

*Busshari* and *Fukuzō*:  
Buddhist Relics and Hidden Repositories  
of Hōryū-ji

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Hōryū-ji in Ikaruga-chō, Nara Prefecture, is believed to have been built on the order of Prince Shōtoku in 607. Then known as Ikaruga-dera 斑鳩寺, it was destroyed in a disastrous fire about sixty years later and rebuilt as Hōryū-ji on a different spot toward the end of the century. Among its many articles of religious significance are the finest set of relics (*busshari* 仏舍利) of any early Japanese temple. In addition, there exists good textual documentation on three sets of holy objects buried at some later but quite uncertain time or times. The Japanese term for these sets, *fukuzō* 伏藏 (concealed stores or hidden repositories), offers little clue as to their specific use, but it seems plausible to regard them as protection for the existing relics and the associated relic-enhancing goods, and as reserve sets in case the original relics should disappear. Their placement can be accepted as evidence of their intent, and the earlier experience with Ikaruga-dera might well have justified such precautions. The practice of concealing substitute relics or relic-protecting articles is virtually undocumented elsewhere, and for a long period even the Hōryū-ji deposits received little scholarly attention. The discovery in 1986 of an immense stone slab marking the location of one of the hidden sets raised interest in the problem.

My intention here is to reconstruct the characteristics and the place of deposit of the Ikaruga-dera relics, date the Hōryū-ji relics on the basis of changing fashions in relic worship, and suggest an occasion and reason for the burial of the hidden repositories in light of Hōryū-ji's history.

*Buddhist Relics in Japan*

The use of relics in Buddhism is related to the death of Gautama and the subsequent distribution of his bones and ashes among his followers. Tradition holds that following Gautama's cremation his remains were

sought by eight contending regions in India. In a compromise to avoid greater struggle, the relics were divided between the groups and placed into the Eight Great Stūpas. Later they were subdivided among 84,000 smaller stūpas, a process of great significance since it enabled a large number of believers to acquire a minuscule portion. The value of the relics was fundamental to the early spread of Buddhism: by providing a concrete symbol of the Buddhist teachings they prepared the way for teachers who later expounded the associated beliefs. The same can be said of Buddhist images, which, in the beginning, were interchangeable in function with relics.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Nihon shoki*, Buddhism was introduced to Japan in 552 when a mission from the Korean kingdom of Paekche brought a statue of Shaka. Soon after arriving in Japan this image was destroyed by opposing factions at the court (ASTON 1972, II, pp. 65-67). Various Buddhist objects continued to reach Japan, however, and were gradually accorded more respectful treatment. Among them was an otherwise unidentified "relic" presented by Shiba Tattō to Soga no Umako, the prime minister. The relic was so strong that it could not be smashed with an iron hammer, and when placed in water it floated and sank at command. Its behavior was impressive enough to make of its controller an exceptionally credible spokesman for Buddhism, and to convert those who observed it into Buddhist believers. The prime minister had a pagoda built, held a ceremony, and placed the relic at the top of the pagoda's center pole.

In another *Nihon shoki* story Paekche priests made a gift of relics, for which the politically prominent Soga clan built Asuka-dera (ASTON 1972, II, pp. 117-19), known first as Hōkō-ji and later, following relocation to Nara, as Gangō-ji. It is generally assumed that the relics buried in Asuka-dera comprise this Korean donation.

The construction of Asuka-dera is described in considerable detail in the *Nihon shoki*, which, for lack of data elsewhere, is the best source of information on this subject (ASTON 1972, II, pp. 118-24). According to this text, the Buddha relics were deposited in the foundation stone of the pagoda's center pole on the fifteenth day of the first month, 593, with the pole itself being raised the following day. Construction of the temple was completed in the eleventh month, 596. Asuka-dera had a *garan* (cloistered core of buildings) with the pagoda at its center; as in the other temples of the Asuka period, all of which had longitudinal axes, the pagoda was the first building that the visitor encountered, suitably marking it as the heart of the temple.

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<sup>1</sup> The Japanese literature on Buddhist relics, as on most subjects, is substantial. The most currently accessible are the following: ISHIDA 1972, KAWADA 1989, and SUZUKI 1989.

The pagoda and Central Golden Hall (*chūkōn-dō*) of Asuka-dera were burnt in 1196. The monks, no doubt curious about the temple's relics, cleared away the debris of shattered tiles and charred wood and dug beneath the floor of the pagoda. There they uncovered the relics themselves and possibly a nearby array of associated objects, some similar to the goods deposited in tombs of the time. This fact was discovered in the 1950s when archaeologists excavating the site found, about 60 cm below the modern surface, a stone with a hollowed-out place containing a wooden box. On all four sides of the box were inscriptions stating that after the fire the monks had retrieved the relics from the pagoda's foundation stone (located below this upper stone), placed them in the box, and reinterred them (see TAZAWA 1958; TSUBOI 1980). If the monks found the other artifacts associated with the relics they left them undisturbed. All of the relics and artifacts were recovered and removed by the archaeologists; the relics proper were examined, photographed, and subsequently reburied.

The relics within the wooden box comprised a gilt bronze bell-shaped reliquary 3.6 cm high, and about 2,500 pieces of glass and beads. About two meters below the original level of the box, and about 2.5 m below the ground surface, lay the huge center-pole foundation stone. The stone is an approximate cube 2.5 m in each direction, with a hole in the center of its upper surface 30 cm by 33 cm by 21 cm deep. Projecting from the bottom of this hole on the east side is a perfect cube-shaped cavity 12 cm each way, its entire interior covered with red paint; broken pieces of stone in the vicinity suggest that this hole had been plugged by a small door.

Lying on the upper surface of the foundation stone were the artifacts associated with the relics, most of them objects normally found in tombs: a suit of iron armor, harness pieces, a horse bell, parts of an iron holder for a horse rump-plume, thin sheets of gold and silver, glass and jade beads, and several pairs of gold and silver earrings. The armor may have been a battle trophy, once owned by a member of the Mononobe clan (SUZUKI 1989, p. 22); the other objects may have had personal value to individuals connected with the temple. Rather unusual was the number of earrings, which well exceeded the needs of an average person. Another surprise was the absence of bronze mirrors, despite their relative popularity in tombs at the time. In fact, mirrors appear in none of the earliest sets of temple relics, for which there are two possible explanations: 1) mirrors were a rather rare imported commodity from Korea; 2) mirrors performed a function in tombs that was not desirable in temples, perhaps neutralizing the effect of the relics. It should be pointed out, however, that mirrors began to appear among relics once direct trade with China commenced in 663, following Silla's conquest of Paekche and the consequent cessation of trade between Korea and Japan. In addition,

most of the mirrors found in tombs were of Japanese manufacture, and “true” relics were of foreign origin.

From what archaeology and old documents say about early relics, it is known that earrings were included among the relic-goods at Asuka-dera, Jōrin-ji, and Chūgū-ji in the Yamato plain; the Shitennō-ji in present Osaka; and the Pun-hwang-sa (Jpn. Funkō-ji) of 634 in Silla. Earrings were, in fact, the only objects common to all of these sets. Small sheets of gold and silver of the type found at Asuka-dera are not normally found in graves—instead, they appear among *jichingu* 地鎮具 (earth-calming-goods) with or in lieu of coins, and were buried in a ceremony at the initiation of construction work. Pieces of armor and swords sometimes show up with *chindangu* 鎮壇具—altar-calming-goods—buried in the platforms of temple golden halls as protection for the Buddha (see below).

At Asuka-dera the hole in the foundation stone was large enough to accommodate the relics proper, indicating that this is where they were originally placed. The use of such base-stone holes for temple relics continued intermittently until around the end of the seventh century. Examples are Hōrin-ji, not far from Hōryū-ji; Ōta-hai-ji (*hai* 廃 = abandoned) in Ibaraki City, Osaka Prefecture; and Yamada-dera in Sohara-terashima-chō, Namuhara City, Gifu Prefecture. Yakushi-ji in Nara may have been the last temple to have such an arrangement. Temples with no relic-holes of this type include Ikaruga-dera and Tachibana-dera in Asuka; Shitennō-ji in Osaka; and Yachū-ji in Habikino-shi, Osaka Prefecture (ISHIDA 1969, pp. 274-76). In the latter temples the relics may have been placed in a cavity hollowed out of the foot of the pole itself. As mentioned above, Soga no Umako put his relics on top of the center pole, and some Korean temples placed the relics well out of reach on the pagodas' second or third floor (KAYAMOTO 1958, pp. 58-59). Such practices were inadvisable in Japan, however, where climatic conditions led to an accumulation of moisture and the inevitable rotting of wood. In addition, they afforded the relics poor protection from fires. Indeed, when Ikaruga-dera went up in flames—the conflagration of 670 is said to have totally gutted the temple—the relics may have been damaged beyond salvation, since none of the original relics seem to have been included in the set used at Hōryū-ji. If any relics had survived one would certainly expect to find them there: their special connection with Prince Shōtoku would have given them an aura of sanctity guaranteeing their preservation as a link between the two temples. And if any relics were salvaged, where would they have been kept? The *Denbōkekki* 伝補闕記 reports that after the fire the dispirited monks of Ikaruga-dera dispersed in three groups and went off to live elsewhere, founding new temples.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion in English of the fire at Hōryū-ji and the rebuilding of the temple see MACHIDA 1968, pp. 87-115.

From descriptions and information on other relics, such as those at Shitennō-ji (see ISHIDA 1976, p. 248), the relics at Ikaruga-dera may have included, at minimum, a sturdy pottery or stone box; a gilt bronze container with glass bottle within; and some beads, small glass articles, and sheets of gold and silver. Around the pole, on the upper surface of the foundation stone, may have lain a modest number of weapons, pieces of armor, horse trappings, and gold earrings. Some of these, such as the earrings, would have been votive offerings by related individuals, while others would have represented symbols of the conquest of the Mononobe clan and the consequent elimination of all obstacles to the introduction of Buddhism to Japan.

Comparison with other known relics of the time will fill the gaps in our knowledge about the Ikaruga-dera and Hōryū-ji relics. Such relics are few, belonging to Sūfuku-ji (Shiga Prefecture) and Ōta-hai-ji. Because of disagreements over the dating of the former temple, it must first be established how close in time it was to the rebuilt Hōryū-ji before it can be used for comparative purposes.

Sūfuku-ji is situated on a hillside above Lake Biwa in Ōtsu City, and is said in the *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記—a history of Buddhism written around 1210—to have been founded in Tenmu 7 (668). Only the site remained when it was excavated in 1938 and 1939 (see ASANO and KOBAYASHI 1964, pp. 82–86; KAWADA 1989, pp. 30–33; SHIBATA 1941; SUZUKI 1989, pp. 26–29). The relics had survived the temple's destruction and its apparent looting by scavengers due to their location in a hole in the east side of the pagoda's center-pole base stone, some 18 cm below its upper surface. The top of the stone has only a shallow circular depression as a receptacle for the pole, so the pilferers must have thought that the relics had been kept within the pole itself or somewhere else, and had been destroyed along with the buildings. The side hole is 27.3 cm deep, and its opening was blocked by a suitably selected river stone with one surface flattened to fit flush. Installed inside was a bronze rectangular box-shaped reliquary with hinged lid holding, successively, a silver box, a smaller gold box, and a thick, green glass bottle. The mouth of the bottle had originally been plugged with a gold stopper. An iron-backed bronze mirror, 13 blank silver coins, a small bell, and some beads were laid on top of or inside the outer reliquary.

The outer container is 10.6 cm in length, 7.9 cm in width, and 7.6 cm in height, has flat, floral-outlined legs, and looks a bit like a miniature coffin resting on a dado. The Chinese did make reliquaries in the form of coffins with curved lids, but in such reliquaries the coffin shape was more obvious. The same coffin-like shape can be seen in the finely ornamented gilt bronze reliquary on the west side of the Hōryū-ji pagoda's first floor, where it is placed centrally to a scene of relics. It probably dates to shortly before 711.

In dating Sūfuku-ji, one must take into consideration the plan of the temple, the style of its roof tiles, and the characteristics and placement of its relics. Assuming that the pagoda was the first of the temple buildings to be constructed, its relics would belong to the time of Emperor Tenmu (r. 672-686).

Ordinarily the mirror would be of critical importance in dating, but its iron has deteriorated despite a gilt bronze covering, and its style is not a common one. The rim is silver, and a single field on the back is occupied by a simple, stylized floral ornament. The lobed, silver floral pattern openwork around the central knob looks as though it belongs to the late seventh or early eighth century. Another mirror picked up on the site, about the same size (6.33 cm in diameter), is a T'ang eight-lobed bronze mirror with several known mates in Japan, including one found with numerous exotic items under the altar of the Middle Golden Hall of Kōfuku-ji in Nara.

Tiles retrieved from the site show variations of the double lotus pattern that appeared toward the end of the seventh century, not long after Tenmu's time. Some are quite sophisticated, implying a sequential building of the halls well into the eighth century and perhaps beyond.

The coins on the site, most of which were located by prospectors and are now in the hands of collectors, range from the first Wadō-kaichin issue of 708 through all twelve of the ancient issues, ending with Kengen-daihō in 958.

Sūfuku-ji was in the best of company in the late eighth century. Along with Hōryū-ji and eight other temples (Daian-ji, Gangō-ji, Kōfuku-ji, Yakushi-ji, Tōdai-ji, Saidai-ji, Gūfuku-ji (Kawahara-dera) and Shitennō-ji), Sūfuku-ji was the recipient of 100,000 *hyakumantō* 百万塔, small hollow wooden stūpas containing printed dhāraṇī prayers that were distributed by Empress Shōtoku in 770. It was thus not only thriving, but was among the top-ranked temples of the time (see HICKMAN 1975; TAKADA 1986).

Since no medieval finds are mentioned in the site report, it may be assumed that the temple was used through the tenth century and probably somewhat beyond, but that by the mid-eleventh century it was, at best, limping along. This was the time known as *mapphō* 末法, the End of the Law, believed in Japan to begin in 1052.

It has been argued on topographical and archaeological grounds that nothing existed on the Sūfuku-ji site prior to the eighth century: the terrain is too complex for a Hakuho period temple, with ravines between the buildings; the earliest coins date from the early 700s; the clay mold-made plaques of single Buddhas resemble Nara-period art; the roof tile types are of a mature style; the shaped stone bases for the wooden columns are of later design, and so on (MIZUNO and KOBAYASHI 1959, p. 507). Nevertheless, the plan of the temple does work for the late seventh

century, and the relic containers with foreign and exotic materials in the box-within-box style also fit this time frame. In view of the temple's prominence at the time and its probable patronage by the imperial court, Sūfuku-ji was likely to have been under considerable pressure to keep well abreast of the times architecturally. It thus seems reasonable to view Sūfuku-ji's relics as valid comparative data for those of Hōryū-ji.

Ōta-hai-ji, the other temple with relics comparable to Hōryū-ji's, is located in Ōta-chō, Ibaraki City, Osaka Prefecture. The site of Ōta-hai-ji (also known as Mishima-hai-ji) was discovered in 1907 when a farmer cultivating new land hit the center-pole stone of the temple's pagoda (TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM 1988, pp. 233, 263; SUZUKI 1989, pp. 30–31). This granite foundation stone, now in private hands, measures about 160 cm by 140 cm across, and has a round depression in the top 94 cm in diameter and 4.5 cm in depth. In the center of this is a slightly slanted rectangular hole 30 cm long, 19 cm wide, and 18 cm deep. From this was recovered a rather poorly shaped, partly broken soft limestone rectangular case with legs. Measuring 20.3 cm long, 13.6 cm wide, and 17.5 cm high including a fitting lid, it contained a bronze lidded jar 7.5 cm high, a small rectangular bronze box 6.5 cm long, and a tiny gold rectangular reliquary box 3 cm long. The measurements show that it was an extremely snug fit, with each successive fit being so close as to indicate a tailor-made series of containers of diminishing size and increasingly precious material. These reliquaries have been dated to the latter half of the seventh century, and are therefore roughly contemporary with the rebuilding of the Hōryū-ji.

### *Origins of the Japanese Temple Relics*

Most of the temple relics came from unidentified sources. Others were donations, but even these tell us nothing about the overall acquisition and production process of the relics and their receptacles. Bones are sometimes mentioned, such as the five fragments that were presented, along with a Nine-headed Kannon of sandalwood, to Hōryū-ji in 719 as a show of good will from China. *Hōryū-ji garan engi narabini ruki shizai chō* 法隆寺伽藍縁起并流記資財帳 – an inventory of Hōryū-ji's property submitted to the government's ecclesiastical office in 747 – notes that these gifts were placed in a corner of the pagoda (ISHIDA 1969, p. 209), indicating that they were regarded as secondary relics. Nothing else is mentioned of them, and no modern description exists of a likely relic-hole.

Archaeological descriptions make little mention of the contents of the glass bottles and small inner boxes that were among the various sets of relics, probably because little was found. The lid of the Sūfuku-ji bottle is said to have come off, and small quartz balls to have been discovered inside. Nowadays an analysis of the dust would have been performed,

but researchers in former times were operating under much severer constraints than today. At the time when Hōryū-ji's relics were examined, for example, temple archaeology was not yet publicly acknowledged: priests were apprehensive about invading the sanctity of the holy domain and upsetting popular belief (no one at the time dreamed of the public relations and monetary benefits for a temple that had its archaeology in the headlines). Hence the investigation was hasty, with the context and contents of the finds only cursorily examined.

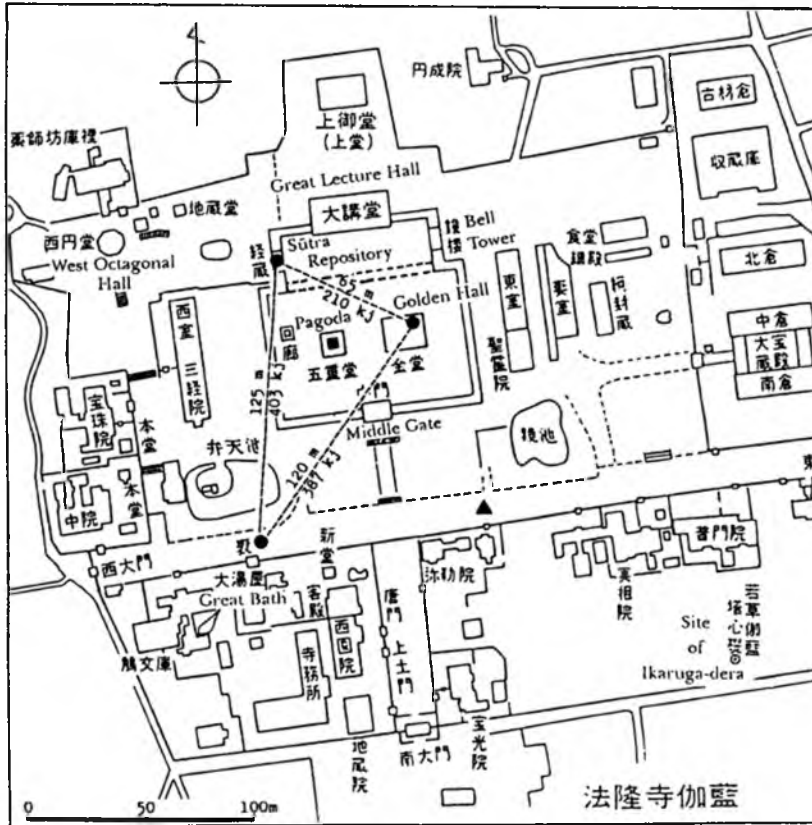
Relics were accepted on faith, of course, and it is thus conceivable that the smallest containers of the sets were left unopened out of respect. The box-within-box style came into vogue in the latter half of the seventh century, after Japan's missions started going directly to China in 663. The new fashion may have involved the sending of delegations by rising Japanese "sects" to the head temples in China, thereby imposing a kind of missionary obligation upon the Chinese institutions. Such major temples had access to workshops that produced the "relics," which the Japanese then accepted as authentic. The relics came as a package, to which the Japanese provided the outside container, which might comprise a hole in a stone or a box made of wood, clay, or stone.

#### *The Hōryū-ji Relics*

The military character of the early relics and associated goods had lessened at the time of Hōryū-ji's rebuilding, although it had not entirely disappeared. Starting in the ninth century, for example, sūtras were buried to help see the temple through the *mapppō* period, and it was not unusual to include a sword or two in the mound as protection for the holy texts.

By the late seventh century pagoda architects had experienced the disadvantages of deeply sunk center poles, in some cases disastrously, yet in spite of this the center pole of the Hōryū-ji pagoda was still sunk well below the surface. It is difficult to discern what principles the builders of Hōryū-ji applied to the center pole problem. Repairs on the temple in 1926 revealed that the center-pole foundation stone is buried 2.6 meters below the pagoda's floor, and the foot of the pole appeared to have rotted off. The consequent gap means that the pole was serving no structural purpose and was, in effect, supported by the building itself. It might be argued that the large gap was intentional, but it is unlikely that any architect would have dared such an approach, especially since other features of the rebuilt temple's architectural style are rather archaic. The old *koma-jaku* 高麗尺 unit of measurement was used, for example, despite the adoption of the new and slightly smaller *kara-jaku* or *tō-jaku* 唐尺 (Chinese or T'ang *shaku*) at the Yakushi-ji under construction in Fujiwara only 13 km away. There the center-pole foundation stone was





Garan of Hōryū-ji: Distances in meters and komajaku

- Pagoda relics
- Hidden repository
- ▲ Earth-calming-goods

placed at floor level, though perhaps as a concession to history a small, round, neatly-cut two-stepped relic hole was carved into it, covered by a stone lid fitted to the top step. Temples can be very conservative: when Yakushi-ji was transferred to the new capital of Heijō about two decades later exactly the same system was used, except that the relics were moved from the east to the west pagoda, perhaps for a fresh start.

Hōryū-ji's foundation stone has a rather roughly shaped conical hole 29 cm deep, covered by a thin stone slab laid into a circular lip. When the relics were removed in 1949 during further repairs on the pagoda, they looked as though they had been stacked incorrectly (ISHIDA 1969, pp. 270–74). Perhaps they had been tampered with and rearranged by someone working in the dark and unable to reconstruct how they had been taken out. If this is true, they were most likely examined by some-

one subsequent to the 1926 repairs, although it is possible that the hole had been discovered long before. The relics were duplicated and replaced, and the hole below the pole filled with stone blocks to prevent access. There is no record of accompanying goods being found near the relics; their use may have fallen out of fashion by the late decades of the seventh century.

The Hōryū-ji relics form an unmatched set. The largest enclosed container is a lidded spherical bronze jar, within which was an openwork, floral-patterned, egg-shaped silver container, the upper half of which is hinged. Inside this was another egg-shaped container, this one of gold, with slightly simpler openwork floral patterns. An inner glass bottle held the relic (ASANO and KOBAYASHI 1964, p. 83).

A large copper bowl acted as the container for these other vessels. A small (10.2 cm diameter) bronze Lion-and-Grape mirror of the early T'ang period stood alongside the containers inside the bowl. Numerous small articles were found at the bottom of the copper bowl, inside the bronze jar, and also at the foot of the hole in the stone. These articles included a thin gold sheet, 627 pearls, 272 glass beads, one ivory tubular bead, one oyster shell, and one piece each of crystal, amber, calcite, and incense wood. The very messiness of this dispersion makes it altogether unlikely that this was the original deposit, done in the light of day and under the gaze of witnesses.

The Lion-and-Grape mirror, a characteristic Chinese type, is of a period subsequent to the 607 foundation of the first temple, and fitting the other objects into the late decades of the seventh century presents no serious problems. Japanese temples and shrines preserve several good Chinese Lion-and-Grape mirrors and a fair share of Japanese copies. Many were probably votive offerings for safe voyages to and from China. The crystal at Hōryū-ji is presumed to be quartz, since this was the most widely used crystalline form. The incense wood might be white sandalwood, although the term is a catch-all for many types of wood. Amber – fossilized resin – may have had its source in ancient Burma.

#### *Sūtras and Later Relics*

The later history of Japanese relics was marked by two large changes. The first change, the use of sūtras as relics, probably stemmed from political conditions, although it has been attributed to the rapid increase in the number of temples in the late seventh century and the consequent demand for more relics. The second change, a strong revival of interest in relics, had to do with the more emotional and subjective nature of Buddhism in the Kamakura period after the trauma of *mappō* had been successfully transcended.

The first change was connected with the *kokubun-ji* 国分寺, the pro-

vincial temples and nunneries that Emperor Shōmu ordered built in 741. Prior to this Shōmu had sent an edict to every province directing it to erect a pagoda as a repository for the *Konkōmyō-saishō-ō sūtra* it was to receive, and to make ten further copies of this sūtra. The *Konkōmyō-saishō-ō-kyō* 金光明最勝王經, a “state-protecting-sūtra” (*Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-(uttama)-sūtra*), invokes the aid of the Four Heavenly Kings (Shitennō). It is no coincidence that the edict followed closely on the heels of a massive smallpox epidemic in 737 that had debilitated the country.

Sūtras, when used as relics, fall into the category of *hōshari* 法舍利 (Dharma relics, i.e., the Buddhist teachings as an extension of the Buddha) in contrast to *shinshari* 真舍利 (true relics, i.e. the actual organic remains of the Buddha). It is significant that the sūtra chosen by Shōmu was one designed to offer physical protection to the country; its selection symbolized the political nature of Buddhism’s nationwide spread. The *kokubun-ji* were built near the *kokufu* 国府, the provincial government headquarters, and were managed by government appointees. The destiny of the *kokubun-ji* system was influenced by the militant psychology that inspired it, a psychology quite unlike the *shinshari* principle of attracting religious devotees. The sūtra relics themselves were stigmatized both by their content and their association with the policies of the court; there was no way they could generate the magnetic attraction characteristic of the *shinshari*. The ultimate demise of the *kokubun-ji* shows that they were a much-resented symbol of court oppression, exacting heavy taxes for unrecognized returns. At one point priests were encouraged to stay indoors for their own safety. The Four Guardian Kings notwithstanding, many of the temples were destroyed during the Heian period in fires suspiciously coincidental with anti-government riots.

The second major change can be traced to Japanese Buddhism’s survival of the critical test of *mappō*. After the passing of the supposed date of the End of the Law, interest in relics revived due to the popularization of Amida worship in the Kamakura period and increased participation in pilgrimages, especially from Heian (present Kyoto) to the Nantōshichidai-ji (the seven great temples of the southern capital). The interest was particularly great among devotees of the esoteric (Shingon and Tendai) and Pure Land (Jōdo) sects. Worshipers seemed to need more assurance, and the visible presence of relics was comforting. Small ornate reliquaries shaped like stūpas with a quartz center that permitted the relic to be seen—or that even magnified it—became a preferred type. Some relics were put into little shrines on altars, while others were placed in less conspicuous places. Models of stūpas and miniatures were common. *Gorintō* 五輪塔, five stacked stones of different symbolic shapes, were used for tombstones. Actual pagodas were also erected, but tended not to be rebuilt after fires. Some were replaced by multistoried stone pagodas.

*Sūtra Mounds and the End of the Law*

*Mappō* was viewed as the last of the three periods of the Buddhist Law, a time of decline when both the scriptures and the power of Buddha would disappear. The most popular method of calculating the periods saw them as 500-year units, with the first beginning at the time of the Buddha's death, and *mappō* slated to start in 1052.

Efforts to circumvent this potential calamity had begun somewhat earlier, with sūtras and related objects being buried in metal tubes, clay jars, and stone containers in the hope of eventual recovery. Many of the containers in these sūtra burial mounds (known as *kyōzuka* 経塚) are dated, making it clear that though the practice changed in nature it continued through the centuries for personal reasons (KURATA 1973; SEKI 1984, 1985). Even after 1052 passed the idea of *mappō* was hard to forget, with many harboring the suspicion that only the mathematics had been wrong. This frame of mind, convinced that the holy objects were vulnerable if attacked by supernatural forces, created the complicated psychology underlying the thinking of Hōryū-ji monks in their burial of the *fukuzō*.

*Chindangu—Altar-Pacifying Goods*

Not much is known about the use of traditional relics in the great imperial temples in Nara, most of which, like Tōdai-ji, Saidai-ji, Gangō-ji, Shin-yakushi-ji, Akishino-dera, and Daian-ji, possessed a pair of pagodas. But sūtra relics were becoming more popular with the exercise of Buddhism under centralized state authority, and carried political overtones that regular relics did not.

Contemporary to or slightly earlier than the use of sūtra relics there arose the practice of burying *chindangu* under the altar (*butsudan*) in Buddhist temples. The practice, following trends in the national economy, took on splendid proportions in imperial and wealthy family temples, reaching its peak about the middle of the eighth century. A staggering array of objects was buried under the altar of the Middle Golden Hall of the Kōfuku-ji, the Fujiwara temple on the east side of old Heijō (see ASANO and KOBAYASHI 1964, pp. 86–88; ISHIDA 1961, pp. 26–28, 32, 34, 51, 89–91; MORI 1979, p. 18). An object-by-object enumeration of the objects may seem tedious, but it is the only way to recognize the extent, quality, and largely foreign character of the collection, obviously intended to outdo all others. The array consists of 2 bronze mirrors; 9 gold sheets; 10 gold bars; 4 chunks of silver; 1 large shallow gilt bronze bowl; 1 large shallow silver bowl; 5 gold bowls; 2 gold-plated silver bowls; 2 copper alloy bowls; 1 gold-plated silver stem cup; 1 gilt bronze stem cup; 6 small horn stem cups; 1 silver spoon; 1 gilt silver

spoon; 1 silver ring with 4 radial openwork wings; 1 ornament for a silver sword; 1 ivory and gilt bronze sheath ornament; 1 fragment of a dagger; 1 pair of silver tweezers; a collection of gold particles; 1 hexagonal leaded-crystal vessel; 1 hexagonal crystal rod; 2 hexagonal amber rods; 2 fragments of cylindrical amber rods; 1 cone-shaped piece of amber; quartz, amber, and other stone beads; 134 Wadō-kaichin coins; one Chinese K'ai-yüan t'ung-pao 開元通寶 coin (first minted in 621); and several other objects.

Since most of these objects are foreign, the same effort went into acquiring them as was put into getting traditional relics. A much more modest set came from the Great Buddha Hall of the Tōdai-ji, and should therefore date to around 745: a gilt silver jar in the shape of a cinerary urn with engraved decoration of a hunting scene, 4.4 cm in height; a rock crystal circular box with cover, 2 cm in height; and a gilt silver lock in the shape of a cicada, 4 cm long (ASANO and KOBAYASHI 1964, pp. 87–88; ISHIDA 1961, pp. 16, 34, 89–91; MORI 1979, p. 18).

#### *Other Kami-Calming-Goods*

The composite package of Buddhism that was transmitted to Japan contained the old Taoist geomantic practice of burying *jichingu* (earth-calming goods), a method of soliciting the protection of the kami to ensure the safe construction of a building.

What was once thought to be the oldest *jichingu* cache was found at Tamaranzaka in Kokubunji City in western metropolitan Tokyo, and was dated to around 760 on the strength of the accompanying Wadō-kaichin and Mannen-tsūhō coins (GEKKAN BUNKAZAI 1984/4, p. 55). The Jingō-kaihō issue of 765 would not yet have appeared when the deposit was made. Coins were mandatory tender for pacifying the kami, with the latest issues always being selected. More than thirty of these deposits have now been unearthed in connection with ancient architectural projects, most of which are datable by the associated coins.

An older set of *jichingu* has now been discovered at Hōryū-ji, uncovered on 1 February 1983 during the digging of trenches to replace water lines. The set lay under the road that passes in front of the Sai-in, more or less opposite the southeast corner of the *garan*, 60 m southeast of the Middle Gate and 100 m north of the Great South Gate (TAKADA 1983, pp. 74–79). When the deposit was made in the early eighth century this spot was just outside the outer wall and South Gate (*nanmon*). Two Hajj-type bowls had been put together as a container and had then been buried in a pit about 80 cm below the surface within an artificially filled stream bed some 5.5 m wide. Earth pressures had completely flattened the bowls. They were covered with a dense layer of broken tiles. Three Wadō-kaichin coins (issued in 708) and two small pieces of gold foil were

encased in the packed clay. Wadō-kaichin used the current Chinese coin type as their model. While there were many issues and places of manufacture of the coins, they average 2.5 cm in diameter, have a square hole in the center, and bear four characters on one side only, read clockwise from the top.

This set of earth-calming-goods raises a major question about Hōryū-ji. It should have been connected with the inadequately-documented reconstruction of the temple, yet it is clear from the *Shizai chō* that the Two Kings (Niō) standing in the Middle Gate and the diorama groups of little clay figures on the first floor of the pagoda were installed in 711, indicating that all the buildings were in full working order by the time the *jichingu* were buried. The archaeologists who discovered this set of earth-calming goods, hard pressed for an explanation, came up with the rather lame idea that some “outside building” must have been started (GEKKAN BUNKAZAI 1984/4, p. 55).

#### *The fukuzō—Hidden Repositories: Documentary Information*

The second archaeological discovery at Hōryū-ji in 1983 was the accidental discovery of the third set of *fukuzō*. Hōryū-ji is traditionally said to have had three *fukuzō* sets: one in the northeast corner of the Golden Hall, one under the Sūtra Repository, and one near the Great Bath. The placement indicates that they were located in such a way as to encircle the chief relics in the pagoda, in spots selected for their strategic and sometimes symbolic value. It was probably intended that any one set could serve as a replacement for the original relic-enhancing set of articles in case of theft, destruction, or disintegration.

On 23 July 1983, during subsequent digging for water lines, an immense granite stone cover for a deposit of some kind was exposed 10 cm below the surface of the same east-west road under which the earth-calming-goods had been found. The site is about 8 m northeast of the Great Bath and about 18 m west of an imaginary line extending due south from the west side of the cloister. The stone block, estimated to weigh at least a ton, measured 2.25 m by 2 m on its exposed surface. No signs of special shaping or working were visible (GEKKAN BUNKAZAI 1983/9, p. 96). Archaeologists dug around the block and were able to measure it, but were allowed to do no more. The earth over it was replaced and the spot roped off with eight posts, in the way *shimenawa* mark a sacred enclosure.

Information on the three hidden repositories goes back to a frustrating thirteenth-century text, the *Kokon mokuroku shō* 古今目錄抄 (Catalog of old and new treasures). Written in 1238 by a priest named Kenshin, the work contains an odd collection of unanalyzed and disjointed entries, doubtless gathered by Kenshin from various sources over a long

period of time, with each entry presented as though nothing preceded it. One imagines that if he himself had known more he might have found other, more systematic ways to organize the information. As it is he seems simply to have included everything that came to his attention. Translation of the work is somewhat hampered by the entries' frequent lack of context.

ISHIDA's examination of the *Kokon mokuroku shō* (1969, pp. 269–70) yielded the references to the *fukuzō* presented below. The first two (49 *ge* 下 and 75 *jō* 上) are general descriptions, the others are more specific. Editorial comments included are parenthesized as (note:). My own comments are within square brackets.

KMS 49 *ge*: There are three hidden repositories. The first is on the ox-tiger of the *kondō* 金堂 (note: northeast), the second is in the *daikyōzō* 大經藏 [Great Sūtra Repository], and the third is on the sheep-monkey corner of the cloister (note: in front of the five-story pagoda of the southwest corner of the cloister).

KMS *jō* 75 *jō*: The three hidden repositories are all *jō* covered with stone lids. One is at the ox-tiger corner of the *kondō*; it is the *Buppō chindan* 仏法鎮壇 [Buddhist-teaching pacifying altar/platform]. The Seven Star *chindan*, and Kannon *kudan* 觀音供壇, etc., these are all *chindan* to sustain the Buddhist teaching. By their power the Buddhist teaching of Japan will spread widely in the world and prosper. At the bottom of the *chintan* 鎮担 are buried Seven Treasures of intimidating efficacy. When their power is lost the Buddhist teaching will cease to exist, totally destroyed. These ancient possessions should be used for restoring the *garan*. One is in the Sūtra Repository. In the center is a stone, which is its lid. Another one is on the sheep-monkey corner of the cloister; in front of the pagoda is a stone which is its lid; it is called *gyohai-seki* 御拜石 [worship stone].

KMS *jō* 17 *jō*: According to one tradition, the actual sūtra that the prince [Shōtoku] received in a dream is stored in the three hidden repositories of this temple, etc. One of the hidden repositories is called “the prince pacifying,” for which the prince himself performed the ceremony, climaxing it with the Seven Star Nyoirin. Another says that important treasures are buried under the Seven Star Platform, so it is called a hidden repository. Hidden repositories (*fukuzō*) and altar-calming (*chindan*) are the same thing.

KMS *jō* 17 *ge*: In the northeast corner [of the *kondō*] is a hidden repository covered with a round stone lid. Inside are various treasures: 80,000 *ryō* of gold, 900 *ryō* of silver, and 10,000 *ryō* of copper. Another account says this is the Seven Star Altar-Calming Platform.

KMS *jō* 19 *ge*: In front of the pagoda is a stone. It is called the worship stone. In another direction on the sheep-monkey corner of the

cloister is a lid of a hidden repository. 10,000 copper roof tiles are buried in this hidden repository.

KMS *jō* 19 *jō*: In this hidden repository are 30,000 3-*shaku* [1 m diameter] gilt copper [gilt bronze] mirrors, bows and arrows used in the battle against Moriya [Mononobe] and the big sword used to decapitate the *ōmuraji* [Moriya designated by rank], armor, etc., 1,000 wooden boards for building, and 2,000 pieces of Shaka's relics. These are all buried inside.

KMS *jō* 19 *ge*: Inside the hidden repository under the Sūtra Repository is a gilt bronze *jōroku* 丈六 [16 *shaku*, almost 5 m] Amida statue in *jō-in* 定印 [*dhyāna-mūdra*, hands together in front, sign of meditation]. This was to be the chief image of the *kōdō* 講堂 [Lecture Hall] when the temple was constructed a thousand years earlier.

KMS *jō* 20 *ge*: The Buddhist teaching of Shaka will last for a thousand years after the death of the prince. When the teaching disappears, open all the hidden repositories and build the temple. There will be a hundred years when Amida is popular. During that time it should be the main image of the Lecture Hall. Inside it [the Sūtra Repository], right in the middle, is a stone which is the lid for the hidden repository.

KMS *jō* 42 *jō*: At this point in time a holy man announced that an official proclamation had been made to open the hidden repository of the Golden Hall. After digging out the articles, he used them.

KMS *jō* 43 *jō*: The hidden repository is one of the fifty kinds of names of Tamonten [chief of the Shitennō, guardian king of the north], and another is Ryūgū [dragon palace, home of its mythical protector], and it is to protect the Buddhist teaching. We can surmise that this also exists in the ox-tiger corner of the Tēnnō-ji [the prince's temple in Osaka].

In addition to these notations in the *Kokon mokuroku shō* there is a rather brief mention in the *Kokon ichiyōshū* 古今一陽集 (A light on old and new materials), written in 1746 by a priest named Ryōkun. In essence it says that the *fukuzō* is in front of the Great Bath, it has a lid of one great stone slab, and it is one of the three buried *fukuzō*.

Let me briefly discuss Ryōkun's notation before returning to the diverse assortment of comments scattered through Kenshin's *Kokon mokuroku shō*. Ryōkun's cryptic statement makes it sound as though the large granite slab had just been discovered, or, perhaps, rediscovered (when uncovered in 1983 it was, after all, just four inches below the surface of the present road). Why did he not name the locations of the other two? Had they been discredited by that time? Many ideas had been circulating in the thirteenth century, when Kenshin wrote, but by the eigh-



teenth century the hidden repositories appear to have been regarded as stale, ancient history.

ISHIDA's (1969) comments are brief, almost abrupt. Anyone may see the stone of the third repository, he writes, though he died before the 1983 discovery. He goes on to say that neither of the above documents may be true. We still do not know the purpose of the hidden repositories.

*Comments on the Reports in the Kokon mokuroku shō*

The claims of the *Kokon mokuroku shō* – that, for example, two thousand fragments of the Buddha's remains, over a ton and a half of metal, and a thousand wooden boards were present in a cache the existence of which was never a secret – are, as Ishida points out, so implausible even in figurative Buddhist terms as to jeopardize the credibility of the entire report. Exaggeration, however, stimulates belief through its very sensationalism, and one is therefore curious if any information of value might be gleaned amongst the many incongruities and transparent fabrications of the text. It is inarguable that at one time or another certain articles were buried (though not a single one has been recovered, as far as anyone knows), and such textual data is the only basis for suggesting motivations and times.

The buried goods of the *fukuzō* are usually spoken of collectively, but when described individually they comprise a rather disparate array: one or more sūtras; sheets, bars, or ingots of gold, silver, and copper; copper (bronze?) roof tiles; large gilt bronze mirrors; bows and arrows; a long sword; wooden boards; and an Amida statue. Could any of these have been from the earlier Hōryū-ji? The bows, arrows, and long sword sound like relic-enhancing articles from the first temple, especially the sword used to kill Moriya. It seems unlikely, however, that such objects could have survived the fire that destroyed the original Hōryū-ji. The boards might have been saved from the first temple and buried for their commemorative value. Both the sword and the boards could have been included in the *Kokon mokuroku shō* reports to reaffirm the existence of the original temple.

It is obvious that the *fukuzō* articles in the hole in the northeast corner of the Golden Hall had been looted long before Kenshin's time. To counter suspicions of neglect on the part of the monks their loss had to be attributed to unknown, supernatural, or legitimate means. A proclamation of the type mentioned in KMS *jō* 42 *jō* carries the authority of the throne behind it, so that only the highest representative could have exhumed and "used" the objects in the repository. As feeble as this explanation of their disappearance may be, it was to show that the temple was powerless to prevent it.

Translated into modern terms, the Golden Hall collection was a vast

hoard of 1320 kg (2910 lbs) of gold, 14.9 kg (32.8 lbs) of silver, and 165 kg (363.8 lbs) of copper. These figures make the report resemble a medieval propaganda exercise packaged in large round Buddhist numbers.

In this particular case the hidden repository and the altar-calming goods are said to be one and the same (KMS *jō* 17 *jō*). The floor and base stones of the Golden Hall were examined after the structure burned in 1949 (ISHIDA 1969, pp. 207–209). Although there is no record of any real archaeological work, there is also nothing to suggest the presence of any altar-calming goods. The monks might have sensed this lack and decided to “add” some by identifying them with the *fukuzō*. There is no evidence to suggest that the use of altar-calming goods started before the early decades of the eighth century. Properly speaking, altar-calming goods could serve as replacements for earth-calming-goods in the sense that they accompanied initial construction. The late-seventh-century Yakushi Buddha of the Yakushi-ji had many articles deposited on the altar, inside the large hollow image (KUNO and INOUE 1960, p. 102). Objects placed inside images are not at all uncommon, but the burial technique being referred to here for Hōryū-ji is thought to have had a relatively short existence.

The *fukuzō* of the Golden Hall is now covered with a small stone dome. The ordinary visitor would not think to look for it off in the northeast corner of the building, its edge just visible if one stands on the sill at the eastern side of the south doors and allows one’s eyes to adjust to the poor light. Implanted under this dome is a small stone with a blackened hole; ISHIDA (1970, p. 344) agrees with the iconoclasts who think it may have been used to cook sesame seed, since prior to 1949—when the wall paintings were still intact—it was noted that the northeast panels (panels 10, 11, and 12) were darkened as though from smoke. The *fukuzō*’s extraordinarily poor concealment makes little sense, but its location is important. The geomantically-inclined connect it with fuming malevolent spirits, whose appearance is made from the northeast. This is also without question the reason why the protective articles were buried in that particular spot.

Three entries (KMS *jō* 75 *jō* ; KMS *jō* 17 *jō* ; KMS *jō* 17 *ge*) speak of the Seven Star Platform as though this term has special significance here. One identifies it with “Nyoirin,” and another links it to the burial of the “Seven Treasures.” These two references relate to the Golden Hall only by inference. “Nyoirin” refers to Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪觀音 (*Cintāmanī-cakra*), one of the six manifestations of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (a deity associated with the wide acceptance of Pure Land teachings in the Heian period).

The full implications of the term “Seven Treasures” may have escaped Kenshin unless he knew the composition of the Hōryū-ji’s relics—which is quite unlikely—or had some knowledge of late-seventh-century reli-

quary practices. The Seven Treasures, known as *saptaratna* (七宝; Ch. *ch'i-pao*; J. *shichihō*), consist of seven precious materials: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, white pearl, red pearl (or ruby), amber (or coral, diamond, or emerald) and agate (or amethyst or coral). These correspond almost exactly to the articles accompanying the relics at Hōryū-ji. The egg-shaped containers are made of gold and silver; the relic holder is made of glass, which was often equated with or mistaken for lapis lazuli. Pearls are present in great number, and amber is also present. The pieces of crystal (probably quartz or clear calcite) took the place of diamonds, which would have been unknown to the Japanese. Transparent crystal could have been sent over to Japan as a substitute for diamond, the difference unrecognized and the loss of efficacy negligible – as long as the tag was right it was acceptable.

“Seven star” is an auspicious term for a highly blissful state, with the juxtaposition of three and four producing a particularly felicitous relationship. In Chinese geomancy, seven stars (*ch'i-hsing* 七星) form one of the 28 asterisms in the 27th ring of the larger geomantic compass (Ch. *feng-shui*, J. *fūsui* 風水). Elements of earth and heaven that were natural counterparts received names such as Seven Star Peak and Seven Star Cave. The Seven Star Platform is hence in a divinely blessed condition where heaven and earth are in total harmony. One suspects that these ideas entered Japan through the medium of the Hossō sect.

Other allusions may have seemed relevant, such as the seven temples built by Shōtoku and the seven great temples of Nara then being visited by masses of pilgrims. The symbolism was made explicit on the platform of the Golden Hall by Jikokuten, who holds a 70.1 cm gilt bronze sword known as *Shichiseiken* 七星劍 – the Seven Star Sword. Now in the Treasure Hall for safekeeping, this fine piece of work has lost most of the hairline gold inlay representing a star chart with seven stars and cloud patterns. Jikokuten, the king of the south who stands on the southeast corner of the platform, today holds a rod in his right hand, but with a grip quite suitable for a sword. The king on the northeast corner, where one might expect a sword holder to be posted for the protection of the hidden repository, is Tamonten, associated with the north, whose upturned right palm supports a kind of stūpa. Traditionally the strongest of the kings and closest to the Buddha by seniority, Tamonten is in direct charge of guarding the Buddha's remains; hence the symbol he displays so prominently in his hand.

I know of no description of the hole under the Sūtra Repository (KMS *jō* 19 *ge*; KMS *jō* 20 *ge*), if indeed such a thing exists. The floor of the Repository is tamped earth, but a hole should not be hard to find (the dimensions of the floor of the building are 9.09 m by 4.98 m), and one can be sure that curious priests and others have searched. In any event, the

story of the *jōroku* Amida statue buried within this hole (KMS *jō* 19 *ge*) is almost certainly apocryphal, as a consideration of the facts will show.

*Jōroku* is a figurative term for a large image, appearing in the literature from the time Buddhist images were first made in Japan. The term indicates a length of one *jō* (10 *shaku*) plus 6 *shaku*, or about 4.85 m. Any figure this big would need a hole the size of a well, and one that had at least a stone floor if not stone walls as well. The term is most commonly applied to standing images, as it gives unmanageable proportions to a seated figure. KMS *jō* 19 *ge* indicates that the *jōroku* Amida image was intended as the chief image of the Lecture Hall—in such a case, however, it should refer to a seated statue with a *jō-in* *mūdra*, as used from the Late Heian period on.

One can gain some idea of the size of a statue with a height of 4.85 m through comparison with large wooden images of the Late Heian, the best known of which is the Amida Buddha in the Byōdō-in in Uji. This statue—made, perhaps not coincidentally, the year after the reputed start of the *mappō*—is 2.95 m high. One of the largest seated images is the Kamakura-period Fukūenjaku Kannon in the Nan'endō of the Kōfuku-ji in Nara, but at 3.48 m it is still only three-fourths as large as the reputed Sūtra Repository statue.

The statuary of the present Lecture Hall at Hōryū-ji has consisted of a triad of seated Yakushi Buddhas since the time that the building was relocated there from Kyoto around 990. The central image is 2.5 m in height, considerably larger than the other two, and is not seriously out of scale even considering the large size of the hall (the largest existing Late Heian building). Were the Sūtra Repository's reputed image to be placed there, however, it would be a towering Gulliver in a Lilliputian land. Again, the exaggeration is probably purposeful. Even the description of the image as made of gilt bronze is an exaggeration: Buddhas were then made of wood, not bronze.

The text indicates that there was never any intention of burying this image permanently—only temporary deposit was planned, until a place became available in the new Lecture Hall that was to be built. It follows from this that there was no Lecture Hall when the temple received the Amida image. But why would anyone want to bury such a white elephant? Why not house it temporarily somewhere?

There is a potential foundation for the fabrication of this undoubtedly apocryphal report. Hōryū-ji did not have a Lecture Hall when it was rebuilt “a thousand years earlier” (KMS *jō* 19 *ge*), and it is unclear when it finally acquired one. Nothing was reported of the hall that was eventually built until it was destroyed in the disastrous fire of 925 (incidentally, there is no proof that the Ikaruga-dera had a Lecture Hall either, and it is known that some early temples did not). If the statue had been buried to await the construction of a new Lecture Hall following the fire,

why was it not exhumed when the present building was brought from Kyoto in the late tenth century to replace the Lecture Hall that burned? The 925 fire destroyed not only the Lecture Hall but also the North Hall (*hokushitsu*) and West Hall (*saishitsu*), and it came perilously close to burning down the pagoda. The only safe way to preserve such an important statue—as could be extrapolated from the story—would be to bury it, which they did. Thus it survives to be used as the main image of the Lecture Hall during the “hundred years when Amida is popular” mentioned in KMS *jō* 20 *ge*.

The situation with the third hidden repository is quite different from that of the other two. Its cover was found in 1986, thus identifying its precise location for the first time since it was mentioned in the extant writings. Previously it was identified with other stones on the temple precincts, such as the stone sitting on the ground in front of the pagoda or the one in front of the Golden Hall. These stones, however, whatever their use may have been, were conspicuous features of the courtyard and can hardly be referred to as hidden.

#### *Votive Offerings to Temples*

The lid of the third repository is a cyclopean granite cover quite large enough to cover a vast hoard of stores piled deep in a multilayered vault. Is it unreasonable that a temple might have accumulated 10,000 roof tiles and 30,000 mirrors as mentioned in the *Kokon mokuroku shō*? Bronze mirrors and roof tiles were, after all, characteristic votive offerings of the Late Heian and Kamakura periods. The West Octagonal Hall (*saien-dō*) at Hōryū-ji had its walls and pillars covered with hundreds of mirrors offered by pilgrims through the centuries, and still has many on display.

This hall stands as living evidence that temples did indeed accumulate huge quantities of gifts. Also called Mine-yakushi, the building was built in 1249 to replace a hall that had been erected in 718 and later destroyed. Mirrors are hung like shingles on its octagonal columns, and many others are said to be kept in storage (NAKANO 1969, pp. 95-96; MIYAZAKI 1984, pp. 12-17). I do not know the total number, but 3,400 exposed mirrors were examined in 1916, of which ten were found to have dates. Two of these are dated 1311 and 1473, implying at least a century and a half of undiminished pilgrimage activity at the hall. A piece of paper pasted on the latter mirror is inscribed: “Bunmei 5 (1473), ninth month, 23rd day, donated for relief from an eye disease” (NAKANO 1969, p. 96). There is no reason to question the validity of the date. Other metal gifts in the possession of the hall include about 7,000 items of weaponry and armor. These and various other objects were, perhaps, each identified with a special ailment: mirrors may have been contributed by the blind to return light to their eyes; awls by the deaf to

open their ears; and helmets, swords, sword guards, and bows by military men who had sustained wounds or survived battles. Presumably, the general uniformity of the mirrors in size and the slow change in style indicate a nearby workshop, likely to be under Hōryū-ji auspices and economically profitable to the temple.

According to the documentary evidence, the largest collection of such votive offerings was a store of 150,000 mirrors dedicated to Yakushi, the Buddha of healing, in Hōrai-ji, a Nara-period temple in Aichi Prefecture founded by the noted ascetic Rishū. In 1874, during the severe repression of Buddhism that took place under the Meiji government, all were sold and recast for more “practical” uses; even the building in which they were housed was dismantled. One donation made in Tenbun 9 (1540) by Funazu Jirōza and Fujiwara Nobutada of Bishū Iwakura was, according to remaining records, an expression of gratitude for good health and the avoidance of trouble (NAKANO 1969, p. 96).

Mirrors were therefore votive offerings, soliciting good health or expressing gratitude for a trouble-free life. Given the vast accumulation at temples with a reputation for cures and relief from particular afflictions, a collection of 30,000 at Hōryū-ji is not unreasonable, though the reputed size of the mirrors (one meter in diameter) is an exaggeration. Such mirrors could easily have been converted to relic-protectors and buried in a large hole. Given the brass color of later Japanese mirrors, they might even have passed for gilt bronze.

Tiles have always been directly associated with building campaigns and new construction. What many believe to be a modern practice in Japan – making a cash donation and inscribing one’s name on a tile – is, in fact, a very old tradition. Excavated tiles of the eighth-century Musashi Kokubun-ji, for instance, have many donors’ names scratched in the clay before the tiles were fired (ISHIMURA 1960, pp. 259–376; part II, pp. 11–42). This was by no means an isolated practice, though it fluctuated with the state of the economy.

Copper roof tiles, also mentioned by Kenshin, were a mark of rank and associated wealth. Buildings of the Tōshōgū, the burial places of the first and third Tokugawa shoguns at Nikkō, are roofed with copper tiles. Since none have been excavated around Hōryū-ji, that temple seems not to have had them, but since Kenshin wrote of them the idea must have been known to him, and was not a fantastic one.

#### *Prince Shōtoku and the Hidden Repositories*

The authority of Shōtoku is not invoked as often as one might expect in the *Kokon mokuroku shō*, but it is enough (e.g., KMS *jō* 17 *jō*) for the temple to claim the prince as the depositor of the articles in the *fukuzō* and therefore the founder of the temple. Medieval monks did, in fact, take

the consistent, uncontested, and incorrect position that Shōtoku was the architect of the one and only Hōryū-ji. The labyrinthine calendrical system and numerous textual conflicts enabled them to blithely ignore such inescapable evidence of the earlier temple as the *Nihon shoki*'s references to fires and the huge center-pole stone right on their property. Assured by the many original statues documented by the inventory of 747, they confidently preached the single temple myth.

In KMS *jō* 17 *jō* Shōtoku is described as having personally buried the sūtra that had caused him the most anguish and was therefore the most precious. Since its survival was paramount, it was connected directly with the prince. The text of KMS *jō* 20 *ge* is not specific as to the source of authority, but no one else but Shōtoku could be quoted in such ex cathedra terms. The “hundred years when Amida is popular” mentioned in KMS *jō* 20 *ge* comprises one of the prince's many predictions about the future, which, together with his miracles, constitutes the basis of his cult.

The material for the Shōtoku cult was compiled in the *Shōtoku taishi denryaku* 聖徳太子伝暦, believed to have been written by Fujiwara Kaneyasu in Engi 17 (919), about 300 years after the prince's death. Events are listed against his age in years, and his supernatural powers are stressed. The *Denryaku* became the standard “biography” embodying all of the cult elements, and was used by later writers.<sup>3</sup>

The *Nihon shoki* of 720, written nearly a century after Shōtoku died, provides ample evidence that by then the cult was already far along. The prince is introduced at the beginning of the section on Empress Suiko as having been delivered in a sudden and painless birth and as able to speak immediately. Within a few years he could judge ten lawsuits simultaneously and without error, and had become proficient in the Buddhist scriptures and Chinese classics (ASTON 1972, II, p. 122).

How selective the compiler of the *Denryaku* was regarding Shōtoku's prophesies, in particular those that were in some way fulfilled before 919, is difficult to say. By and large, when the prince was predicting events in terms of years his estimates tended to be on the conservative side—those on record are mostly within a period of 500 years. Consider the following: in 588 he predicted a short reign for Emperor Sushun; in 596, the destruction of Asuka-dera in 500 years; in 599 (third month 28th day), an earthquake; in 604, the transfer of the capital to Kyoto after 200 years; and in 617, the transfer of the capital to Nara (giving no specific time). Since the destruction of Asuka-dera was the only event that took place after the writing of the *Denryaku*, it doubtless forms a bet-

<sup>3</sup> For a list of these events, including before the birth and after the death of the prince, see KIKUTAKE 1973, pp. 22–29.

ter test of the prince's prognosticating powers. All in all the averages were on his side, given that earthquakes are a certainty in Japan and temple fires are a matter of when and not if.

How did Shōtoku's predictions fare? Emperor Sushun's reign lasted only five years, terminated when he ran afoul of the Soga and was assassinated. The Asuka-dera, destroyed by fire in 1196, received a century of grace from its prophesized destruction (one can imagine the dilemma of the priests, praying for the survival of the temple while wishing to believe in the integrity of the prince). A large earthquake hit the month after Shōtoku's warning: the *Nihon shoki* says, "[Four]th month, 27th day: There was an earthquake which destroyed all the houses. So orders were given to all quarters to sacrifice to the kami of earthquakes" (ASTON 1972, 11, p. 124). His prediction of the transfer of the capital to Kyoto after 200 years overshot the mark by only ten years (it took place in 794), and the move to Nara did indeed transpire, although prior to the move to Kyoto. I know of no predictions for the destruction of Shōtoku's own temples.

Ever since the discovery of the covering stone for the hidden repository near the Great Bath, the Hōryū-ji authorities have taken an adamant stand that it not be touched. Temple spokesmen justify their position by invoking the tradition (KMS *jō* 20 *ge*) that Prince Shōtoku, when depositing these stores, ordered them to remain sealed for a thousand years after his death, and to be opened only if the temple had fallen on hard times or if the power of Buddhism was on the wane. In their view the temple is flourishing, Buddhism is alive and well, and the deposit need not be opened (GEKKAN BUNKAZAI 1983/9, p. 96). They interpret the *Kokon mokuroku shō* selectively. One imagines that the priests are attempting to protect both the myth and the temple's reputation, believing it better to leave the granite block undisturbed than to run the risk of discovering that the spares are missing and the chief relics have not had the protection tradition has accorded them. The thought is too much to contemplate.

#### *Why and When the Hidden Repositories were Deposited*

Over and above the national threat of *mappō*, was Hōryū-ji threatened by more local developments that might have increased the concern of the monks?

Known events at the temple, beginning about a century before the start of *mappō* and ending with Kenshin's writing in 1238, involve a span of about three centuries. The idea of Shōtoku depositing sūtras in the *fukuzō* could not predate the middle of the eighth century, when the practice started. Speaking of *fukuzō* and *chindangu* as one and the same could not have been done before the altar-calming ritual was started,



probably during the early eighth century. All of this occurred at least a hundred years after Shōtoku died.

The examination of other records reveals three catastrophes that might have induced such drastic relic-saving measures during the time span under consideration, although most entries on Hōryū-ji speak of the normal wear and tear on the temple and the necessary repairs. From several texts and an occasional inscription on or in an image, one knows that statues were made and received, that screen paintings were repaired, and that several buildings were erected: the South Great Gate (*nandai-mon*) in 1031, the Sacred Spirit Hall (*shōryō-in*) in 1109; the Three Sūtras Hall (*sangyō-in*) in 1126, the Tō-in Bell Tower in 1164, the Relic Hall (*shariden*) in 1219, and the cloister of the Tō-in in 1236. Records of repairs include the Lecture Hall in 1146, the pagoda in 1158, the Middle Gate in 1161, the Dream Hall (*yumedono*) in 1165, the Golden Hall in 1204, and reconstruction of the Dream Hall in 1230.

Of the three catastrophes that did strike, one was so serious that it may have been seen as foreshadowing *mappō* and have thus precipitated a greater feeling of crisis. This was the great fire of 925, which, according to the *Kokon mokuroku shō*, destroyed the Lecture Hall, West Hall, and North Hall. The same document and two others report the destruction by fire of the West Octagonal Hall in 1048 (one source says 1046); the *Kokon mokuroku shō* reports that the West Hall went up in flames in 1078.

The 925 fire wiped out the buildings on the north side of the cloister and eventually resulted in the removal and reconfiguring of the north colonnade. The Sūtra Repository and the Bell Tower were incorporated into the cloister and joined with the large Lecture Hall when the latter was relocated from Kyoto in the early 990s. Since the West Octagonal Hall sits on a hill well west of the *garan*, it is unlikely that the 1048 conflagration threatened the pagoda and its relics; the West Hall was also outside, due west of the cloister. The fire of 925 was a serious threat, however, as indicated in the documents reporting that the buildings (and cloister) were moved back to avoid a repetition of the disaster.

The tenth century was marked by the appearance of Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集 (variously translated as *The Essential Collection Concerning Birth, Essentials of Salvation, or Birth in the Land of Purity*). This 985 work expounded the joys of the Pure Land but aggravated fears of *mappō*. Amidst temples took *mappō* very seriously; Hōryū-ji, belonging to the Hossō sect, might have expected a slightly lighter sentence. One conjectures that the hidden repositories were put in place some time after the 925 fire and before the time of *mappō*. They followed the spirit of *mappō* but not the form. They reflected the same fear and reaction to actual or perceived threat, but they represented more than a reasoned response: they bordered on panic. Assuming that all the *fukuzō* were buried within a generation of each other, what could three do that one

could not? Presumably this: they ringed the chief relics with a shield of magical protection, and their diversity in content and manner of deposit provided cover from both above and below. They were placed under a platform in the belief, perhaps, that the temple had no *chindangu* and the Buddha was unguarded; beneath a floor, where holy writ was kept, below the level of the pagoda's relics; and outside, underground but in a sense exposed. They were concealed in unlikely, theoretically unpredictable places. They were, in other words, blanket security measures taken by the priests at a peculiarly demoralizing time, who also used the *fukuzō* to bolster local morale and instill confidence in the future of the temple by amplifying the cult of Shōtoku.

#### ABBREVIATION

GEKKAN BUNKAZAI: *Gekkan bunkazai hakkutsu shutsudo jōhō* 月刊文化財発掘・出土情報 [Monthly reports on excavations and discoveries], Japan Tsūshin-sha.

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