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The Credibility of the *Gangōji engi*

The *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* (hereafter *Gangōji engi*) contains entries that cannot be accepted as historical facts, entries that do not fit with the historical period for which they are claimed, and items that raise doubts due to internal inconsistencies in the text itself. The text makes a dubious claim of composition on the eleventh day of the second month of Tenpyō 19 (747), but should be considered a forgery from a later period. The document appears to have been written as an *engi* for Toyuradera (Kenkōji) in the late ninth century, the first stage of compilation. It was probably revised and extended into its present form in the late Heian period (late-eleventh to mid-twelfth century) as an *engi* of Gangōji, the second and final stage of compilation.

KEYWORDS: Daigoji archives—*Gangōji engi*—*Toyuradera engi*—Kenkōji—Gisai—transmission of Buddhism

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WITH REGARD to the date for the transmission of Buddhism to Japan, Japanese who received their education before the war (pre-1945) will identify the date as 552 CE. This theory is based on the records of the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, in an entry for the tenth month of Kinmei 13. Those who went to school after the war, including myself, learned that the date was 538 CE. In my case, I remember a large banner showing a chart with a detailed timeline of Japanese history strung across the top of the blackboard at the front of my elementary school classroom. Here it was clearly noted: “538, the transmission of Buddhism.” This date was also taught in middle and high school history classes. This is based on two texts, the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* 元興寺伽藍縁起并流記資財帳 and the *Jōgū Shōtoku hōōtei setsu* 上宮聖德法王帝説, which record that the transmission of Buddhism occurred in Kinmei 7, a *bogo* 戊午 year in the sixty-year cycle, matching the year 538 in the Western calendar. Many recent junior and senior high school textbooks list both dates, since it is difficult for historians to decide between them.

Which of these dates is correct? Or perhaps neither is correct? The report of the transmission in the *Nihon Shoki* is very problematic, and it is difficult to support the historicity of its account and the date of 552.¹ But there are also problems with the 538 date, and one should not simply accept it as a substitute for 552. The main problem with this theory is that both of the documents in which it is found are full of enigmas, authorship is uncertain, it is not clear when the text was produced, and it is not known to what extent we can believe what it says. In short, its credibility as a historical document is suspect. Here I would like to take up one of these texts, the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, and examine its textual characteristics, the possible date of its composition, and the credibility of its content.

The Gangōji engi

The *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* is not a well- nor long-known text; it is a newly-discovered historical document that came to light in the Meiji period (1868–1912), discovered in the temple archives of Daigoji by the art histo-

* This article is a partial and slightly revised translation of YOSHIDA (2003). For further details on the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* and the transmission of Buddhism to Japan, see YOSHIDA (2012).

1. For details on the problems with the *Nihon Shoki* account, see my chapter on “Dōji no bunshō” 道慈の文章 in ŌYAMA (2003, 273–314).

rian Hirako Takurei. The Daigoji archives included a collection of *engi* in eighteen volumes, of which the second volume was labeled “*Gangōji engi*,” which included the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizai*. Hirako came across these documents at Daigoji in Meiji 39 (1906), and introduced them to the scholarly community the next year (see HIRAKO 1907a and 1907b). This was the first time that these texts (and their contents) became known to the world.

The *Gangōji engi* consists of a bound booklet 27.1 cm long and 16.1 cm wide of thick Japanese paper. Including the cover, it is made of thirty-eight pages (*chō* 丁). Each half-page has six lines of text. The cover is light brown with a small chrysanthemum pattern, and “*Gangōji engi*” is written on the top left corner. The inside pages use a whiter shade of Japanese paper made from mulberry (*choshi* 楮紙). All of the eighteen volumes of the *engi* documents kept at Daigoji have the same characteristics, such that they appear to have been copied by a single person at one time. Volume one on Tōdaiji 東大寺 and volume 6 on *Shōdaiji konryū engi* 招提寺建立縁起 include postscripts stating that these were copied by a monk named Bengō 弁豪 in the seventh month of Ken'ei 2 (1207), and proofread by a monk named Kōen 光淵 in the ninth month of the same year. The *Gangōji engi* also has a postscript attributed to Kōen, so it is safe to conclude that this booklet as a whole was copied on this date by Bengō and Kōen.²

The *Gangōji engi* booklet contains four texts:

1. *Buppon denraiki* 仏本伝来記
2. *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*
3. *Bō koki* 某古記
4. *Jishun shikanmon* 慈俊私勘文

It was the second item on Gangōji that drew the attention of Hirako and other researchers and that concerns us here. This section opens with a long *engi* text, followed by two inscription quotes: *Tō fukubanmei* 塔覆盤銘 (or *Tō robanmei* 塔露盤銘) and *Jōroku kōmei* 丈六光銘, and then some closing comments and a date, and acknowledgments of examination by the Administrator of Monks (僧綱). Finally there is a very short “outline of resources” (*shizaichō* 資財帳). The *engi* text provides a detailed description of the early days of Buddhism in Japan: the transmission of Buddhism from the Korean kingdom of Kudara 百濟 to Japan (倭国) and its dates; Emperor Kinmei's order to Empress Suiko to construct the first Buddhist hall; the controversy over whether or not Buddhism should be accepted; accounts of the earliest Buddhist temples, the first ordinands, the construction of the two temples of Toyuradera 豊浦寺 and Gangōji 元興寺 based on a vow made by Suiko, and the donation of land and finances to these temples by

2. For details on the *Gangōji engi* text and the research on it since its discovery, see YOSHIDA 2001.

Suiko; and so forth. The two “inscription quotes” are presented as transcriptions from metal or stone objects and are highly valued as accurate indicators of the state of early Buddhism in Japan, and many consider them of higher historical value than the *engi* text itself.

DOUBTS CONCERNING THE *GANGŌJI GARAN ENGI NARABINI RUKI SHIZAICHŌ*

Despite interest in its contents, doubts were soon expressed about the authenticity of the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*. The text claims to have been produced on the eleventh day of the second month of Tenpyō 19 (747 CE). However, when Hirako showed the text to his friend Kita Sadakichi, one of the top historians of the time, Kita took one look and concluded that, based on the content and form of the text, it could not be from the Tenpyō era but was most likely a forgery produced in the late Heian period, that is, the eleventh to twelfth century (see KITA 1980). Again, the well-known architect Fukuyama Toshio claimed that the style of the text belongs to the late Nara period (eighth century), and that the contents (except for the inscription quotes) could not be trusted. Indeed, he dismissed it as a “clumsy forgery” (*setsuretsu naru zōsaku* 拙劣なる造作; FUKUYAMA 1968).

Of course there are those who, even now, accept this text at its face value as having been composed in 747. And there are still some theories that take this text as a basis for discussing the early history of Buddhism in Japan. My understanding, however, is that, based on the content and form of this text, it must be a later composition. Since it falsely claims an earlier date or origin, it must be called apocryphal. Both Kita and Fukuyama had a keen eye, and it is crucial that further studies on this text should be based on the research of these eminent scholars. Thus my interpretation of the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* is that it was composed as an *engi* in the later part of the ninth century at Kenkōji 建興寺 (Toyuradera; first stage), and then revised to its present form in the latter part of the Heian period with addenda and modifications as an *engi* of Gangōji (second stage).

Problems with the Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō

As one reads the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, one finds many unbelievable passages. Here is a list of twelve of these issues, and some speculation on why and how the contents were composed.

1. THE CLAIM OF UMayATO-TOYOTOMIMINOMIKO

The very beginning of the text claims that it was written by Umayato-toyotomiminomiko 厩戸皇子 in the hundredth year of Toyomikegashikiya-hime (Suiko 推古). Thus the text itself claims to have been written by Prince Umayato

(more commonly known as Shōtoku Taishi) in 613 CE (*kiyū* 癸酉, in the sixty-year cycle). The date of composition given at the end of the text, however, is the eleventh day of the second month of Tenpyō 19 (747). These claims, as we shall see, are not plausible, even if one ignores the internal inconsistency of the text. It is likely that this opening claim was added during a later period when faith in Shōtoku Taishi was popular.

2. THE BIRTHDATE OF SUIKO AND THE MUKUHARA PALACE

Next, this text claims that Buddhism was transmitted from the king of the Korean kingdom Kudara in 538, and that Emperor Kinmei, following the advice of Soga no Iname, instructed Suiko to honor Buddhism in her palace at Mukuhara 向原. Suiko followed these instructions and enshrined the Buddhist materials given by the king of Kudara and offered them homage. Given the imperial family lineage, it is impossible for Suiko to have become an adult by 538. According to the *Nihon shoki*, Suiko had not yet been born in 538. This *engi* distorts history by placing Suiko's birth forty years earlier, making her a hundred years old in 613.

3. SUIKO AND THE MUKUHARA PALACE

The *Nihon shoki* claims that Soga no Iname's house was located at Mukuhara, and that Iname turned this house into a temple when Buddhism was transmitted to Japan. The *engi*, however, not only claims that Suiko was already born at this time, but also that the building at Mukuhara (here given as 牟久原), where Buddhism was honored, was Suiko's palace. This claim is also difficult to accept as historical, and must be seen as an attempt to wrest credit for the early support of Buddhism away from Iname and to Suiko. This is also related to the claims concerning Toyuradera, as explained below.

4. THE HISTORY OF THE RELOCATION OF TOYURADERA

Although this *engi* claims to be that of Gangōji, the longest passages are actually those concerning Toyuradera. Eventually the Buddhist facility established by Suiko (later known as “Mukuhara-dono” 牟久原殿) was relocated to another palace in Sakurai, where the Sakurai *dōjō* 桜井道場 (later Sakuraidera) was built. Later, Suiko herself turned her own palace at Toyura 等由良の宮 into a temple and relocated Sakuraidera to create Toyuradera (等由良寺, 豊浦寺). That is, according to this *engi*, Toyuradera was established by Suiko by relocating the original site at Mukuhara to Sakurai, and then to Toyuradera. Finally, the text claims that the very first ordinands in Japan were three nuns (including Zenshin'ni 善信尼) who lived at this temple. However, these claims cannot be taken as historical.

First, as we have already pointed out, we cannot accept the claim that Suiko had a palace at Mukuhara as historical. Next, with regard to the Buddhist establishment at Sakurai, the *Nihon shoki* does indeed record that three nuns (including Zenshin'ni) dwelt at Sakuraidera, but it does not say anything about where this was located or what kind of temple it was. The *Nihon shoki* does not mention any connection between Sakuraidera and Toyuradera, or that the three nuns had any connection with Toyuradera. It appears that the story in the *engi* was created to burnish Toyuradera's reputation by claiming that the temple had been home to the first ordinands in Japan. According to this *engi*, Toyuradera was heir to the first Buddhist establishment at Mukuhara, and the proud home of this first Japanese ordinand, but there is no basis for its historical veracity.

5. GANGŌJI, KENTSŪJI, AND TOYURADERA

This *engi* claims that Gangōji had its roots in Toyuradera (which had supposedly begun as the Mukuhara hall for nuns and then became Sakuraidera), and that its original name was Kenkōji 建興寺. It also claims that a “monk's temple” 僧寺 was also constructed here and called Kentsūji 建通寺. But this assertion is so historically implausible as to be absurd. Gangōji was never a temple for nuns. Gangōji is the Buddhist title of the Asukadera established by the Soga family as the first genuine Buddhist temple in Japan, which was a temple for monks. In contrast, Toyuradera was a temple for nuns, and its Buddhist name was Kenkōji. These two establishments were two separate temples, constructed in different places with different names. The *engi's* efforts to unify these institutions reflects the complicated process through which it was written rather than any historical fact.

6. THE NAME “KENTSŪJI”

The Buddhist titles of Gangōji and Hōkōji for Asukadera are well known through entries in the *Nihon shoki* and *Shoku Nihongi*. The name Kentsūji, however, does not appear in any historical record from the Nara and early to mid-Heian periods. It appears for the first time in the *Shichi-daiji junrei shiki* 七大寺巡礼私記, a document from the twelfth century. Thus it appears that Kentsūji as another name for Gangōji was unknown until a much later period than is claimed in the *engi*.

7. SUIKO'S NAME

This *engi* refers to Suiko as “Sakuraitoyura-no-miya chitenka” サクライトユラ宮治天下, but this is also very suspicious. The *Nihon shoki* records that Suiko ascended the throne as Toyuranomiya 豊浦宮, and retired as Oharida-no-miya 小墾田宮 in Suiko 11. Therefore Suiko is usually referred to as Oharida-no-miya

chitenka (Gyo'u) 小墾田宮治天下(御宇). The name “Sakuraitoyura” does not appear in any other text, and the combination of two separate palaces—Saikurai and Toyura—is suspicious. There is also no other example where the names of two palaces—such as Chitenka and Gyo'u—are combined. This appears to be an effort to support a false name by relying on the fabricated connections between Mukuhara, Sakurai, and Toyura.

8. SUIKO AS “GREAT GREAT KING”

In this *engi* Suiko is referred to as the “Great Great King” (Dai-dai-ō 大々王). The term “Great King” 大王 for the ruler in Japan was used before Tennō 天皇 became standard, but there is no other example in historical documents where “Great Great King” is used. Again, this is not being used as a general title for a ruler. The *engi* itself uses “Tennō” to refer to the ruler, and “Great Great King” is used only to refer to Suiko. At first she is referred to only as “Great Great King,” but after Bidatsu ascends the throne she is referred to as “Empress Great Great King” (大后大々王), and when she herself ascends the throne she is referred to as “Great Great King Emperor” (大々王天皇). This pattern of naming cannot be found anywhere else, and the combinations are also strange; it is unthinkable that such titles were used in the sixth and seventh century.

9. SUIKO'S VOW

This *engi* claims that the Toyuradera (as a nun's temple) was established through the will of Emperor Kinmei at the advice of Iname, and through a vow made by Suiko. It also claims that Hosshidera 法師寺 (Kentsūji) was built on the basis of a vow by Suiko and at the behest of Umayatono miko (Shōtoku Taishi) and Soga no Umako. In other words, both Gangōji and Toyuradera are temples founded through Suiko's vows. In fact, however, although Asukadera (whose dharma name is Gangōji) was constructed due to a vow by Umako, it is more likely that Toyuradera (dharma name Kentsūji) was built as a temple for nuns by the Soga family. Why, then, does this *engi* present a false premise? I will discuss this in detail later.

10. SUIKO'S DONATIONS

This *engi* claims that Suiko—when she was a hundred years old in 613 (a *kiyū* year)—donated forests, parkland, lakes, stipends (*fuko* 封戸), and servants to a temple for nuns, and parkland, stipends, and servants to Hosshidera. However, there is no other historical record that mentions these donations, and the *fuko* stipend system did not yet exist in Suiko's time. Thus this claim cannot be recognized as historical.

11. *KIYŪ* YEAR AND THE 613 DATE

As for the date 613, the *Shinshō kyakuchokufushō* 新抄格勅符抄 (a legal document from the Heian period) records for the twelfth month of Hōki 11 (780) that a stipend of 1700 units (*ko* 戸) was assigned to Asukadera for the first time in a *kiyū* year, noting that another hundred units were assigned in the fifth month of Hōki 11 (780), along with a list of how many units were assigned according to location. It adds that in this year, stipends were assigned for the first time also to Daianji 大安寺 and Kawaharadera 川原寺. It is generally accepted (and I agree) that this “*kiyū* year” refers to Tenmu 2 (673). This *engi*, however, backs up a single sixty-year cycle and speciously claims that this happened during the time of Suiko in 613.

12. THE VOW TO PROTECT THE TEMPLES

This *engi* claims that Suiko, Umayato, and various ministers made a vow that the materials donated to the two temples should not come to harm for ages, and that anyone who tries to take them away should suffer various calamities. This claim is also difficult to believe as historical. As Kita Sadakichi has pointed out, this claim must have been added in a later period when Gangōji or Toyuradera were in decline and were in danger of losing their land and treasures.

ADDITIONS OF A LATER AGE, OR COMPOSED IN A LATER AGE?

If we look at the history of research on the *engi*, one comes across the theory that these suspicious passages were “later additions.” That is, they admit that there is some suspicious content, but assert that the problematic passages must be additions of a later age, whereas the rest of the text can be admitted as having been written in Tenpyō 19 (747). I cannot accept this interpretation, and believe that the entire text was composed at a later date. First, the suspicious contents are all part of the basic sections of this *engi*, especially items 4–6 and 9–12. Items 2, 3, and 7 are also integral parts of the text, and the claims of items 6, 7, and 8 are related to matters throughout the text. If we remove the suspicious parts, the entire *engi* loses its central contents. It is thus unreasonable to claim that the *engi* was composed in 747, with some parts added at a later time; it should be understood that the entire text was written at a later date.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE “OUTLINE OF RESOURCES”

As for the “outline of resources” (*shizaichō*) at the end of the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, it contains only three entries, which is very short and unusual for such texts from the ancient period. What is the reason for such a dearth of entries? In addition, the placement of these entries is strange. Usually

these kinds of entries come before the closing remarks and date of the text, but in this *engi* they come after. What accounts for this anomaly?

This *engi* claims that Gangōji was constructed due to a vow by Suiko, and that she donated “parklands, stipends, and servants” to Hosshidera in a *kiyū* year, and that Prince Umayato composed the *engi* in this year. If that were so, then it would be proper to see this “outline of resources” as referring to the parkland, stipends, and servants that were donated by Suiko in a *kiyū* year. We could then understand why this part was added after the notation on the date, and why only three items were listed, that is, these three items would refer to the supposed donations by Suiko. The donation of “stipends” (*fuko* 封戸) reflects the information found in the *Shinshō kyakuchokufushō*. Thus it is likely that the assignment of these donations to “a *kiyū* year” follows this entry or some other source based upon it. Consequently, it must be concluded that this “outline of resources” cannot be accepted as being from the Tenpyō era, but must instead be viewed as part and parcel of the later forgery in order to give credence to the main text.

THE TWO INSCRIPTION QUOTES

What, then, are we to make of the two inscription quotes, the (a) *Tō fukubanmei* and (b) *Jōroku kōmei*? Inscription (a) claims to be from Kentsūji (Gangōji), and is a remarkable fit with the forged text of the *engi*. The suspicious terms “Sakuraitoyura no miya” and “Kentsūji” are the same as those used in the *engi*. Accordingly, these inscriptions could not have been inscribed on some memorial during the time of Suiko, but must have been created at a later date at the same time and by the same person as the composer of the *engi*. As for the titles of the inscriptions, the character 露 in *Tō fukubanmei* as copied by Bengō is corrected to 覆 by the editor Kōen, so that the correct reading is 塔覆盤銘 instead of 塔露盤銘.

How about inscription (b)? This inscription also claims that Gangōji was constructed at the behest of Umayato and Umako and due to the vow of Suiko, matching the claims of the *engi* text. It also uses the suspicious term “Sakuraitoyura no miya.” Thus we must conclude that this inscription also was forged by the same person at the same time as the *engi* text itself. Neither inscription (a) nor (b) can be considered authentic records from memorials dating from the times of Suiko.

The Date of Composition of the Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō

When was this text written? Who wrote it, and for what purpose? It is not easy to answer these questions, but it seems that the text was created in two stages. The first person to come to this conclusion was Fukuyama Toshio. When he read the *engi*, he was surprised to find that most of the text goes on and on about the history of Toyuradera, and not the history of Gangōji (Asukadera). Fukuyama concluded that the original text was written as an *engi* for Toyuradera, and was later

rewritten into its current form as an *engi* for Gangōji. This is an insightful conclusion, and is most useful for understanding the *engi*. However, Fukuyama also thought that the original Toyuradera *engi* was composed in ancient times, before the *Nihon shoki*. I disagree. I think that the Toyuradera *engi*, which formed the basis for the later *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, was probably written in the late ninth century, when there were struggles for control over Toyuradera, and that it was composed as a text for one side to claim legitimacy.

THE HISTORY OF TOYURADERA

Let us step back a bit and take a look at the history of Toyuradera. This temple was one of the first in Japan, and was a temple for nuns. Its origins are obscure, but Fukuyama Toshio speculates that it was constructed near the home of Soga no Emishi during the reign of Emperor Jomei. This theory was followed and modified by Shimizu Akihiro, suggesting that the temple was constructed by the Soga family before the death of Suiko in 628 CE (SHIMIZU 2000). This is a reasonable assumption.

This temple first appears in historical records in an entry on the enthronement of Emperor Yōmei (585) in the *Nihon shoki*, which notes that Yamashiro no Ōe no Ō 山背大兄王 stayed at “Toyuradera” when he was visiting Soga no Emishi. The next mention of Toyuradera is from an entry on the twelfth month of Shuchō 1 (686), where this temple is listed along with the temples Daikan 大官, Asuka 飛鳥, Kawahara 川原, Oharida 小墾田, and Sakata 坂田 as the sites where a Musha Taie 無遮大会 ceremony (for ritually sharing donations) was conducted. This entry indicates that Toyuradera was one of the representative temples of Japan in the later seventh century, and also that it was clearly a separate institution from that of Asukadera. In the *Shoku Nihongi*, the name “Kenkōji” can be found in entries for the fifth and seventh months of Tenpyō 1 (749). The earlier entry tells of the donation of various goods and land to important temples to promote the long life of Emperor Shōmu and the salvation of sentient beings. The second entry concerns the limits of the land donated to the temples. These entries list the representative and important temples of the time, and include the name of Kenkōji, as well as a separate entry for Gangōji. From this it is clear that, in the mid-eighth century, Kenkōji was considered a major temple, and at this time was a different temple than Gangōji.

DISPUTES OVER THE CONTROL OF TOYURADERA

By the latter half of the ninth century, Toyuradera (or Kenkōji) suffered from a general decline, and was the focus of disputes over its control and management. The *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 日本三代実録 contains a detailed description of this matter in its entry for the twenty-third day of the eighth month of Gangyō

元慶 6 (882).³ According to this text, a dispute had arisen over the management (*kenryō* 檢領) of Kenkōji. People such as Soga no Kimura 宗岳木村 claimed that they had the right to manage the temple, and filed a suit to that effect with the government. Gisai 義濟, the current head (*bettō* 別当) of Kenkōji, disagreed.

Before examining this further, let us take a look at the situation of these claimants. The Soga family had been the strongest political force in the country during the sixth and seventh centuries, but had lost out in a power struggle with the imperial family. By the eighth century they had become a sidelined aristocratic family and taken the name “Ishikawa” 石川. Their power weakened even further as they entered the Heian period, falling to a middling aristocratic level or even lower. Right about the time of this dispute, this person (Ishikawa no Kimura 石川木村, later Soga no Kimura) petitioned to recover his family’s ancestral name and resurrect the name Soga 宗岳 (later read “Muneoka”; see the entry in the *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* for the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of Gangyō 1 [877]).

Kenkōji, on the other hand, was active as a temple for nuns in the seventh and eighth centuries. By the early Heian period, however, temples for nuns were in decline, with their management handed over to male monks, the temple itself becoming a residence for monks, or even becoming an abandoned temple (see USHIYAMA 1990), and Kenkōji was no exception. The man named Gisai was a male monk affiliated with Gangōji, who had become head of Kenkōji. On the other hand, Soga was the main hereditary patron (*danōtsu* 檀越) and thus had the authority to speak on matters of temple management, giving us a case of a power struggle between older and newer authorities. Gisai wished to strengthen his authority at the temple, and it is likely that he meant to make Kenkōji an affiliated or branch temple of Gangōji. There was a general tendency during the ninth century for large temples to absorb smaller or rural temples as affiliated (*betsuin* 別院) or branch (*matsuji* 末寺) temples, which eventually developed into the “main and branch temple system” (*hon-matsu taisei* 本末体制) of medieval Japan.

In this dispute, Soga no Kimura claimed rights with regard to Kenkōji based on the fact that it was a temple established by his family ancestor Soga no Iname. For evidence, Soga no Kimura submitted a document on the origins of the temple (*hon-engi* 本縁記), which described the history of Kenkōji with Soga no Iname as the founder. Gisai, on the other hand, claimed that Kenkōji was a temple that was originally a palace of Empress Suiko, and that it was not a temple of the Soga family. Gisai’s side submitted two pieces of evidence: Council of State edicts (*daijō kanpu* 太政官符), the first (a) dated the thirteenth day of the ninth month of Ninju 4 (854), and the second (b) the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month of Jōgan 3 (861). The content of these documents reflects Gisai’s

3. For a *yomikudashi* of the original *kanbun* text, see YOSHIDA 2003, 106.

standpoint, so it is possible that he had influenced the government in advance to issue official documents supporting his cause. It is also possible that the documents were forged. They are not found in historical records of the time such as the *Ruijū sandaikyaku* 類聚三代格 and *Ruijū fusenshō* 類聚符宣抄, and the contents suspiciously match the claims of Gisai. The contents of the document submitted by Soga are not known, but it is possible that this document was also a forgery.

Document (a) submitted by Gisai claims that Kenkōji is a temple that had originally been located at Empress Suiko's palace, and that the *engi* was written "formerly" (*zenshi* 前志). The characters for *zenshi* can also be read "*saki ni shiruseshi mono*," which probably refers to an older document that records the temple's history. This document was no doubt submitted to counteract the origin text submitted by Soga no Kimura. The dispute thus hinged on the contents of two origin texts. The Soga text claimed that Toyuradera was established through converting the building at Suiko's Toyura palace, and that it represents the earliest appearance of the Buddha Dharma in Japan. It adds that Suiko donated "land and servants," and that her vow was firm and earnest. The content is remarkably close to that of the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*. On the other hand, Gisai's document (a) claims that the temple management (*gōi* 綱維) had neglected temple upkeep and allowed it to fall into ruin, and that temple treasures had been usurped to pay for secular expenses, which is counter to the express intent of Suiko's vow. It concludes that management of the temple should be assigned to the current supervisor (*chōkan* 長官; that is, Gisai), and not the official management (*sangō* 三綱). Gisai's document (b) refers to the "secular head" (*zoku bettō* 俗別当)—presumably a member of the Soga family—as causing damage to the temple, and ordering them to stop their activity. This document says exactly what Gisai is claiming, and seems to be either the result of backroom intrigue or an outright forgery. It appears that at this time the official management, the temple patrons such as the Soga family, and the "secular head" had joined together in opposing Gisai and his encroachment on Gangōji. In response, Gisai sought to completely annihilate their stance, and fought back with these official documents. In the end, the government sided with Gisai and rejected the claims of the Soga family.

THE FIRST STAGE OF COMPOSITION

In light of this case, the Toyuradera *engi* that served as the basis for the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* must have been the "former" *zenshi* text submitted by Gisai, rather than the *hon-engi* origin story submitted by Soga. Indeed, the contents match up nicely. Where, then, did this text come from? The *zenshi* text denies that Toyuradera was originally a temple of the Soga family. It is filled

with ahistorical claims regarding the origin of Buddhism in Japan, and Suiko's donations of land and servants, and cannot be an ancient text with a proper pedigree. The content contradicts that of the *Nihon shoki*, and it goes without saying that it cannot be a temple *engi* composed before the *Nihon shoki* (in general it is unthinkable that temple *engi* were composed as official documents before the time of *Nihon shoki*). In addition, the content specifically attacks and completely denies the claims and rights of the Soga family. I believe it is safe to conclude that this text was forged specifically to present to the court as a refutation of the *hon-engi* document submitted by the Soga family.

Thus, the Toyuradera *engi* that served as the basis for the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* was either the *zenshi* text itself, or a modified form of it that was closer to a temple *engi*. Which of these is more likely? If we look at the section on the judgment by the government at the end of the passage in the *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, Gisai claimed that although Toyuradera originated as a Buddhist hall built by Soga no Iname, it was Suiko who offered her palace grounds as a place for the temple to be reconstructed. He adds that Soga no Iname was in charge of building a Buddhist stupa by imperial order. This part of the story is a bit different from that found in the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, which does not mention Iname's construction of a stupa. Gisai further buttresses his position by claiming that the Buddhist hall of Mukuhara was not part of Iname's house but rather a part of Suiko's palace, which further minimizes Iname's role. In light of these points, we may conclude that the Toyuradera *engi* that served as the basis for the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* was not the *zenshi* text itself. Instead, it had been modified with further content and rewritten in the form of a temple *engi*. It was probably written at around the time of the Gisai-Soga Kimura dispute, that is, the latter part of the ninth century, and the author may have been Gisai himself or someone connected to him and Gangōji. This would be the first stage in the composition of this text, which was probably called the *Kenkōji engi* at the time.

THE KENKŌJI ENGI TEXT

Is it possible that the original Toyuradera (Kenkōji) text still exists somewhere? Unfortunately, we do not have a full text, but an excerpt is quoted in a document called the *Tennōji hiketsu* (*Deibarajaji makashosei hiketsu*) 天王寺秘決 (提婆羅惹寺摩訶所生秘決). The *Hiketsu* refers to it as *Kenkōji engi*, in only two short excerpts.⁴ The first says that, according to a *Kenkōji engi*, Buddhist objects were presented to Japan by the King of the Kudara kingdom on the twelfth day of the

4. For the original text see YOSHIDA (2003, 111), which is taken from a 1291 document in the Maeda Ikutokukai Sonkeikaku Bunko 前田育徳会尊経閣文庫 (see TANAHASHI 1996).

twelfth month of Emperor Hironiwa (Kinmei 7). The second quotes the *Kenkōji engi* as referring to the ordination of three nuns, including Zenshin.

If we compare these quotes with the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, the text concerning the offering of Buddhist objects matches quite closely. The *Kenkōji engi* quote identifies the Buddhist objects as “a statue of Prince [Siddārtha], a vessel for an initiation ceremony (*kanbutsu no ki* 灌仏之器), and one scroll on the origin of the Buddha 説仏起書” which is the same three objects identified in the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*. Again, these are the only two documents that identify these same three objects, indicating that these two texts are related. Again, the kanji used for Kuratsuri no obito tatto (按師首達等) and the names of the three nuns, as well as the phrasing indicating that these ordinations occurred at the behest of a government minister (大臣即喜令出家), are unique to these two texts. In other words, they are like two peas in a pod in terms of content, style, and use of kanji.

The odds are high that the document known as the *Kenkōji engi* was the basis for the document that became the *engi* for Toyuradera (Kenkōji) and is now known as *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*. It is unfortunate that the complete text no longer survives, but the available quotes offer sufficient grounds for such conjecture. In sum, we can conclude that the *Kenkōji engi* is not an *engi* that is derived from the *hon-engi* submitted by the Soga family, but rather derives from an *engi* related to the *zenshi* text, composed in the latter half of the ninth century by Gisai of Gangōji or someone in that tradition.

THE SECOND STAGE OF COMPOSITION

When, then, was the *Kenkōji engi* revised to produce the document we now know as *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, and what were the circumstances? As for the date, I believe that the latter part of the Heian period is the most likely. It has already been some time since KITA Sadakichi (1980) argued that the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* is a forgery from the latter Heian period. Kita is well known as a shrewd evaluator of ancient texts, and though one may disagree with some of the details of his theories, I believe his conclusion that this text can be dated to the late Heian period is incontrovertible. My main point of contention is that we should follow the analysis of Fukuyama by dividing the composition of this text into two stages.

As for the modifications, it must have taken some effort to turn what was originally an *engi* of a temple of nuns into an *engi* for a temple of monks. If we look at the final results, the first and longest section goes on and on about the history of a temple of nuns, switching suddenly to a section concerning a temple for monks, leaving a somewhat uneasy sense of imbalance. But perhaps there was no other choice. When, then, was the section on the temple of monks written, and is it

possible to identify the period when these modifications were made? One major hint is the introduction of the temple name “Kentsūji.” As mentioned earlier, there are no ancient records that refer to Asukadera (Gangōji) as Kentsūji, and so common sense concerning ancient history disallows such a name. It seems that it was forged to reflect the temple name “Kenkōji.” Both names use the same character, *ken* 建, and the similar *tsū* 通 substitutes for *kō* 興. As explained above, the name Kentsūji appears for the first time in the *Shichi-daiji junrei shiki* of the twelfth century. Probably the name Kentsūji was created for the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* and later popularized by people affiliated with Gangōji, and then found its way into the pilgrimage text of the *Shichi-daiji junrei shiki*.

Kita has claimed that the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* was written (a) after the decline of Gangōji; (b) after the *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 and *Iroha jiruishō* 伊呂波字類抄, since neither of these texts mention it; and (c) before the *Gangōji engi* copy dated the eleventh day of the fourth month of Chōkan 3 (1165). This is an admirable theory, except that it includes Kita’s misunderstanding concerning the *Iroha jiruishō*. This text does, in fact, include a section that relies on the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*, so the *Iroha jiruishō* must postdate it. Also, it is important to consider the entry in the *Shichi-daiji junrei shiki*. Thus I would modify Kita’s theory as follows: (a) the text was written after the decline of Gangōji; (b) since it is not mentioned in the *Fusō ryakki* (end of the eleventh to the beginning of the twelfth century), it was written after this time; and (c) it was written before the mention of Kentsūji in the *Shichi-daiji junrei shiki* (mid-twelfth century). On this basis I conclude that the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* was forged into its present form during the late Heian period, sometime between the latter part of the eleventh century and the mid-twelfth century.

ADDITIONS AT THE SECOND STAGE OF COMPOSITION

The entries on Kentsūji, a temple for monks, should all be considered additions or modifications to an *engi* on Kenkōji, these occurring at a second stage of composition. Therefore the section on Suiko, Umayato-toyotomiminomiko, and Umako founding Hosshidera (a temple for monks) in addition to a temple for nuns, the section saying that Hosshidera was renamed “Kentsūji,” the section on Suiko donating treasures to Hosshidera in addition to the temple for nuns, the section on the construction of two Buddhist statues (*jōroku-butsu niku* 丈六仏二軀), and so forth should all be considered additions from this second stage. Again, the Kentsūji portion of the *Gangōji engi* states that Suiko donated mountain forests, parkland, lakes, stipends, and servants to a temple for nuns, and donated parkland, stipends, and servants to Hosshidera. The donations listed in the *shizaichō* refer to the property donated to Hosshidera (a temple for monks), so it should be understood as added in reference to the temple for monks. If this surmise is

correct, the *shizaichō* section was not part of the document at the first stage of composition, but was composed and added during the second stage.

Why, then, was such a forgery composed at the latter part of the Heian period? Near the end of this *engi* there is a long section that tells how Suiko vows that the property donated to these two temples should not be endangered for all ages, and that Prince Umayato and all his ministers also had the same wishes. This section is conspicuously long and unnaturally emphatic. It adds the threat that anyone who tries to take away this property should suffer great misfortune and disaster. This indicates that the *engi* was written to protect Gangōji in some way at a time when the temple was on the wane and in danger of losing its property. If we take a look at the history of Gangōji (see IWAKI 1999), the latter part of the Heian period was just such a time, when it would have been necessary to make such claims. Thus it is safe to conclude that the motive for composing this *engi* was to protect the temple from external threats and further erosion of the temple's influence. During this time, Kōfukuji 興福寺 monks were appointed as the head (*bettō*) of Gangōji, so it may be that this text was composed to counteract the influence of Kōfukuji on Gangōji. It is likely that the composer of this text borrowed an earlier temple *engi*, revised it, and thus forged the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* in order to protect and/or restore the temple's influence.

A final revision to the text concerned the identity of the nuns said to have resided at Toyuradera. The *Gangōji engi* claims that a nun named Hōmyō 法明 and a laicized monk named Eben 惠便 served as the teachers to three nuns, including Zenshin'ni. By contrast, the *Nihon shoki* mentions only Eben. The same is true of the *Kenkōji engi* quoted in the *Hiketsu*. Thus, it is likely that Hōmyō was not listed in the earlier version of the text, but added at the second stage. Moreover, reference to a nun named Hōmyō brings to mind the Korean/Kudara Zen nun Hōmyō who appears in the *Yuima-e engi* 維摩会縁起 (900). It appears that the composer of this forgery felt that it was of insufficient import to have the teacher of these three nuns to be only a laicized monk, and thus added the name of a famous nun. This item must also be considered an addition at the second stage of composition.

Thus we conclude that the *engi* of Toyuradera that was composed around the latter half of the ninth century was revised toward the end of the Heian period into what we now have as the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō*.

THE GANGŌ ENGI REFERRED TO BY SAICHŌ

Saichō, the founder of the Tendai school on Mt. Hiei, wrote a treatise on the precepts called *Kenkairon* 顯戒論, which contains a discussion of the role of the precepts in response to a scholar-monk named Gomyō 護命, who represented the Nara schools. This text contains a famous reference to a “*Gangō engi*” 元興縁起, which appears in the context of a discussion of the transmission of Bud-

dhism to Japan. Gomyō argued that “The Buddha Dharma was presented to the Shikishima-no-miya-gyō’u Tennō 志貴嶋宮御宇天皇 [Emperor Kinmei] by the King of Kudara in the year *bogo* (538) of the sixty-year cycle, and it has been revered by the noble ruler ever since without fail.” In contrast, Saichō claimed that “the enthronement of the emperor was in a *kōshin* 庚申 year and Emperor Kinmei reigned for thirty-two years. If we examine the calendar carefully, there is no *bogo* year [during his reign], and the *Gangō engi* claiming the *bogo* year is contrary to the actual record.” This exchange shows that there was a text called the *Gangō engi* during the time of Saichō and Gomyō, and contrary to the record in the *Nihon shoki*, Buddhism was transmitted to Japan during a *bogo* year of the sixty-year cycle. Saichō rejected this claim and took instead the “actual record” (here probably referring to the *Nihon shoki*), that Emperor Kinmei (also known as Shikishima-no-miya-gyō’u Tennō) reigned for thirty-two years. This period, however, does not include a *bogo* year of the sixty-year cycle, and therefore the claim in the *Gangō engi* is mistaken.

What is this text that Saichō refers to as the *Gangō engi*? Hirako Takurei, who discovered the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* at Daigoji, believed that it was indeed the *Gangō engi* referred to by Saichō. In contrast, Kita Sadakichi argues that Hirako’s claim is mistaken, and that these two texts cannot be the same. My conclusion is to agree with Kita, that these are two different texts. Since, as we have seen above, the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* is a forgery from the late Heian period, the text referred to by Gomyō and Saichō must be a different *engi* associated with Gangōji.

RECONSIDERING THE DATE OF THE TRANSMISSION OF BUDDHISM TO JAPAN

As I pointed out at the beginning of this article, we have two claims to the date of the transmission of Buddhism to Japan: the *Nihon shoki* opts for Kinmei 13 (552), and a number of texts claim “Kinmei 7, a *bogo* year [of the sixty-year cycle]” (538). However, it has been shown that the section on the transmission of Buddhism in the *Nihon shoki* was influenced by texts such as the *Konkōmyō saishō ō kyō* 金光明最勝王經, and was probably composed by the Buddhist monk Dōji 道慈 (?–744), a prominent Sanron monk. The year 552 was chosen because it was believed at the time to mark the beginning of the degenerate *mappō* period, and cannot be taken as reflecting historical fact.

As for the texts that claim the 538 date, we must remove the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* from consideration, since it is a forgery from the late Heian period and not historically reliable. The other source, the *Jōgū Shōtoku hō teisetsu*, is a compilation of a number of independent texts and, according to a detailed analysis by Ienaga and Tsukishima, it should be divided into five separate sections (IENAGA and TSUKISHIMA 1975). The reference to the 538 date is in the fourth

section. Ienaga and Tsukishima concluded that this section was composed “around the eighth century,” but I think that it is at best from the end of the eighth century and more likely from the early part of the Heian period in the ninth century. This means that it is not a particularly ancient text.⁵ The oldest document that claims the 538 date seems to be the *Gangō engi* referred to by Saichō and Gomyō, which is not extant and is referred to only in Saichō’s *Kenkairon*. Given what we know about the development of temple *engi* in general, it can be surmised that this text probably was composed as a “history” (*engi*) of Gangōji in the mid- to late eighth century.

Thus we must conclude that the 552 date was a later pretense, and cannot be accepted as historically accurate. The 538 date may reflect an ancient transmission passed on by the Soga family or Asakusadera, and requires further investigation, but at this time there is no solid textual evidence that the claim predates the composition of the *Nihon shoki*, and therefore accepting this claim is also problematic. The least we can say is that by the end of the seventh century, it was believed that Buddhism had been transmitted to Japan during the reign of Emperor Kinmei, or during the time of Soga no Iname, but without determining any specific date. In short, the best that can be said is that Buddhism was transmitted to Japan sometime around the middle of the sixth century.

Conclusion

I have concluded that the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* was first composed as an *engi* of Kenkōji (Toyuradera) in the latter half of the ninth century (first stage), and was revised in the latter part of the Heian period with addenda and modifications as an *engi* of Gangōji (second stage) to reach its present form. Thus the date (eleventh day of the second month of Tenpyō 19 [747]) affixed to the text is a false attribution and cannot be accepted as historically accurate. The content also cannot be considered as historical fact, and unfortunately we cannot take its description of early Buddhist history—nor the accounts of the founding, construction, and art of Toyuradera and Asukadera—as historically accurate. Nevertheless it is an important document in considering the conflict with regard to control over Kenkōji in the latter part of the ninth century, and a reflection of the popularity and influence of faith in Shōtoku Taishi during this period. The significance of this faith and popularity of Shōtoku Taishi in the history and culture of Japan is a topic that should be pursued further.

5. For more details on this text, see the article by Ōyama Seiichi on “‘Jōgū Shōtoku hōō teisetsu’ seiritsu shiron” 「上宮聖徳法王帝説」成立試論 in ŌYAMA 2003, 147–68.

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