the monks whose nationality can be identified, eight went to Tang and fourteen to Silla. Japanese monks who returned from Silla introduced the culture and Buddhism of that country to Japan.<sup>22</sup>

During this period, prominent Buddhist priests such as Wonhyo, Uisang, Dojeung, Seungjang, Dunryun, Hyetong, Myeongrang and Seungjeon were active in Silla and Buddhism flourished there.<sup>23</sup> In Gyeongju, the capital of Silla, many Buddhist temples were constructed. Among them, there are 31 temples whose names and venues can be identified, and 30 temples whose venues are fairly clear.<sup>24</sup> Japanese Buddhists reacted quickly to the movements of Buddhism of Silla. They followed the Buddhists of Silla, who regarded *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* and *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamarāja-sūtra* as the important scriptures.<sup>25</sup> Yogācāra Buddhism was also introduced to Japan from Silla. It can also be inferred that the art of carving images was introduced to Japan from Silla.

It has been generally accepted that the Buddhist arts of the Hakuho period can be traced back to the Sui and Tang art of China. However, Tamura Enchō emphasizes the importance of Japan's relations with Silla in this.<sup>26</sup> For example, in 702, during the Hakuho period, Tang only once sent a messenger while the Yamato Court took positive steps toward improving its relations with Silla. Gyōnen's treatment of this important period of expansion of Japanese Buddhism likewise focuses exclusively on Chinese influences. Based on modern research including archeology and art history, there is a need to reexamine the influences of the Silla Buddhism as well as of Tang Buddhism on that of Japan during the Hakuho period.

### 3 The Formation of Japanese Buddhism

The emperor was the apex of Japanese society divided into clans prior to the advent of Buddhism in that country and until the Taika reformation of 645, at

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-79.

<sup>23</sup> Kamata Shigeo, *Chōsen bukkyōshi* (The History of Buddhism in Korea) (Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1987), pp. 72100.

<sup>24</sup> Tamura Enchō, p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> Johannes Nobel, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-Sutra: das Goldglanz-Sūtra; ein Sanskrittext des Mahāyāna-Buddhismus; die tibetischen Übersetzungen mit einem Wörterbuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1950).

<sup>26</sup> Tamura Enchō, p. 76.

which time this structure was completely altered. Consequently, the Buddhism that arrived in Japan in the sixth century was also associated with this ancient social structure. At that time, in particular, the emperor's task was dual. First, he had to preserve the balance between the clans. Second, he had to exhort all of these clans towards international relations with Korea. Thus, the political situation of the sixth century was more or less defined by these two conditions: the political tensions in Korea and the differences and frictions between clans.

After the death of Keitai (r. 507-531), the court split into two parties. The three sons of Keitai could not agree on succession for eight years. One faction consisted of Ankan (r. 531-536) and Senka (r. 536-539) and the other was Kinmei (r. 531-572). The latter managed to survive both opponents. However, as a result of this struggle, the emperorship lost immeasurably in respect and power. The leaders of the two most powerful clans, the Mononobe and the Soga, particularly benefited from this turmoil, noticeably increasing their positions and influence. In addition, the clans attempted to strengthen their powers by influencing Japan's policy towards Korea.

According to the early Japanese narrative, which is admittedly problematic in many ways, the Mononobe's ideology was against what they saw as a foreign god, the Buddha, and was characterized by obstinate nationalism strengthened by support of the national deities honored before the introduction of Buddhism, even though many of these were also originally imported from Korea.<sup>27</sup> The Soga, on the contrary, advocated the acceptance of the foreign god, Buddha. Thus, the two ideologies clashed. Here, the open and internationally orientated progressive opposed the traditional conservative.<sup>28</sup> Emperor Senka left the decision regarding the acceptance of Buddhism at court to the leaders of these clans and while the clans disagreed about whether Japan should accept Buddhism or not, both the Mononobe and the Soga remained faithful to the old Japanese family tutelary deity worship system. But the fact that the Mononobe opposed Buddhism strengthened the desire to accept it among the

27 Recent studies have been done on the political nature of myth by the Japanese scholars Konoshi Takamitsu and Isomae Jun'ichi and by Bruce Lincoln, who have shown that difficult and largely ahistorical sources such as those cited here can be used productively. Accordingly, it is sometimes possible to disentangle the conflicting narratives appearing in them, as we attempt here.

28 E. Dale Saunders, *Buddhism in Japan: With an Outline of Its Origins in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), pp. 9293; August Karl Reischauer, *Studies in Japanese Buddhism* (Rpt, New York: AMS Press, 1970), pp. 8182; and Yi Yeongja, trans., Nishida Mizumaro, *Ilbon bulgyosa* (The History of Buddhism in Japan) (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1987), p. 21.

Soga. For this reason, Buddhism had plenty of opportunity to expand throughout the Soga area until the defeat of the last Mononobe leader, Moriya, in 585.

Buddhism fluctuated in accordance with the political successes of the Soga. The destruction of Mukuhara Temple in 552 occurred at a moment of Mononobe superiority. At that time the Mononobe clan blamed pestilence in the country on the importation of the foreign god that had been installed in Mukuhara, which had been converted into a temple from the home of Soga no Iname in present-day Ōsaka. The Mononobe received imperial permission to burn the temple down and through the Buddha image into the Naniwa canal. Gyōnen very lightly glosses this struggle, presenting the introduction of Japanese Buddhism as a smooth and welcome steady progression. He writes near the beginning of the second fascicle of *The Transmission of the Buddha Dharma*, “During that time, although the Great Minister Mononobe no Moriya (d. 587) attempted to destroy the Buddha Dharma, because Prince Shōtoku utilized skillful means, all the people took refuge in it, the Buddha’s halls and pagodas became very prosperous, and the temples and buildings were extensively constructed.”

Emperor Kinmei felt more at home among the Mononobe. Nevertheless, he must have felt very deeply about maintaining the balance between the most prominent clan leaders. This caused him to initiate a family connection with the Soga. The *Kojiki* shows that of his five wives, two were Soga. These two Soga women gave him eighteen of his twenty-five children. The more eminent of the two women was Kitashi hime, the daughter of the Soga leader of that time, Iname. She became the mother of the further Emperor Yōmei (r. 586-587) and Empress Suiko. His other Soga wife, Oehime, gave him another successor, Emperor Sushun (r. 587-592). As a result, the emperor, residing in the Mononobe district, was nevertheless strongly enough tied to the Soga to maintain the balance of power in the Yamato area.

These marriages of Kinmei eventually smoothed the path of Buddhism at the imperial court by way of the Soga clan. However, during his reign and that of his son Bidatsu (r. 572-586), this was not yet the case. Emperor Yōmei and Empress Suiko owed their sympathy toward Buddhism to their ties with the Soga clan, that is to say, to their Soga mothers. The introduction of Buddhism in Japan has been characterized as having occurred in three stages.<sup>29</sup> While it centered on the conversion of the Soga, it was not limited to this since the imperial house was also concerned. In the first stage of this development, Buddhism was rejected by adherents of the family tutelary deity system. In the second stage, the integration of Buddhism with this family tutelary deity

29 J.H. Kamstra, pp. 318-370.

worship was achieved by the conversion of the Soga. In the third stage, it was completed by the conversion of the emperor himself and after the destruction of the Mononobe who until then had been the symbol of all who disagreed with this development.

The conversion of two Soga leaders, Iname and his son Umako, had an immediate influence on the imperial house. This happened because various Soga daughters had married Japanese emperors. This reached its apex in the imperial figures of Yōmei and Suiko. As we have already pointed out, the mother of these two, Kitashi hime, was the daughter of Soga no Iname and the sister of Umako. Yōmei himself also married two other daughters of Iname. The later crown prince Umayado, better known under the name of Shōtoku Taishi, was descended from one of these marriages. Therefore, he was related to the Soga both on his mother's and on his father's side. The nature of this Buddhist influence was very closely connected with the two Soga leaders Iname and Umako. Again, Gyōnen effectively ignores the clan and imperial politics of early Japanese Buddhism.

The arrival of many qualified immigrants to Japan with entirely new techniques and ideologies deeply shocked many of the Japanese who were tied to the old traditional society. So, old values were radically replaced throughout society by new ones. The myth of Prince Shōtoku has been observed in its growth through various stages up to the time of the compilation of the chronicles. The evaluation of Shōtoku is greatly dependent on the *Nihon shoki*. Thus, we will consider whether all the political reforms of Shōtoku related in the *Nihon shoki*, such as the *Seventeen-article constitution* and the institution of the cap ranking system can be attributed to him or even existed in the way they are represented. Korean immigrants played a historic part in the development of Japanese Buddhism, but over time they lost their significance. Their historical function with regard to Japanese Buddhism afterwards was deemphasized and depreciated because of nationalistic sentiment of the *Nihon shoki* compilers and has recently come to be reevaluated.

According to tradition, Prince Shōtoku understood and examined Buddhism better and more thoroughly than any of his contemporaries. His exceptional position as “the father of Japanese Buddhism” brings up a series of questions as to how it was possible that the Buddhism he promoted took on completely different properties from that of the scriptures he allegedly mastered. That is to say, by the end of the sixth century Japanese Buddhism had developed into little more than a new version of traditional family tutelary deity worship. Meanwhile, in each succeeding century, the importance of Shōtoku's place in history became more heavily emphasized and Shōtoku himself became deified. Gradually, people began to attribute all the achievements

of his fellow-workers and contemporaries to him. Thus, people asserted that he was the builder of all the Buddhist temples of his time. He was considered the author of a completely new constitution in Japan and he has been said to have begun Buddhism completely anew. Gyōnen too attributes miraculous abilities to Shōtoku, saying for example that he read scriptures and treatises when he was seven years old and later dispatched envoys to China to retrieve texts he had read there in a previous life.

It was not difficult therefore to cast Shōtoku as the founding patriarch of later Buddhist sects. His figure was waxed to a Japanese version of Śākyamuni. In Shintō, he became one of the gods who descended to earth for a while in order to start the Japanese Empire. In Japan's later history, popular religion made him appear repeatedly anew as various important personages. In order to demythologize Shōtoku's role in the formation of Japanese Buddhism, it may be helpful to examine the similar tradition about his creation of the Seventeen-article constitution.

According to the *Nihon shoki*, the Seventeen-article constitution contains some paragraphs on Buddhism and the cap ranking system derived from Taoist and Confucian philosophy. The seventeen articles put an end to the social structure of those days and, thus, to the religious conditions on which that structure was mainly based. While these articles presuppose a social and political structure including a system of ranked officials, such a system is not yet in existence at the time. Such a system neither appears in the law itself nor is referenced in the *Nihon shoki*. In fact, the state run by officials was only established in 645 by the Taika Reforms, not in the Seventeen-article constitution allegedly written by Shōtoku in 604. Some articles in the constitution are also mentioned in the *Jin shu* (History of the Jin Dynasty), the collection of chronicles of the Chinese Jin Dynasty (265-420) under the Emperor Wu (265-290). But in Shōtoku's time, Japanese relations with China had hardly started. And, many imperial decrees of the *Nihon shoki* were actually written by the compilers themselves. So, the compilers of the *Nihon shoki* might have used some articles to demonstrate their own knowledge of Chinese law.<sup>30</sup>

Another alleged achievement of Shōtoku was the institution of the cap ranking system, a system that awarded different styles of headwear as a sign of rank and achievement. But, we should remember that there were not yet officials who could be awarded in such a way. The system was instead imported from Goguryeo without realizing there is was not applicable to the Japan context. In the chronicles of Empress Suiko's reign in the *Nihon shoki*, there is only

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30 J.H. Kamstra, p. 403.



one mention of people with such a rank.<sup>31</sup> In ascribing the two systems of regulations to Shōtoku, the cap ranking system and the Seventeen-article constitution, the obvious intention was to hide the Korean and Korean immigrant authorship and to attribute the achievement to Shōtoku. The attribution of authorship to Shōtoku might have been given by the nationalists during the period of Emperors Tenmu (r. 673-686) and Kanmu (r. 781-805) who, for example, burnt the records of the Korean immigrants.<sup>32</sup>

When Shōtoku was 23 or 24 years old and had the country's government in his hands, Goguryeo monk Hyeja became his master. The Buddhism of his childhood up to his first meeting with Hyeja must have been that of his own family. Thus, it might be the Buddhism-directed family tutelary deity faith. Likewise, the attribution of the establishment of Hōryūji temple to Shōtoku likely came about because Japanese nationalists did not wish to put it in the name of the real builders, the Korean immigrants, which can now be verified by art historians.

Shōtoku is attributed famously with the authorship of the influential *Sangyō gisho*, commentary on three sūtras. These are commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra* (J. *Hokkye-kyō*), the *Śrīmālādevī Sīṃhanāda Sūtra* (J. *Shōmangyō*) and the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (J. *Yuimakyō*). However, his commentaries on the *Shōmangyō* and the *Yuimakyō* were attributed to him only in the twelfth or thirteenth century. They are mentioned for the first time in *Hōryūjigaran engi* (History of Hōryūji temple), which was compiled in that period. His commentary on the *Hokkekyō* was put under his name in the *Kamitsumiya Shōtoku hōō teisetsu* that was edited at the beginning of the Heian period (794-1185), one hundred years later than the compilation of the *Nihon shoki*. In the *Nihon shoki* itself, no single commentary of Shōtoku is mentioned.

A very old *Hokkekyō* commentary was discovered in 1920 in the Imperial Library in Tokyo. At the beginning of the text of this repeatedly corrected document, there is the following superscription: "from the collection of Crown Prince (Shōtoku), ruler of the land of Yamato, this work did not originate overseas." On the basis of this superscription, it could be contended, as is done by many, that it is authentic. One should, however, differentiate between the age of the work itself and that of the superscription. In particular, its last clause, "This work did not originate overseas," gives the impression of having been

31 *Nihon shoki*, 22, Empress Suiko, the 19th year.

32 Kanazawa Shozaburo, "Chōsen kenkyū to *Nihon shoki*" (Studies on Korea and the *Nihon shoki*), in *Chōsen Gakuhō* 1 (May 1951): pp. 868-9.

added at a later date from antiKorean sentiment. This explicit denial of the foreign origin of the work might well signify its confirmation.<sup>33</sup>

Another argument is found in the fact that Shōtoku was only instructed in Buddhism for a short period by Hyeja after he had taken control of the government. Thus he must have had little time for the study required for the writing of such commentaries. To the contrary, his commentary on the *Hokkekyō* has now been considered a work of a Tendai Buddhist scholar.<sup>34</sup> For the Tendai School wished to use this and other Shōtoku data in order to prove that the prince had really been its pioneer. The *Hokkekyō* deals with the redemption of common people. The *Yuimakyō* defines and elevates the position of the lay Buddhists in the world and the *Shōmangyō* exalts the position of women in Buddhism. In sharp rivalry with the Shingon School and from a reaction to the aristocratically exclusive Nara schools, the Tendai School tried in every way to win over lay people. So, Tendai scholars elevated Shōtoku well above his contemporaries such as the aristocrat Soga no Umako and Empress Suiko. Nevertheless, he had originally had nothing to do with the sūtra readings attributed to him.

This emerging picture of Shōtoku reveals a nationalist tendency, which caused the accomplishments of Korean immigrants in the very earliest Buddhist development to disappear in Shōtoku's aggrandized shadow. Nationalists concocted the cultural and religious achievements of Korean immigrants, the matriarchy of Suiko and the enormous open-mindedness of the protector of immigrants, Soga no Umako. The Buddhism of Shōtoku's time has become more clearly apparent through his demythologization. According to J.H. Kamstra,<sup>35</sup> Empress Suiko, as the national shamaness and deity, was a powerful supporter of Buddhism which had not yet quite rid itself of family tutelary deity worship. Thus, in accordance with the social structure of the period, she shaped Japan's religious climate. In this, she was strongly supported by advisors such as the Soga clan leader, Soga no Umako, her nephew Shōtoku and by many Korean immigrants. By omitting Korea as one of the countries at the center of the transmission of the Dharma to Japan, Gyōnen essentially supports the nationalistic position of his predecessors although taking it in a novel direction.

33 Yi Yeongja, trans., pp. 3134.

34 J.H. Kamstra considers the commentary on the *Hokke-kyō* as a work of a Tendai scholar. But, Ishida Mizumaro introduces an assertion that all of the three commentaries by Shōtoku might be written by Korean immigrants. Refer to J.H. Kamstra, p. 412 and Yi Yeongja, trans., pp. 3233.

35 J.H. Kamstra, p. 457.