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Contingent and Contested

Preliminary Remarks on Buddhist Catalogs and Canons in Early Japan

This article explores the notion of the Buddhist canon in seventh- and eighth-century Japan. It relies on scriptorium documents, temple records, and manuscripts of catalogs to argue that there was no single Buddhist canon in ancient Japan; each was created at a particular moment in a unique configuration to respond to the needs of the patron and the monastic community. For this reason, Buddhist canons in the Japanese case are best understood in the plural. But rather than simply focusing on what the canon was as a noun, this article examines the dynamic processes through which canons were produced as systematized collections of texts. It shows how monks, rulers, and administrators in the capital consulted continental catalogs but were never bound by them. Canon copying provided a means for individuals at court to demonstrate their mastery over the Buddhist tradition.

KEYWORDS: canon—catalog—Shōsōin—sutra copying—Nara Buddhism—Genbō

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ACCORDING to the *Continued Chronicles of Japan* (*Shoku Nihongi* 6/18/746; SNKBT 14: 28–31), the Japanese monk Genbō 玄昉 (?–746) returned to his homeland in 735 with “some 5,000 scrolls of Buddhist sutras” after spending nearly twenty years in China. Because this number is close to the 5,048 scrolls deemed canonical by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*¹—a Chinese text that set the standard for the contents and organization of the canon throughout East Asia—scholars for many years assumed that Genbō imported the entire Tang Buddhist canon. More recent research has suggested that this was likely not the case. In fact, Genbō was quite selective, choosing works that accorded with his interests and only collecting about half of the titles in the *Kaiyuan Catalog* during his time abroad.² Amongst the thousands of scrolls that Genbō did return with, the *Kaiyuan Catalog* itself arguably had a larger impact on Japanese Buddhism than any other title. The arrival of this text introduced a state-of-the-art continental definition of canonicity to the Japanese court. This was a concept that the royals sponsoring canon-copying projects could not ignore but also never fully obeyed.

The case of Genbō and the large scale transcription efforts that followed his return shed light on issues that are central to the study of Japanese religions, Buddhology, and religious studies. The period from 651, when the term “canon” (*issaikyō* 一切經) first appears in Japanese historical records, through the end of the eighth century, represents a time of unprecedented interest in the canon in Japan.³ During this time, textual production exploded; extant Buddhist

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1. See T no. 2154. The full title is *Record of Śākya[muni’s] Teachings from the Kaiyuan* [Era] 開元釋教錄, but I will abbreviate it as *Kaiyuan Catalog* throughout this article.

2. YAMAMOTO Yukio’s recent work on this topic places the number of scriptures imported by Genbō at 614 titles totaling 2,401 scrolls. Of these, 564 titles in 2,166 scrolls correspond to works deemed canonical by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*; see YAMAMOTO 2006, 320–19. For a chart listing works Genbō imported, see YAMAMOTO 2007. In addition to scripture, Genbō likely returned with a number of commentaries, which may make the total closer to the 5,000 scrolls listed in the *Shoku Nihongi*. However, this topic requires further research. For some preliminary remarks on the commentaries, see YAMAMOTO 2006, esp. 317 and 297–96.

3. The term *issaikyō* is by far the most common designation used for canon in early Japan. My searches are based on the Tokyo Historiographical Institute’s database of Nara period docu-

works climbed from around 2,000 unique scrolls of scripture to titles totaling nearly 7,000 scrolls. Records from court circles alone cite twenty canon-copying projects from the Nara period, a pace of one canon every three to four years and roughly 100,000 scrolls altogether. The designation “constant copying” (*jōsha* 常寫), which was used to refer to canon transcription in documents from an officially sanctioned sutra-copying office, proved apt; the bureau was almost always transcribing canons throughout its nearly fifty-year history. Copying canons was, in fact, the primary job of the official sutra-copying bureaus.⁴ In order to understand early Japanese Buddhism, therefore, one must account for one of the era’s most central practices: canon transcription.⁵

In Buddhist studies, the stakes in defining the canon are particularly high. While recent research has highlighted the importance of scriptures problematically referred to as “apocrypha,” a topic I will return to in this article, Buddhology, as a field, remains grounded in texts deemed canonical by early Buddhist councils, medieval monks, and modern scholars. This attention to canonical works is appropriate; these texts have played a central role in shaping the tradition from the past to the present day. Even research into so-called apocryphal works requires an understanding of the contours of the Buddhist canon. The Japanese example offers a particularly well-documented case study of the processes through which canons are formed: thousands of documents from the Shōsōin 正倉院 collection record the day-to-day activities of an eighth-century office responsible for canon production. Beyond these sources, thousands of manuscripts of sutras and catalogs shed additional light on notions of canonicity in the centuries following the introduction of Buddhism to Japan.

For religious studies, the Japanese case provides rich data for a host of questions about the canon more generally. How does a canon relate to a catalog?

ments. A search for *issaikyō* returned 6,137 hits. The term also appears in national histories such as the *Nihon shoki* and the *Shoku Nihongi*. The related term *daizōkyō* 大藏經 seems to have been far less common. In later periods, new ideas of canonicity emerged both through the collection of materials such as *shōgyō* 聖教 (sacred teachings) and through exclusive practices connected to a single text such as the chanting of the *daimoku* (the title of the *Lotus Sutra*). For a provocative analysis of the relationship between *shōgyō* and canonicity, see RUPPERT 2012. For an exploration of Nichiren’s use of the *Lotus Sutra* and its implications toward the concept of canonicity, see DOLCE 1998.

4. For the best overview of this office’s institutional history, see YAMASHITA 1999c. For the term “constant copying,” see SONODA 1974, 26–37.

5. The closure of the canon-copying bureau in 776 marked the end of the peak period of canon transcription in Japan. Canon-copying activities underwent a resurgence in the tenth through twelfth centuries, as patrons such as Fujiwara no Michinaga and the retired sovereign Shirakawa sponsored numerous canon-copying projects; see BLAIR 2008, 63–118 and KAMIKAWA 2008, 133–71.

Does the term “canon” point to a singular stable entity with a clear referent? Is the canonicity of a given text fixed or temporary? Are canons universal or local? How do they emerge?⁶ This article will provide some preliminary responses to these questions based on the rich extant manuscript evidence from early Japan.

I will argue that there was no single Buddhist canon in ancient Japan; each was created at a particular moment in a unique configuration to respond to the needs of the patron and the monastic community. In emphasizing plurality over singularity, I am not simply repeating calls to recognize differences between formal canons as ideas and the realities of manuscript cultures on the ground.⁷ While I agree with the scholars who have emphasized the plurality of canons in physical forms, I hope to take the critique one step further by pointing out not only the multifarious nature of canons as material collections of texts but also to highlight the variety of prescriptive ideas of what a canon should look like. These ideas circulated amongst a small group of individual patrons and were reworked through the constant recreation of catalogs. For this reason, catalogs will occupy a central focus of this article, as they not only outlined notions of canonicity but also provided organizational frameworks for classifying and interpreting texts.⁸ While catalogs were imported from the continent and referred to regularly, they were also themselves recreated with each transcription of the canon in original ways.

Canons and catalogs are products of contingency and contestation. The precise scale and structure of any given canon depended on a range of variables including its intended use, access to material goods and labor, availability of texts, and the doctrinal and political commitments of sponsors and clergy. Copying a canon required navigating competing goals. While some strove for an exhaustive collection of unprecedented scale, others fought to exorcise poten-

6. In framing these research questions, I have benefitted from similar studies on the canon in early Christianity as well as more general theoretical accounts. The following works have been particularly helpful: BRUCE 1988; McDONALD 2007, esp. 38–69, and 2009, esp. 11–33; METZGER 1987; SMITH 1982, 36–52, and 1998; THOMASSEN 2010; and ULRICH 2002.

7. For example, see KEYES 1983, esp. 272; COLLINS 1990; SKILLING 1997, esp. 92–93; BLACKBURN 1999, esp. 283–84; VEIDLINGER 2006, esp. 19–20; MCDANIEL 2008, 196–202; and BERKOWITZ 2009. With regard to “the Chinese canon,” Paul HARRISON (2004, 114) has astutely noted in an encyclopedia article on the topic that “the Chinese Buddhist canon’ is itself an abstraction of many highly variable collections.” Part of the purpose of this article is to show how variable it was even within the relatively narrow context of court based canon copying in Nara Japan. Other important studies on the Chinese Buddhist canon in English include LANCASTER 1979 and 1987. The best study on the topic is FANG 2006, which pays significant attention to manuscript evidence of catalogs from Dunhuang.

8. J. Z. Smith has emphasized that catalogs provide organizing principles to lists, an observation that is true for the East Asian Buddhist case as well. In addition, the normative function of some lists has been pointed out by Einar Thomassen. See SMITH 1982, 45, and 1998; and THOMASSEN 2010, 9–10.

tially problematic titles, limiting the canon to those texts that were unquestionably authentic.⁹ Thus many sponsors aspired to include as many genuine texts as possible. At the same time, they recognized the sacrifices of authority incurred by incorporating problematic works and aimed to balance these two competing goals of scale and authenticity. Understanding these dynamic processes of canon production requires attention not only to the canon as a noun signifying a stable collection of texts but also to verbs referring to processes of canonization. In other words, it is necessary to examine both what the canon was and how specific individuals constructed it.

The “Canon” in Japan Before Genbō

The tale of the Japanese Buddhist canon begins with a causative verb: “[The emperor] summoned some 2,100 monks and nuns to the Ajifu Palace 味經宮 and *had them recite* [yomashimu 使讀] the canon” (*Nihon shoki* 12/651; NKBT 68: 316–17). This 12/651 entry from the *Chronicles of Japan* marks the first appearance of the word *issaikyō* in a text compiled in Japan. Emperor Kōtoku 孝德 (r. 645–654) acts as the agent who calls the canon into existence; the recitation of the canon occurs at his will. From the start, the process of canonization is connected to the ruler of a fledgling state, a topic that we will return to repeatedly below.

While the impetus behind the recitation is clear, the meaning of the term “canon” in this context only emerges through a combination of close reading and judicious speculation. The entry records over 2,100 individuals reciting the canon. Since it was customary at these events for each monk or nun to chant from a single scroll, the term “canon” likely indicates a collection of around 2,100 scrolls. As Japanese scholars have pointed out, it is unlikely that the canon compilers referred to a Chinese catalog in defining the canon at this time.¹⁰ It seems most probable in this context—roughly a century after Buddhism’s official transmission to Japan—that Kōtoku conceived of the canon as “all the scriptures available,” the literal meaning of *issaikyō*, rather than as a particular collection of texts. The estimated 2,100 scrolls of Kōtoku’s canon, which very well may represent nearly all of the texts extant in Japan at this time, pales in comparison to the amount of Buddhist works documented in roughly contemporaneous Chinese catalogs. For example, the *Record of the Three Treasures through Successive Dynasties* (*Lidai sanbao ji*) from 597 lists 6,417 scrolls, and the *Catalog of*

9. Similar tensions have helped generate other Buddhist canons. For example, David Gray has outlined the balance between the authority of Indic works and the continued appearance of revealed ones in Tibet; see GRAY 2009, 17.

10. For an overview of these arguments, see KAMIKAWA 2008, 102–3. For the best introduction to Chinese catalogs in English, see STORCH 2014.

the *Inner Classics of the Great Tang* (*Da Tang neidian lu*), which was completed in 664, includes 8,476 scrolls (STORCH 1995, 44–45). Japanese textual practices had grown in the hundred years since Buddhism's transmission in the mid-sixth century, but the religion remained in scriptural infancy at this moment in 651.

Two decades later, Emperor Tenmu 天武 (r. 673–686) initiated the first effort to transcribe the Buddhist canon in Japan. Three entries from the *Chronicles of Japan* related to this project hint at new ideas of the canon that emerged in the twenty years after its first recorded recitation:

3/673: In this month, [the emperor] gathered scribes and began transcribing the canon at Kawara-dera. (*Nihon shoki* 3/673, NKBT 68: 410–11).

Winter, 10/3/675: [The emperor] sent envoys out in the four directions in search of the canon. (*Nihon shoki* 3/675, NKBT 68: 420–21).

8/15/677. [The emperor] held a great abstinential rite at Asuka-dera to recite the canon. The emperor progressed to the south gate and worshipped the three treasures. At this time, he summoned the imperial princes, all the other princes, and ministers, and ordered each one of them to furnish a person to leave the household [that is, become a monk]. It did not matter whether the person leaving the household was male or female or old or young. All accorded with these wishes and [he] sent them [into the priesthood]. In this manner, the great abstinential rite was held. (*Nihon shoki* 8/15/677, NKBT 68: 428–29)¹¹

As with the previous example, it is easier to identify the subject and verb than the precise referent of the object: the canon—whatever that may be—was transcribed at the order of the sovereign. What constituted the canon here is a far more difficult question, but one seemingly minor detail provides some evidence that the transcription occurred in accord with some preexisting ideas related to scale and shape. Two and a half years into the project, Tenmu sent out envoys in search of texts. This suggests that he may have had some idea that manuscripts were missing. If so, he had a notion of what a complete canon should be. Whether he had access to catalogs or if these shortcomings were simply noticed by monks and nuns at his court with continental experience is a question that the sources do not permit us to fully answer. But this small detail does suggest that some sorts of standards may have been in place, which may reflect a difference with the earlier recitation.

The context of the latter half of the seventh century provides further support for possible awareness of canonical criteria. The 650s and 660s were a period of fertile exchange with the continent, both through envoys and immigration. Immigrants and diplomatic missions brought new texts with them, including the Japanese monk Dōshō 道昭 (629–700), who returned with a number of titles

11. For studies on this canon, see MAKI 2004, 52–53 and KAMIKAWA 2008, 105–7.

that were later used as exemplars in Nara period canon-copying projects.¹² The evidence is sparse, but new notions of canonicity may have entered Japan in the latter half of the seventh century through exchange with the continent and the activities of pilgrim monks. Surely the number of texts available in Japan increased dramatically through these interactions.

Data from these seventh-century cases is limited to official chronicles, but from the eighth century a range of documentary and manuscript evidence appears. The earliest extant manuscript from a canon-copying project dates to 710 in the form of a single scroll of the *Śāriputra abhidharma-śāstra* (Ch. *Shelifu apitan lun* 舍利弗阿毘曇論). The colophonic dedicatory inscription, sponsored by a monk named Chihō 知法 (n.d.), states that the transcription aimed to “extend the blessed lifespan” of Empress Genmei 元明 (r. 707–715). Chihō’s canon followed the three basket classification, as the colophon refers to the transcription of “all the sutra, śāstra, and vinaya (*issai kyō ron oyobi ritsu* 一切經論及律).”¹³ This is the first evidence of the concept of a *tripitaka* in Japan.¹⁴ Unfortunately little other information can be gleaned about the structure of the canon from the single extant scroll and its short colophon, but the concept of canonicity has changed to include a system of classification.¹⁵

More details on early canons emerge from the 730s, the period just prior to Genbō’s return. The evidence stems from a collection of ten thousand documents stored for centuries in the imperial treasure house at Tōdaiji 東大寺 known as the Shōsōin. Shōsōin documents preserve intimate details regarding the activities of a sutra-copying office that began under Queen Consort Kōmyō 光明 (701–760), first as a private household scriptorium for transcribing primarily Buddhist works, and eventually as an officially sanctioned canon-copying bureau. Although most of the documents in the Shōsōin collection postdate Genbō’s importation of the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, a few remain from earlier eras that offer a glimpse into the shape and meaning of the canon in the first half of the

12. For example, a 654 envoy is praised for returning with many books. See *Nihon shoki* 7/654, NKBT 68: 323. For a brief English overview of exchange with the continent during this period, see VON VERSCHUER 2006, 6–7, and BATTEN 2006. For the importance of immigrant groups in the cultural, religious, and political spheres of early Japan more broadly, see COMO 2008 and 2009, as well as OOMS 2009, especially 86–104. For a study of one manuscript that was copied based on a text Dōshō imported, see LOWE 2011.

13. The manuscript is presently in the Nezu Museum. I have relied on a partial reproduction in *Nara chō shakyō*, plate 3.

14. For example, Dōshō’s obituary speaks repeatedly of “sutras and śāstra” as a pair, but is silent on the third basket. This same entry does use the term “three baskets,” but only in the context of the honorific name of the monk Xuanzang, and not to discuss actual collections of texts; see *Shoku Nihongi* 3/10/700, SNKBT 12: 22–27.

15. Another short record from Daianji cites a canon of 1,597 scrolls offered by Empress Genshō in 723; see *Daianji garan engi narabi ni ruki shizai chō*; *Nara ibun*, 368.

Nara period. For example, one early document requesting bundles to be used for a canon-copying project reads, “total for canon to be transcribed in 4,243 scrolls” (DNK 24: 14; ZSKS 28: 8). This order of materials for an intended canon yet to be copied shows that the compilers conceived of the canon as a collection of 4,243 scrolls. This number does not correspond to any extant continental sources, which suggests the possibility of a domestically produced catalog.¹⁶

The fragments of such a catalog remain in contemporaneous documents. One such piece was likely used for the early stages of the transcription of what came to be the most important canon of its time, the 5/1 canon, known after the date of its dedicatory prayer.¹⁷ The fragment records the organization of “assorted bundles of Hinayāna sutras” (小乘經雜帙; DNK 7: 8–19; ZS 12: 3), a term that shows the presence of a classification system using the two vehicle model. This is the first example of this bibliographical system in Japan.¹⁸ Altogether, it includes five bundles each containing between ten and twenty-three single scrolls, as well as a number of texts bundled separately. Notably, the order of the texts in this document does not correspond to any extant Chinese catalog. Moreover, some texts listed, such as the *Scripture on Causes and Conditions of Nitha* [“Scavenger”] (Ch. *Nidi yinyuan jing* 尼提因緣經) and the *Scripture Preached by the Buddha Himself on the Conditions of the Originally Commencing Compassionate Mind* (Ch. *Fo zishuo ben shiqi cixin yuan jing* 佛自說本始起慈心緣經), are absent from any extant continental catalog.¹⁹

This document parallels another Japanese catalog from the Bureau of Books and Drawings (DNK 12: 449–59; ZS 12: 2 verso), an official government office, as the texts in both catalogs are assigned to identical bundles.²⁰ The correspondence between these two sources highlights the consistency of Japanese catalogs from this period. While the origins of the system are murky and the possibility of reference to a no longer extant Chinese or Korean catalog cannot be denied,²¹ it is clear that this document represents an officially recognized system sanc-

16. My interpretation of this document follows YAMASHITA 1999c, 403–4.

17. For an English discussion of this project, see Lowe 2011. In Japanese, MINAGAWA 1962 and YAMASHITA 1999c, 402–62, remain the best surveys.

18. As Tanya STORCH (2014) has pointed out, the division of works into the two vehicle framework as a bibliographical classification only began in the fifth century and developed gradually over a few hundred years.

19. In addition, two other titles do not appear in continental catalogs. These are the *Sidi zhuan falun jing* 四諦轉法輪經 and *Shuti zhangzhe yinyuan jing* 樹提長者因緣經. These may be alternate titles for the *Sidi jing* 四諦經 or the *Zhuan falun jing* 轉法輪經 for the former and *Shutiqie jing* 樹提伽經 for the latter.

20. There is one small discrepancy: *Du fanzhi jing* 度梵志經 in one scroll is in bundle two of the Assorted Bundles of Hinayāna sutras but bundle four of the Bureau of Books and Drawings catalog. For more on these documents and their relationship, see YAMASHITA 1999a, 49–52 and 59–61.

21. I am unaware of any Korean catalogs. STORCH 2014 cites numerous, no longer extant Chinese catalogs.

tioned by both the Bureau of Books and Drawings and the sutra-copying office tied to Queen Consort Kōmyō.²² In this way, it can be considered a fragment of an authoritative document used in court circles for organizing collections and transcribing new canons from the period just prior to Genbō's return. A table comparing these two catalogs can be found in the appendix (online).

Each of these early efforts to recite and transcribe a canon must be understood in part as political responses to challenges facing the throne in the seventh and eighth centuries. For one, they were all either initiated by emperors and queens or copied on their behalf. Moreover, early canonical practices occurred at strategic times related to moving capitals, planning invasions, and assuming new positions of authority. The 651 ceremonial recitation of the canon, for example, marked the transition to a new palace at Naniwa no Nagara no Toyosaki 難波長柄豊碕. It was also sponsored at a time when plans were being made to attack Silla. These two events were recorded in the same entry in the *Chronicles of Japan* as the recitation.²³ Next, Tenmu's transcription began in 673, immediately after his coronation, which was made possible by his victory over his rival Prince Ōtomo 大友 (648–672)—the designated heir—in the Jinshin War.²⁴ Transcribing the canon was one of Tenmu's first acts as a ruler and, therefore, must be understood as an effort to both solidify his still unstable position as a sovereign who gained power through violent force, and perhaps also to gain penance for the blood left on his hands. The Chihō canon contains a prayer for the sovereign and dates to a time soon after the capital was moved to Nara, continuing a theme of producing a canon upon establishing a capital, a strategy first seen with Kōtoku. Kōmyō initiated the 5/1 canon shortly after becoming the first non-royal to receive the rank of Queen Consort, a title that gave her children priority to the throne. In all of these cases, the decision to copy the canon came at a time when the patron needed to demonstrate newly gained power. Canon copying by royals from this early period, therefore, functioned within the broader Buddhist and non-Buddhist symbolic strategies of legitimation employed by the court at this time.²⁵ Here, Anne Blackburn's more general comments ring true: "To possess religious texts, or to support their production, is often (especially in a manuscript culture) a display of wealth and power."²⁶

22. The best study of the sutras in the Bureau of Books and Drawings is SAKAEBARA 2000, 177–231.

23. For more on this palace, see FARRIS 1998, 136–41. The planned attack on Silla was a response to an incident in which a Silla official wore Tang clothes to the Japanese court.

24. For an overview of the Jinshin War in English, see DUTHIE 2014, 123–59.

25. For more on these symbolic strategies, see OOMS 2009.

26. See BLACKBURN 2012, 151. For a more general discussion of the canon and politics in the Japanese case, see KAMIKAWA 2008, 100–211.

The 5/1 Canon and the (In)significance of the Kaiyuan Catalog

Genbō's contributions to the court were numerous. He healed the mother of Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (r. 724–749), who had been in a state of severe depression for decades, and rose to the position of supreme priest (*sōjō* 僧正), the highest office in the Bureau of Priestly Affairs (*sōgō* 僧綱). Even more significant for the history of Japanese Buddhism was his importation of the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, a Chinese text that came to define the canon on the continent. As TOKUNO (1990, 52–53) states:

[The *Kaiyuan Catalog*] is generally regarded as the single most important bibliographical catalog in terms of the role it played in the history of East Asian Buddhist canonical publications.... It was adopted as an official catalog soon after its completion, and its register of canonical texts served as the standard for the Tang canon. The content and organization of all successive canons from the late Tang period on were based on this catalog, the only major difference being the addition of later translations and compositions.

In particular, the final two scrolls, which outlined texts to enter the canon—first intended descriptively but soon adopted prescriptively—became the basic reference source for determining canonicity not only in Tang China but in Nara Japan as well.²⁷

The importation of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* had an immediate effect on Japanese Buddhism, as seen through an analysis of the 5/1 canon, which, as noted above, was initiated by Queen Consort Kōmyō a few years prior to Genbō's introduction of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* to the court. It eventually grew into an imperially sanctioned canon. Within two years of Genbō's return, progress reports on this canon began describing it as following the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. The earliest of these documents, dated to 737, contains the heading "5,048 scrolls to be copied for the canon in accord with the *Kaiyuan Catalog*" followed by a breakdown of texts sorted into categories of Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna sutra, *vinaya*, and *śāstra*, as well as collections and biographies of sages and worthies (DNK 17: 51–52; ZS 1: 6). Under each of these categories appears the total number of texts that had been copied to date as well as those yet to be copied. The number 5,048 corresponds to the total number of canonical texts outlined in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*'s final two scrolls.²⁸ Two additional documents from 739 (DNK 2: 157–58 [ZS 17: 3]) and 740 (DNK 7: 485–86; ZS 17: 3), issued as "Memoranda from the Bureau of Sutra Transcription," contain nearly identical headings and updated progress reports.²⁹

27. For more on the significance of this catalog, see STORCH 2014, 123–28.

28. For more on the role of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* in structuring the 5/1 canon, see YAMASHITA 1999a, 49–52.

29. There is a slight variance in the headings. In place of the term *issaikyō* (canon), the 740 document uses the phrase "Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna sutras, *Vinaya*, and *Śāstra*, as well as collections,

These headings show that the administrators at Kōmyō's scriptorium treated the *Kaiyuan Catalog* as the source of the 5/1 canon from this time.

Scriptorium officials did not only follow the number of scrolls outlined in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, they also adopted its organizational scheme. A catalog produced at the Nara scriptorium in 741 related to the 5/1 canon lists sutra titles in the exact order in which they appear in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, merely skipping over the texts that had not yet been copied (DNK 12: 99–147 [ZZS 13: 1]). Similarly, the collection of texts at the Bureau of Books and Drawings, which as we saw above had previously followed a domestic cataloging system, was reorganized to accord with the arrangement of texts employed by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. Genbō's return prompted the court to shift its conception of the canon to one that accorded with the most recent continental standards.

While the influence of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* is undeniable, particularly with regard to organizational schemes, Kōmyō's project continued to innovate and evolve. For one, administrators incorporated numerous texts into the 5/1 canon that did not accord with the *Kaiyuan Catalog*'s normative definition of canonicity (Ch. *ruzang jing* 入藏經), even after they had begun to refer to these standards carefully. Texts that entered the 5/1 canon included extracts, duplicates, and suspicious and spurious works—all texts that appeared elsewhere in the *Kaiyuan Catalog* but not in its canonical lists in the nineteenth and twentieth scrolls—as well as works that were simply not recorded in the *Kaiyuan Catalog* at all, such as commentaries and a range of other scripture. While Queen Consort Kōmyō appears to have been relatively cautious with regard to suspicious and spurious works, her general goal was to compose as exhaustive a canon as possible. In fact, the 5/1 project eventually exceeded 6,500 scrolls, a number that dwarfs the 5,048 scrolls deemed canonical by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*.³⁰ The *Kaiyuan Catalog*, therefore, represented a set of guiding principles, what Jack GOODY (1998, 6) has called “a fixed point of reference,” as opposed to a normative definition. Queen Consort Kōmyō used the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, but she was not bound to it. She could simultaneously demonstrate her command over continental standards while also attempting to surpass them.

The flexibility of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* is reflected in the manuscript cultures as well. In the age of printing and standardized collections, it is easy to think that the *Kaiyuan Catalog* existed in a single edition. Careful attention to manuscripts, however, reveals that the catalog itself was rewritten in early Japan. A manuscript of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* from Kongōji 金剛寺 reveals several emendations and

biographies, and so on.” The 737 document also inserts the word “canon” before the number of scrolls and crosses out the word “canon” from what had originally read “Kaiyuan Canon Catalog.”

30. It should be noted that not all of the texts deemed canonical by the *Kaiyuan Catalog* had been imported in the Nara period.

TABLE 1. Emendations to Scroll Nineteen of Kongōji and Hōryūji Manuscripts.

TITLE	SCROLLS	NOTES
光讚般若波羅蜜經	10	
注金剛般若經	1	Annotated by Huijing 慧淨
注金剛般若經	1	Annotated by Sengzhao (僧肇; listed as肇法師)
勝鬘師子吼經	2	
注涅槃經	72 ^a	
注涅槃經	30	
注法華經	7 ^b	
注維摩經	8	
注維摩經	6	
法華玄論	10 (?) ^c	Listed as external to the catalog (錄外) in main body
華嚴論	50	Listed as external to the catalog in main body
世親佛性論	4	Listed as external to the catalog in main body
攝大乘論釋	12	Listed as “Additionally [<i>mata</i> 又]” in main body next to fifteen scroll version.

- a. The main body gives seventy, but this is likely a scribal error. Other sources such as Shōsōin documents list seventy-two.
- b. The main body has ten, but this is likely a scribal error as seven and ten appear similar in character form. Seven can be found in other sources such as Shōsōin documents.
- c. In the main body, as well as Shōsōin documents, this text is listed as ten scrolls. In both the Kongōji and Hōryūji final lists, it appears as fifty. This is likely a case of transposition by the scribe in a manuscript of common lineage, as the subsequent text is listed as fifty scrolls.

inconsistencies with the Taishō edition.³¹ The most glaring appears at the end of scroll nineteen, which records canonical Mahāyāna texts. This scroll, along with number twenty, which lists Hīnayāna works as well as biographies, provides the list of texts deemed canonical and was thus used as a reference for copying the canon. The end of scroll nineteen in published print editions contains a summary of the number of texts listed previously, a passage that is mirrored in the Kongōji manuscript. But the Kongōji manuscript continues after this summary with an additional list of nine annotated sutra titles and four abhidharmic works (the complete list appears in TABLE 1). A colophon after this list of emendations reads: “The above nine sutras and four *śāstras* totaling 201 scrolls are not listed in the extensive catalog [that is, the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, as received], but they have been appended, because they are titles that were transcribed.”

Each of these thirteen titles had also been inserted into the main body of scroll nineteen. Three of the *śāstras* have notes in the body marking them off as “external to the catalog,” a paradoxical designation, since they are included in this manuscript version of the catalog. The other is an alternate twelve scroll edition of the normally fifteen scroll *Compendium of the Great Vehicle* (Skt. *Mahāyāna saṃgraha-śāstra*; Ch. *She dasheng lun shi* 攝大乘論釋) with the phrase “additionally” (*mata* 又) inserted before its title, marking it as a second version. The annotated texts are labeled “annotations” (*chū* 注) above the title of each sutra in the main body of the scroll to mark them off. In addition to the thirteen texts listed at the end of the scroll, I have found at least one other emendation in the main text: a one-scroll copy of the *Scripture on the Superior Dhāraṇī of the Great Buddha’s Crown* (Ch. *Da Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 大佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經). The colophon and emendations found in the Kongōji edition correspond to a Heian-period manuscript from Hōryūji now in the Ōtani University Museum collection that has been studied by Miyazaki Kenji.³² This suggests a common lineage of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* that circulated widely in Japan. These manuscripts adopted additional texts not included in the original Chinese version. All of the emended texts listed in these manuscript versions of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* also appear in Nara period Shōsōin documents. The *Kaiyuan Catalog* manuscripts date to the Heian and Kamakura periods,³³

31. I viewed images of the manuscript in the database housed at the library of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies in Tokyo and would like to thank Ochiai Toshinori for helping to arrange my stay there.

32. MIYAZAKI 2006, 375–79. Although his published chapter does not address the *Da Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing*, Miyazaki Kenji has confirmed the presence of this text in the *Kaiyuan Catalog* from Hōryūji, currently in the Ōtani University Museum. He also suggested that the Kōshōji 興正寺 edition may be of the same lineage, though this requires further research. Personal correspondence, 23 September 2014.

33. For the dating of the Kongōji manuscript, I have followed the Kongōji catalog compiled by Ochiai Toshinori; see OCHIAI 2007, 400.

CANON NAME	NO. OF SCROLLS	CONTENTS	TYPE
5/1	~6500	S, V, A, B, E, C	A
Initially Transcribed	3,850–4,000	S, V, A, E	C
Latter Transcribed	3461 ^a	S, V, E, C	E
Jingo Keiun	6,500+	S, V, A, B, E, C	A
Kōmyō Vowed	3,433 (planned)	S, V	F
Kōmyō Memorial	5,330	S, V, A, B, E	B
Kibi Yuri (Saidaiji Shi ō Hall)	5,282	S, V, A, B, E, C	A
Saidaiji Yakushi Hall	2,942	S, V, A, [C]	D
Saidaiji Miroku Hall	4,613	S, V, A, [C]	D
Saidaiji Jūichimen Hall	4,383	S, V, A, C	D
Kō set canon	4,640	S, V, A, E	C
Initial First Set	4,585	S, V, A, E	C
Beginning Two Sets	4,609	S, V, A, E	C
Further Two sets	4,609	S, V, A, E	C

a. YAMAMOTO Yukio 2002, 360–61, note 68, mentions that there were thirty duplicates, so the total could also be considered 3,431. The relevant document for both totals is DNK 11: 83–89 (ZZS 2: 5).

TABLE 2. Selected Canons from Nara Japan.

but they reveal continuity with Nara ideas of canonicity. Their inclusion of these extra-canonical works both reflected and shaped the canon as understood in early Japan.³⁴

The Many Canons of Early Japan

While the 5/1 canon was arguably the most important sutra copying undertaking of the Nara period, in that it was the largest canon at the time of its transcription and was used as a source text and for proofreading with many later canon projects, it by no means had the final word on the definition of canonicity in early

34. While the *Zhenyuan Catalog* (compiled 800 CE; full title *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*) eventually surpassed the *Kaiyuan Catalog* as the basis for canonicity in Japan, similar deviations continue in its manuscript cultures. This text, which was imported by Kūkai, was essentially an expansion of the *Kaiyuan Catalog*; the *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* followed the *Kaiyuan Catalog*'s structure including the preface, dedication, and comments, but also included some newly translated and other additional works. As other scholars have noted, many Japanese manuscript editions of the *Zhenyuan Catalog* contain a number of Three Stages Teachings texts.

Japan. In fact, no canon can claim this honor. Almost every canon produced in the Nara period had a different composition from those that preceded it and those that followed it. This becomes clear when we look at the aggregate data for eighth-century canons in terms of the number of scrolls transcribed and the types of texts included in a given canon.³⁵

TABLE 2 lists Nara period canons for which there is data regarding the number of total scrolls. It classifies canons into six types based on their composition. Type A canons contain sutra, *vinaya*, *śāstra* [abhidharma], biographies, extracts, and commentaries. Type B canons omit commentaries. Type C also excludes biographies. Type D includes commentaries, but they do not contain biographies and extracts, or at least the available documents are silent about these types of texts. Types E and F skip the abhidharmic corpus altogether, with the former including commentaries and extracts related to sutras and *vinaya* and the latter stripped down to simply sutras and *vinaya*.³⁶

From this table, it is obvious that there was significant variation in what constituted the canon, both in terms of the number of total scrolls and the types of texts included. At a minimum, a canon required just two of the famous three baskets: namely, *sutra* and *vinaya*, leaving out the exegetical literature known as *śāstra* or abhidharma.³⁷ Some canons, however, incorporated a range of texts that extend well beyond the three-basket classification system such as commentaries and excerpts, not to mention numerous suspicious, spurious, and extra-canonical works that had been deemed non-canonical by Chinese catalogs. It is

I have examined a digital edition of a fragment from Kongōji in the database at the library of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies in Tokyo and confirmed a similar structure. It is likely that these alternate manuscript versions of the *Zhenyuan Catalog* enabled many Three Stages texts that were lost in China to reappear at Nanatsudera in Nagoya. For more on this issue, see HUBBARD 1999. For detailed studies of manuscripts of the *Zhenyuan Catalog*, see TSUKAMOTO 1957, OCHIAI 1998, and MIYAZAKI 2006, 391–418.

35. Some of the data in TABLE 2 derives from MIYAZAKI 2006, 6–7, but I have heavily modified it for my use here. I have omitted the titles for which we do not have sufficient information regarding scroll numbers and contents (Miyazaki's chart contains all recorded canon copying projects) and added and updated some of the data. The contents section excludes categories of spurious, suspicious, and extra-canonical texts, a topic that will be addressed in detail below.

36. Type F canons may have included extracts and some commentaries, but there is no firm documentation for this.

37. The third basket is often referred to as abhidharma in the Indic context, but it seems that the character 論, which constitutes one of the baskets in East Asia, was often used to translate *śāstra*, as many texts include both the transliteration of *abhidharma* 阿毘曇 and the character 論 in their titles. Lewis Lancaster has argued that this three basket classification is erroneous since most canons were not ordered in these classic divisions; see LANCASTER 1979, 217. He may overstate his case somewhat, as the three baskets are employed in Chinese catalogs, but often refined with a number of additional classificatory schema.

not only the types of texts included that differed from canon to canon but also the number; even canons that utilized the same kinds of texts contained different numbers of scrolls. Clearly, canons existed in the plural for Nara Japan.

This plurality should come as little surprise to those who work on South-east Asian or Tibetan materials. Scholars researching these Buddhist traditions have repeatedly pointed out the discrepancies between formal canons as ideas and the realities of manuscript cultures on the ground.³⁸ But this explanation does not quite explain the early Japanese case. What is well documented for Nara Japan (710–784) is that there were multiple ideas of the canon circulating simultaneously. In other words, discrepancies were not simply a product of manuscript access and preservation. The idea of what a canon *should be* is made visible through scriptorium documents that list what texts were intended to be transcribed for a particular project. These prescriptive lists outline an idealized as opposed to a practical form of the canon and show just as much variation as the descriptive lists, which record what was actually copied. In some cases, such as the Kōmyō vowed canon (type Ƒ), the total reflects plans for the scale of the canon—not the actual number of manuscripts copied, as she died before the project was completed. Plurality, therefore, cannot be reduced to manuscript cultures, but instead speaks to multiple and competing visions over normative definitions of canonicity. The very idea of the Buddhist canon, to borrow a phrase from Steve Collins, was far from singular.

Two canons sponsored by Emperor Shōmu, one of the paragons of pious patronage in early Japan, show that competing ideas could exist in parallel even for canons commissioned by a single individual and copied simultaneously through the same institution. Shōmu sponsored at least three canons in his lifetime and two of these were transcribed alongside one another in 746–748 through the Office of Sutra Transcription.³⁹ The first, known as the “Initially Transcribed Canon” (*sensha issaikyō* 先寫一切經), included Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna sutra, *vinaya*, and *śāstra* (*daishōjō kyōritsuron* 大小乘經律論), as well as extracts (*besshō* 別生). This canon was composed of somewhere between 3,850 to 4,000 scrolls. This contrasts with the other canon sponsored by Shōmu known as the “Latter Transcribed Canon” (*kōsha issaikyō* 後寫一切經), which despite its name was primarily copied at the exact same time as the “Initially Transcribed Canon.” This version only contained two baskets: sutra and *vinaya*, totaling 3,461 scrolls.

38. See sources cited in footnote 7 above.

39. The first, known as the “Initially Transcribed Canon,” was initiated in 743 by Emperor Shōmu but was suspended after eight months. It resumed again in 746 and was finished by the spring of 748; most of the copying occurred between 746 and 748. The second, known as the “Latter Transcribed Canon,” began in 746 and was finished in 748 about five months after the “Initially Transcribed Canon”; see HARUNA 1995 and YAMASHITA 1999C, 439–49.

But this “Latter Transcribed Canon” did incorporate commentaries. These are texts that would have been useful for scholastic activities. Although it is somewhat speculative, this feature may provide insight into the intended use of these canons. The first aimed to be exhaustive in terms of the three baskets but did not seem concerned with the commentarial tradition. The second was designed to contain the types of texts monks would be most likely to use. It is probable that these different versions were designed to serve different purposes. The canon was in part a product of its function. The same individual could simultaneously produce multiple canons even when relying on identical institutions.

What to do with Non-Canonical Works?

As discussed in the above two sections, both Nara canons and the manuscript versions of the catalogs they were based on included a range of works deemed “external to the catalog.” While the manuscripts of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* only included thirteen of these texts in the appendix, canons from the Nara period often incorporated a much higher total. In fact, four of the canons in TABLE 2 contain more scrolls than the 5,048 scrolls outlined in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. The 5/1 and *Jingo keiun* projects, which represent the most authoritative canons of the Nara period, each surpassed 6,000 scrolls. These projects grew to such scales because they included a range of texts beyond those deemed canonical by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*.

In many cases, Nara period canons incorporated works that would have been considered relatively harmless. For example, excerpted sections of larger canonical sutras (Ch. *biesheng*; Jp. *besshō* 別生) and duplicates—texts with different titles but identical content—were copied into the canon whenever they were available in early Japan.⁴⁰ Here, the compilers chose to include any version of the authentic words of the Buddha (Skt. *buddhavacana*). As outlined above, commentaries and biographies were incorporated into many canons as well. These texts would have been useful for doctrinal studies and preaching. In addition, canons, including three at Saidaiji, contained texts labeled “External to the Catalog” (*mokuroku gai* [目録外]), a term that is used repeatedly in Shōsōin documents.⁴¹ These are texts that may or may not appear in the first eighteen scrolls of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* but are absent from its final two scrolls. They may have been included in Nara canons simply to create a record for posterity of works that compilers were unsure of. In fact, it was the norm to include at least some of the above texts: excerpts, duplicates, biographies, commentaries, and even extra-canonical

40. Much of the following discussion has benefited from groundbreaking work by Yamashita Yumi. In particular, see YAMASHITA 2000. For more on *besshō* in Japanese canons, see OCHIAI 1999.

41. For Saidaiji, see *Nara ibun*, 405–7. For more on these texts in Shōsōin documents, see YAMASHITA 2000.

works were all copied fairly indiscriminately. As YAMASHITA Yumi (2000, 47–49) has argued, the sponsors of projects such as the 5/1 canon aimed for exhaustiveness above all else. Here, Nara canons share the inclusivist quality of the Tibetan *Bstan gyur*, as has been argued by Christian WEDEMEYER (2009). In the Japanese case, the aspirations toward scale support the political goals of canon making: bigger canons would have better demonstrated a ruler's capabilities to secure and reproduce impressively large collections of texts.

While it is sensible for temple collections to incorporate many of the above works, it is perhaps more surprising that many canons included texts deemed suspicious and spurious by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*.⁴² As with the inclusion of extra-canonical texts, this seems to have been a self-conscious decision, rather than mere carelessness. For example, the Saidaiji Jūchimen Hall included twenty scrolls explicitly labeled in temple documents as “spurious and suspicious” (*Nara ibun*, 407). Documents related to the Kōmyō memorial canon similarly mention nine works deemed “suspicious and spurious” in the sources themselves, as well as extra-canonical works, extracts, and biographies (DNK 15: 104 [ZZS 2: 1]). But it would be an overstatement to argue that suspicious and spurious texts were included indiscriminately. Yamashita Yumi has performed a statistical analysis of assorted texts incorporated into the 5/1 canon. While most works such as extracts were copied whenever they were available, only about forty percent of suspicious and spurious works appearing in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*'s non-canonical lists (*bu ruzang mulu* 不入藏目錄) and extant in Japan were copied for the 5/1 canon. This relatively high exclusion rate shows that compilers were generally cautious about adding titles explicitly deemed non-canonical on the grounds of being suspicious and spurious.

These suspicious and spurious texts only sometimes entered the canon, but their inclusion affected the types of beliefs and practices circulating in the capital. For example, one text known as the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* (*Jiuhu shenming jing*) was deemed non-canonical by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, but was inserted into the 5/1 canon (DNK 7: 89 [ZZS 16: 8]).⁴³ Its reason

42. For more on these categories of suspicious and spurious, see BUSWELL 1990, TOKUNO 1990, SWANSON 1998, and HUBBARD 2007, 20–25.

43. The picture is slightly more complicated. The text was actually copied twice as part of the 5/1 canon. The first time was in the early years of the canon-copying project, which predates the period when Genbō had imported the *Kaiyuan Catalog*; see DNK 7: 12 (ZZS 12: 3). As Yamashita Yumi has shown, the document mentioning this initial transcription likely records the earliest efforts of what would later become the 5/1 canon; see YAMASHITA 1999c, 403–8. Here, the sutra is counted as a Hinayāna work in the tally of texts copied, but a memo over this label marks it as a Mahāyāna scripture. It is debatable if we can call the presence of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* here in the canon an “oversight,” as the *Kaiyuan Catalog* had not yet been imported. The text was then copied a second time after Genbō imported the *Kaiyuan Catalog*; in this second transcription, the exemplar used belonged to Genbō.

for inclusion is unclear, but Genbō's personal influence may have played a role, since he imported a copy of this text (DNK 7: 89 [ZZS 16: 8]); alternatively, it may have been included since Chinese catalogs disagreed about its authenticity.⁴⁴ Once it gained canonical status in the Nara period, it also garnered significant attention at court. In 742, Queen Consort Kōmyō sponsored the transcription of one hundred copies of this text, with many of them copied on expensive colored paper. The transcription of this text, which centers on protection from demonic attacks, responded to fear over the potential instability following Shōmu's abdication to his daughter, Princess Abe, the first woman to be designated crown prince.⁴⁵ Once deemed canonical, the text could then be employed to protect the throne and subdue malefic spirits.

In incorporating problematic works, the court showed that they were not bound to continental standards. While a group's ability to close a canon has frequently been understood as an expression of authority, perhaps the ability to open it again serves as an even stronger display. Here, J. Z. SMITH's statement that "closure need not be permanent ... closure may well need to be understood as a relative category" (1998, 306) proves useful. If anything, a canon is an attempt at closure, but one that is never entirely successful. What was once closed could in fact be reopened and closed again. Making a canon is an endless effort at having the last word.

Restructuring the Canon

This article has focused on the number and types of texts included in Nara canons. Canons, however, are not only collections of texts. They are also systems of organization.⁴⁶ As noted above, the earliest catalogs used in Japan divided works into Hīnayāna versus Mahāyāna and further classified them into categories of sutra, *vinaya*, and *śāstra*. At the same time, some borderline texts reveal the fluidity of these systems. For example, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and the *Scripture on Rāhula's Forbearance* (*Luoyun renru jing* 羅云忍辱經) were both reclassified as Mahāyāna works, as revealed through marginal proofreading notes above the two titles. This goes against the Chinese catalogs, which labeled them as Hīnayāna or even dubious for the case of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. Although the reason for this change is unclear, the reclassification of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*

44. Catalogs have a mixed assessment of this text, with some listing it as dubious and others attributing it to Zhu Tanwulan. For a Japanese assessment of the text's appearance in Chinese catalogs, see SUWA 1996, 530–34 and MASUO 1996, 816–18. For an English-language assessment and a complete translation of the sutra itself, see LOWE 2014.

45. For a study of this sutra copying project, see LOWE 2012, 282–348.

46. This point has been made by SONODA (1971, 12–13).

may again reflect Genbō's influence and could contribute to the rise of this work to canonical status.

One of the key organizational developments introduced by the *Kaiyuan Catalog* was the emergence of the notion of the "five major [Mahāyāna] categories" (Ch. *wu dabu*; Jp. *godaiibu* 五大部): namely, *Prajñā* 般若部, *Ratnakūta* 寶積部, *Mahāsaṃnipāta* 大集部, *Avataṃsaka* 華嚴部, and *Nirvāṇa* 涅槃部. This arrangement was original to the *Kaiyuan Catalog* and represented a significant development of a classification scheme based on doctrinal content. As noted above, soon after the *Kaiyuan Catalog* was imported, texts were rearranged to follow its order, simply skipping over non-extant works. Almost every canon produced after the importation of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* employed this classification system.

The canon known as the Initial Set Canon (*sen ichibu issaikyō* 先一部一切經), sponsored by the late Nara female ruler Empress Shōtoku, the same Princess Abe who succeeded her father Shōmu, contains a few important exceptions to standard practices. This was the only canon transcription project in the Nara period administered by monks; all other canons were managed by lay administrators. Perhaps surprisingly, this clerically administered canon contains a few abnormalities related to the *Avataṃsaka* section of the canon. First, while the *Prajñā* section was typically copied first in Nara period canons, the Initial Single Set Canon began with transcription of the *Flower Garland Sutra* in eighty scrolls.⁴⁷ This change in order highlights the importance of the *Avataṃsaka* to the Initial Single Set Canon. This likely reflects the priorities of the monks supervising this project, who hailed from Tōdaiji, the center of *Avataṃsaka* studies in Japan. Moreover, the chief monk managing this canon, Jicchū 実忠, was planning a lecture on the *Flower Garland Sutra* at this time. The change in order of this Tōdaiji project suggests that it was by design.

More significantly, the *Avataṃsaka* section of this canon contains two works that are not designated as such according to the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. This is curious, since the rest of the canon and every other canon copied after the importation of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* classifies these two titles as *Ratnakūta* (MORI 2001, 94). Both sutras are somewhat obscure, but it seems possible that their obscurity enabled them to be slipped into this section unquestioned. The first text, the *Scripture of the Woman who Attained No Impurities* (Skt. *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā*

47. The fact that the project started with the *Flower Garland Sutra* in eighty scrolls is supported by research into scribal self-reports (*shujitsu* 手實) for this canon (DNK 17: 198–236 [ZS 20: 1]). Since the reports are arranged in reverse chronological order, the earliest documents appear at the left-hand side of this long scroll on a sheet recording the activities of Mononobe no Shiromaro 物部白麻呂, who transcribed the fourth bundle of the eighty-scroll *Flower Garland Sutra*; about a month later, he reports he had transcribed a section of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. For more on this sutra copying project in general, see SAKAEHARA 2003, 398–407 and MORI 2001.

Sūtra; Ch. *De wugou nü jing*), tells the tale of a princess who bests many of the great bodhisattvas in debate. After doing so, she transforms herself to a male and reveals that she is a bodhisattva, who had chosen to appear in female form (MORI 2001, 94). We know the patron, Empress Shōtoku, was interested in scriptures that focus on the discourse of gender transformation, including another translation of this sutra.⁴⁸ In fact, Shōtoku herself performatively changed her gender upon becoming emperor; she who wore the same crown donned by male rulers and possibly even dressed in male robes, literally transforming to a man when she took the throne, much like the protagonist of the scripture.⁴⁹ Here, we see not only that this particular canon was organized in a highly idiosyncratic manner but also that the arrangement of texts functioned to meet the gendered political and doctrinal goals of a female ruler and patron.

The second text that seems out of place, entitled *Scripture Preached by Mañjuśrī on the Inconceivability of Buddha Realms* (Ch. *Wenshushili suoshuo busiyi fo jingjie jing*), has Mañjuśrī, the protagonist of the work, advance a doctrine that, in typical Mahāyāna fashion, denies all attempts at differentiation.⁵⁰ This text lacks the rich narrative of the *Scripture of the Woman who Attained No Impurities*, but there are at least two conceivable reasons why it may have been reclassified along with the other scripture. For one, Mañjuśrī, the protagonist, is portrayed as a paragon of wisdom. He has an answer for every question. In the *Scripture of the Woman who Attained No Impurities*, the princess uses her sharp intellect to silence Mañjuśrī. When read together, this second text becomes a foil that paints Mañjuśrī as a formidable figure, a move that would only make the young woman's accomplishments that much more impressive. Moreover, Shōtoku would have likely been attracted to the text's extended discussion on the theme of equality (*byōdō* 平等). Mañjuśrī repeats again and again that all is equal within a Buddha realm. While it is somewhat speculative, this doctrine could have provided Empress Shōtoku with a strategy to stave off criticisms about her sex by trying to reduce all gender difference to absolute equality from the ultimate perspective. The *Scripture of the Woman who Attained No Impurities* similarly has the

48. Specifically, Empress Shōtoku had borrowed the *Li gou shi nü jing*, which is an earlier translation of the *Vimaladattāpariṣcchā Sūtra*. She also borrowed *Wu gou xian nü jing*, *Fu zhong nü ting jing*, and *Zhuan nü shen jing*, which are three different translations of the *Strīvartavyākaraṇa Sūtra*, a text that also deals with gender transformation and promises that women can also become Buddhas, declaring gender distinctions provisional. For Shōtoku's borrowing of these texts, see KATSUURA 2000, 272–76.

49. For more on this see KATSUURA 2000, 276–79 and TAKEDA 1995.

50. These two texts appear next to one another in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, so at first it seems like they could have simply been selected together. But from other sources, we know that Empress Shōtoku grouped a different translation of the *Vimaladattāpariṣcchā Sūtra* with another Mañjuśrī text, so it seems likely that the choice here was more than accidental. See KATSUURA 2000, 274.

protagonist state that awakening has neither the body of a male or a female. This vision accorded with Empress Shōtoku's own view of her position as the ruler; as KATSUURA (2000, 277–78) has argued, Empress Shōtoku saw herself as, in part, transcending gender distinctions upon ascending the throne. Here, the absolute equality advocated in the scripture would have similarly bolstered the claim that she was an emperor, not a woman. Jicchū could craft the canon to highlight doctrines attractive to the political needs of the ruler. This type of canonical play required a specialized knowledge and familiarity with texts. Making the canon was a scholastic pursuit, but one in which subtle changes could speak volumes.

CONTESTED CANONS

While the above discussion has emphasized plurality and flexibility, some individuals tried to more narrowly define the Buddhist canon in terms of continental standards. In some cases, these canonical fundamentalists explicitly called for a more careful reading of the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. For example, a Shōsōin document related to the *Bureau of Books and Drawings* uses the standards of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* to reassess the bureau's collection of texts. The document lists titles and codicological information from the “Bundle Six of Miscellaneous Sutras” of the library of the Bureau of Books and Drawings; the sutras appearing here all correspond to works explicitly excluded from the canon by scroll twenty of the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. The document preserves the order of the texts in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, but skips over the titles that were not in the collection of the Bureau of Books and Drawings. After each subcategory of texts—such as extracts, duplicates, and suspicious and spurious works—the document quotes the grounds for dismissal from the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. It only changes the number of texts cited for exclusion to match those in the Bureau of Books and Drawings.⁵¹ For example, while the *Kaiyuan Catalog* proscribes ten texts as suspicious and spurious, the Shōsōin document changes the number to seven, the number of extant suspicious and spurious texts in this particular library.⁵² The author of this document,

51. For a brief discussion of this document, see OCHIAI 1999, 765–68. Yamashita Yumi, a Shōsōin specialist, has identified this document as a part of a catalog from the library of the Bureau of Books and Drawings; see YAMASHITA 2000, 48.

52. Notably one of these seven is the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, a fact that shows that the text was included in the Bureau's collection up to that point. Two texts not referred to in this document that do appear in the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, namely the *Scripture of Most Sublimely Superb Concentration* (*Zuimiao shengding jing* 最妙勝定經) and the *Scripture on Determining Merit and Sin* (*Jueding zuifu jing* 決定罪福經), are not recorded anywhere in Shōsōin records. From this, it is reasonable to assume that they do not appear in the document because they were not extant in Japan at this time. The other text, the *Samādhi Scripture of Piluo* (*Piluo sanmei jing* 毘羅三昧經), does appear in several Shōsōin records and is extant in a Nanatsudera manuscript, but it must have been absent from the collection at the Bureau of Books and Drawings.

who had examined the Bureau of Books and Drawings' scriptural holdings in detail, questioned the authenticity of earlier indigenous Japanese canons and argued to rearrange the Bureau of Books and Drawings holdings around a more narrow definition of canonicity that strictly followed continental norms.

Chikyō 智憬 (n.d.), an influential eighth-century monk who frequently borrowed texts from the scriptorium, provides another example of a concerned party calling for stricter standards of canonicity. His attitude toward the accommodating character of Nara canons appears in a letter he wrote accompanying two texts he had returned:

Regarding the above mentioned *Commentary on the Horse- neigh* [*Aśvaghōṣa*] *Treatise* 馬鳴論疏 [a.k.a. *Awakening of Faith*], this subject under discussion is a work external [to the tradition] [that is, heterodox]. I beg of you that as highlighted in this letter, you do not keep it with the works internal [to the tradition] (that is, orthodox). I am truly fearful that this could cause disorder to later generations. Respectfully yours.

DNK 13: 22 (ZS 16: 7: 11)

Chikyō had been borrowing other treatises on the *Awakening of Faith* around this time, perhaps as research to prepare for the commentary he wrote on the classic Mahāyāna treatise.⁵³ Upon encountering this questionable single scroll commentary, he decided it was a heterodox teaching that should not be mixed with more orthodox interpretations.⁵⁴ Other sources demonstrate that Chikyō was interested in the shape of the canon; documents from two years earlier record that he once borrowed the nineteenth scroll of the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, which is the chapter that outlines canonical Mahāyāna works (DNK 3: 551 [ZSKS 47]).

While Chikyō played the role of critic, other monks were subject to attacks by those arguing for stricter standards. For example, Kaimyō 戒明 (n.d.) of DaiANJI 大安寺 encountered repeated criticisms of the texts he imported from China in the late eighth century. In one instance a crowd of monks gathered to demand the burning of a sutra imported by Kaimyō.⁵⁵ The text in question, a ten-scroll

53. From another document (DNK 12: 387; ZS 16: 7: 7), we can see that Chikyō had borrowed a series of commentaries on the *Awakening of Faith* a few months previously. Two of these commentaries have named authors, but one is unnamed in the request. It seems possible that this anonymous commentary could in fact be the *Commentary on the Horse-neigh Treatise*.

54. It seems likely that the commentary had only recently been copied at the scriptorium. It appears in a document dated 8/3/753 (DNK 12: 362; ZS 28: 17). It is not clear if Chikyō's letter had any effect on the texts canonicity, as we see it being borrowed by a Fujiwara scriptorium a year later on 8/12/754 (DNK 3: 651–52; JK 30: 2: 1 verso). For Chikyō's commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*, see CHOE 2001.

55. This account was contained in the *Enryaku sōroku* 延曆僧錄, a text that is no longer extant in full but is quoted in other collections such as the *Nihon kōsō den yōmon shō*. For the passage in question, see KT 31: 88. For an overview of this event in Japanese, see MATSUMOTO 1987. For a brief English discussion, see ABÉ 1999, 187–88.

version of the *Śūramgama-sūtra* referred to as the *Scripture on the Great Buddha's Crown* (Ch. *Da foding jing* 大佛頂經), was at the center of a doctrinal debate between Sanron 三論 and Hossō 法相 monks over emptiness. In this case, the debate over the authenticity of a text reflected increasing sectarian identity and doctrinal divisions.⁵⁶ As Steven COLLINS (1990, 96) has suggested, most canons “were produced in the context of dispute,” and the beginning of an emerging sectarian identity in the late Nara period facilitated such disagreements.

Controversy did not end here for the Daianji monk. In a separate case, the famous scholar Ōmi no Mifune 淡海三船 (722–785) questioned the authenticity of a commentary on the *Awakening of Faith* text that Kaimyō had imported:

When I first heard the title [of this commentary], I was overjoyed at the subtle interpretation of Dragon-Tree [Nāgārjuna]. Upon unrolling the scroll, I despised the way it defiled the true teachings of Horse-Neigh [Aśvaghōṣa]. Presently, I investigated this treatise, and it is truly not the doctrine of Dragon-Tree. Some fool borrowed the exalted name of the great bodhisattva and [this text] was simply written [under his name]....⁵⁷ Now, great virtuous savant of the present age, why would you toil along distant paths to bring back a forged work such as this? Long ago, Kashiwade no Ōoka [膳大丘] brought Vajragarbha bodhisattva's *Annotated Diamond Prajñā Sutra* from Tang, and just like this treatise [that is, the *Awakening of Faith* commentary], both are forged falsehoods. I pray that you quickly hide it away somewhere and no longer circulate it to spare yourself from becoming the laughingstock of countless generations.⁵⁸

Much like Chikyō, who questioned a single scroll commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*, Mifune challenges the authenticity of what appears to be a separate ten-scroll treatise on the same text. Here, Mifune treats the work in question in a way that perhaps justifies the adjective “apocryphal,” a word meaning “hidden,” often used to refer to a work that “deserved to be ‘hidden’ because [it was] spurious or heretical.”⁵⁹ Mifune, like Chikyō, also wrote a commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*, so his knowledge of this tradition may have shaped his opinion.⁶⁰ In both of these cases, scholastic activities led individuals—both lay and

56. See MATSUMOTO 1985 for more on this debate.

57. Here, Mifune notes that the source text is indeed Paramārtha's translation, but he points out numerous problems in the preface to the commentary that prove it is a forgery.

58. This letter is included in *Hōsatsu shō*, T 2453.77.821a; see MATSUMOTO 2010.

59. For this meaning of “apocryphal” in early Christian communities, see METZGER 1987, 165, where this quote is taken from. The appropriateness of the term “apocrypha” more broadly in Buddhist studies is subject to debate; here, I simply hope to point out the parallels with the notion that problematic works should be hidden away.

60. For the best discussion of Mifune's doctrinal knowledge and his annotated commentary, see MATSUMOTO 2010, 69–72.

monastic—to question the authenticity of a work and demand that it be removed from the canon.

Mifune also cites past cases, noting how Ōoka made a similar mistake and also brought back a fraudulent commentary on the *Diamond Sutra*.⁶¹ It is significant that two annotated versions of the *Diamond Sutra* were included in Nara canons and on the Kongōji and Hōryūji editions of the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, though it is uncertain if these are the same works. What is clear is that scholars carefully consulted earlier catalogs to assess how texts had been treated and also examined the content of the questionable works themselves to assess their canonical status. Canons emerged in part through scholarly exchange and doctrinal disagreement.

Conclusions

A significant part of this article has focused on canons as nouns: here, the task has been to understand what the term *issaikyō* refers to in early Japan. A literal translation of “all the scripture” is insufficient for all but the earliest cases, primarily because it ignores the organizational principles and processes of exclusion fundamental to canon production. Canons were systematized collections of texts—both real and imagined—created for particular purposes through the collaborative efforts of patrons, administrators, and monastic advisors. Each canon was different and, for this reason, Buddhist canons in the Japanese case are best understood in the plural. Catalogs played a role in framing the canon, but patrons and clerics made their own choices about classification and the inclusion of potentially problematic works. Much like the state itself in early Japan, canons moved toward centralization and control but remained fluid and contested.

The choices made by patrons, administrators, and monks highlight the verbal qualities of canon formation. The pattern of canon production fits the more general one proposed by J. Z. SMITH (1982, 52): “Canon is best seen as one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation through ingenuity.” While the continental catalogs proposed limits, those involved in constructing canons insisted on expressing their own conceptions of canonicity. At times, they inserted texts that they viewed as doctrinally correct or politically expedient, even altering the very manuscript of the catalogs on which canons were based. In other cases, they reorganized works to highlight certain aspects such as the centrality of the *Flower Garland Sutra* to the canon or the genderless nature of the ruler. Ingenuity, however, was not always welcome. Factions fought over the inclusion of texts, employing criteria of both continental precedent and doctrinal arguments. In referring to catalogs without mirroring them, patrons

61. For more on Ōoka’s importation of this text, see MATSUMOTO 2012.

showed that they understood the standards they inherited while also displaying their freedom from these fetters. Canon copying did not merely provide a means for the court to absorb the Buddhist tradition; it offered an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery over it.

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- JK *Jinkai* 塵芥. Published in *Shōsōin komonjo eiin shūsei* 正倉院古文書影印集成. 17 vols. Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1988–.
- KT *Kokushi taikei* 國史体系. 60 vols. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964–1967.
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系. 100 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958–1966.
- SNKBT *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 新日本古典文学大系. 100 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989–2005.
- SS *Seishū* 正集. Published in *Shōsōin komonjo eiin shūsei*. 17 vols. Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1988–.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.
- ZS *Zokushū* 続修. Published in *Shōsōin komonjo eiin shūsei*. 17 vols. Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1988–.
- ZSBS *Zokushū besshū* 続修別集. Published in *Shōsōin komonjo eiin shūsei*. 17 vols. Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1988–.
- ZSKS *Zokushū kōshū* 続修後集. Published in *Shōsōin komonjo eiin shūsei*. 17 vols. Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1988–.
- ZZS *Zokuzokushū* 続々修. Published in *Shōsōin monjo* 正倉院文書. 16 reels (microfilm). Tokyo: Tōkyō Karā Rabu, 1957–1963.

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- Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定衆經目錄. T vol. 55, no. 2153.
- De wugou nü jing* 得無垢女經. T vol. 12, no. 339.
- Fu zhong nü ting jing* 腹中女聽經. T vol. 14, no. 563.
- Hōsatsu shō* 寶冊鈔. T vol. 77, no. 2453.
- Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. T vol. 85, no. 2865.

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- Wenshushili suoshuo busiyi fo jingjie jing* 文殊師利所說不思議佛境界經. T vol. 12, no. 340.
- Wu gou xian nü jing* 無垢賢女經. T vol. 14, no. 562.
- Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄. T vol. 55, no. 2157. [Also, Kongōji manuscript].
- Zhongjing mulu* 衆經目錄. T vol. 55, nos. 2146–2148.
- Zhuan nü shen jing* 轉女身經. T vol. 14, no. 564.

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