

CHAPTER FIVE

REASSESSING THE WALL PAINTINGS OF HÖRYŪJI

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Perhaps no other Japanese painting or set of paintings has received as much scholarly attention as the wall murals of the Kondō (Main Hall or Golden Hall) of Hōryūji.¹ Created at a time when Japan was actively importing and assimilating the continental culture of Tang China, the murals show a complex program as well as an eclectic mix of artistic styles that include elements of Indian, Central Asian, and Tang Chinese conventions. For more than a century, there have been periodic intense debates about the iconography, dating, and style of the murals. For research carried out before World War II, none surpassed the comprehensiveness of Naitō Tōichirō's 内藤藤一郎 1932 work, made available to the English reader through the translation by William R. B. Acker and Benjamin Rowland, Jr. (1943). Scholars generally agree that the wall paintings in the Kondō were completed about the same time the reconstruction of the temple was finished, which would give an approximate date of 690 to 710 (see section on dating).

In 1949, a tragic fire destroyed or defaced most of the murals, but photographs taken before the fire allow for detailed examination.² This tragic fire sparked further interest, so that some of the research conducted by Japanese scholars immediately before and after the war and the fire was introduced in Western journals by Dietrich Seckel (1949a, 1949b) and Alexander C. Soper (1952). Thereafter, the Hōryūji murals continued to draw attention, especially with the lavish publications of Japanese temple art in the 1960s and 1970s. But except for the translation of Mizuno Seiichi's 水野清一 work in 1974 and the 1999 book by J. Edward Kidder, little attention has been paid to the Hōryūji murals in Western literature in the last fifty years. Thus an updated review of the state of research, especially the work undertaken by Japanese scholars since the 1950s, is long overdue.

As an art historian whose primary field of research is Chinese Buddhist art, my purpose here is to revisit some iconographic and stylistic aspects of the murals in light of recent advances in knowledge about Chinese Buddhist art. In the seventh and eighth centuries, Japan was increasingly brought into the larger cultural sphere of Tang China, which was itself receptive to cur-

rents coming from the West—namely, from India and Central Asia, and possibly Southeast Asia as well. Thus I attempt here to place the Hōryūji wall paintings in the broader context of this emerging international idiom of Buddhist art.

Context in the Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries

The establishment of the Tang dynasty (618–907) in China put an end to several centuries of political disunion. Throughout the seventh century, Tang China rapidly developed into a powerful international empire, reaching its zenith by the first half of the eighth century. The defeat of the Western Turks during Emperor Taizong's 太宗 reign (626–649) secured Chinese dominance over the land routes to the West, which promoted commercial and cultural exchanges along the Silk Road. Most notable was the sixteen-year journey to India undertaken by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), the celebrated Chinese pilgrim and translator whose relatively smooth journey back to China in 645 signaled a new phase of internationalism in Tang history. Xuanzang returned with 657 volumes of Buddhist texts, 150 pellets of the Buddha's relics, and seven statues of the Buddha. When he entered the Tang capital of Chang'an, these trophy items were carried in a procession, with monks and spectators lining the thoroughfare. The seven images of the Buddha are copies of famous icons in India; because of their prestige in the Buddhist world, they were worshipped as sacred images.³

Also in the mid-seventh century, the Chinese diplomat Wang Xuance 王玄策 (fl. seventh century) was sent to India three or four times.⁴ He brought back new information about the country and opened a new route between China and India by way of Tibet and Nepal. Traveling with him was a group of artists who made sketches of Indian monuments and images. Inscriptions related to Wang have been found in Tibet and at the Longmen 龍門 cave-chapel site, near Luoyang, where he dedicated images. At Longmen and in Buddhist temples in the Tang capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang, drawings that Wang brought back became the blueprints for images. For example, Zhang Yanyuan's 張彥遠 *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (847, Records of painters of all dynasties) records that in 665 a gilt statue of Maitreya Bodhisattva was made for the Jing'aiji 敬愛寺 in Luoyang, based on a sketch brought back by Wang; the making of the statue was directed by none other than Wang himself.⁵ The well-known painting of *Famous Images of the Buddha* from the sealed library of Dunhuang 敦煌 (the two sections are divided between the British Museum and the National Museum in New Delhi) is now thought to have been based on Wang Xuance's illustrations and inscriptions.⁶ Wang also made a copy of the Buddha's footprints in Magadha

and brought them to Chang'an, whence they were soon introduced to Japan by a Japanese artist (see below).

The images, copies and sketches of images and monuments brought back by Xuanzang and Wang Xuance, among others, provided new visual sources and stimuli, creating what some scholars call an “Indian boom” in the Tang capitals. The impact of these new influences is apparent in the international and Indianizing character of the plastic arts in Chang'an and Luoyang.

Renewed direct contact with India and the patronage of Buddhism by Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 650–683), and especially by Empress Wu 武后 (r. 690–705), also created an environment favorable to reception of the latest developments in Buddhism from India and its neighboring countries, most notably the incipient form of esoteric Buddhism and cults of esoteric deities. In addition, the presence of foreign artists in the capitals contributed to this international trend. Artists of Indian or Central Asian descent had long been present in China, and they continued to enliven the Tang court. For example, the famous Khotanese painters Yüchi Bazhina 尉遲跋支那 and Yüchi Yiseng 尉遲乙僧 (fl. ca. 670–710), a father and his son, were known for producing images with the illusionist effects of protruding and receding, and there are records of Yüchi Yiseng's paintings of multi-armed esoteric deities in a monastery at the capital.⁷

Fresh stimuli and political unification thus fostered a more unified and mature art style—a synthesis of the earlier Chinese Buddhist style with stylistic elements introduced from Central Asia and India. New subject matter and new cultic deities also reflected the developments of Buddhism and devotional preferences. This unified Tang idiom emerged during the latter part of the seventh and first half of the eighth century.

Before the seventh century, Japan's contact with the continent relied heavily on the Korean kingdoms as intermediaries, with the immigrant communities of Korean and Chinese descent playing a key role in the transmission of continental culture to Japan. By the time of Prince Shōtoku (573?–622), however, Japan began to send envoys to China directly; a total of four, perhaps five, missions were sent during the Sui dynasty (581–619). By the Tang dynasty, these envoys were called *kentōshi* 遣唐使 (envoys sent to Tang China), and Japan sent a total of twenty missions.⁸ Initially, one or two boats were sent, with about two hundred people on board. But by the eighth century, a mission consisted of four boats and more than five hundred people. These missions were led by an ambassador and included vice envoys and other officials, student-monks, painters, craftsmen of all kinds, and supporting crew. With the new policy of opening Japan to main-

land cultures established by Prince Shōtoku in the early seventh century and the Taika 大化 Reform of 645, which established a centralized government based on Chinese models, Japan quickly imported and assimilated different facets of continental culture, from law to medicine, literature, art, music, Buddhism, architecture, and all kinds of technology. The missions returned with texts, textiles, musical instruments, paintings, ceramics, gold and silver ware, and Buddhist images and drawings—artifacts that attest to the international character of Japanese culture at this time. (Many of these are preserved in Buddhist temples and in the imperial treasure house Shōsōin 正倉院.)

The student-monks who went on these missions were instrumental in transmitting all facets of Buddhism to Japan—not only doctrine but also monastic codes, ritual practices, and Buddhist images and other ritual objects. Like Xuanzang on his sojourn to India, these monks traveled to China to study with masters in temples in the Tang capitals of Chang’an and Luoyang. One of them, Dōshō 道昭 (629–700), who was in China from 653 to 660, had the opportunity to study under Master Xuanzang himself. It was Dōshō who introduced the Faxiang 法相 (J. Hossō; Consciousness Only) doctrine to Japan, the first and most prominent school of Buddhism in Japan in the seventh century. When such pilgrim-monks returned to Japan, they carried with them Buddhist sutras, images, paintings, temple plans, and all kinds of ritual paraphernalia. The painters and artisans who came along learned the methods of making Buddhist images and building temples. Many painters and artisans who went on these missions were of immigrant—Korean and Chinese—backgrounds and came from hereditary artisans’ families.⁹ As in the previous century, these émigré painters and artisans played a significant role as carpenters, sculptors, and painters in Japan’s many projects of constructing grand Buddhist temples and furnishing them (not to mention building new capitals in Fujiwara 藤原 in 694 and Heijō 平城 [Nara] in 710), except that by this time they were directly transmitting current Tang Chinese styles and technology to Japan.

One of the chief goals of these missions was to seek and collect Chinese books, and the number of Chinese titles that these envoys brought to Japan is impressive (so much so that, later, the Chinese court would request copies of lost works from Japan). Dōshō returned with a large number of Buddhist scriptures and built a hall at Gankōji 元興寺 in which to store them. Genbō 玄昉 (d. 746), who went on the 717 mission, returned to Japan in 736 with the entire Tripiṭaka available in China at that time; apparently this was a gift from Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756). One can only imagine the enormous impact that some five thousand volumes of Buddhist

texts must have had on the development of Buddhism in Japan once they became available there. And if in the seventh century the Buddhist art of Japan lagged behind continental developments and relied heavily on Korean intermediaries, by the late seventh and early eighth century the plastic arts in Japan closely followed the latest currents in Tang China due to this intense level of contact and activity.¹⁰

Literary sources record hundreds of Buddhist temples in the Tang capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang that are adorned with sculptures and wall paintings.¹¹ However, none of these temples has survived, which makes study of the Hōryūji all the more relevant. Some stone and bronze sculptures are extant, but most relevant for comparison with the Hōryūji murals are the wall paintings and sculptures from the cave-chapels at Dunhuang 敦煌 in northwest China. Located at the crossroads between China and the West, the art at Dunhuang can elucidate Hōryūji's connection with this cosmopolitan Buddhist art facilitated by traffic on the Silk Road.

Overview of the Program of the Hōryūji Murals

In what follows I first give a brief overview of the program of the murals inside the Kondō before considering the more contested issues of dating and iconography. There are altogether twelve panels, numbered from the east wall and proceeding in a clockwise direction (Fig. 5.1). Four large panels portray four buddhas and their assemblies/pure lands, and eight narrow panels depict individual bodhisattvas.

The four large buddha panels (nos. 1, 6, 9, 10) are located on the east, west, and north walls. The east and west walls each have one large panel. Because the south side is the main entrance into the Kondō and has three doorways, there is not sufficient wall surface for a large mural. Instead, the north wall in the back accommodates two large panels. The narrow panels are located at the two ends of each wall. After much debate, there is now general consensus about the iconography of the paintings, although the identity of some deities is still being discussed. The following shows the majority view, along with alternative identifications:

The four large panels:

	no. 1	no. 6	no. 9	no. 10
Majority view	Shaka	Amida	Miroku	Yakushi
Alternative identifications	Shaka	Amida	Yakushi	Miroku

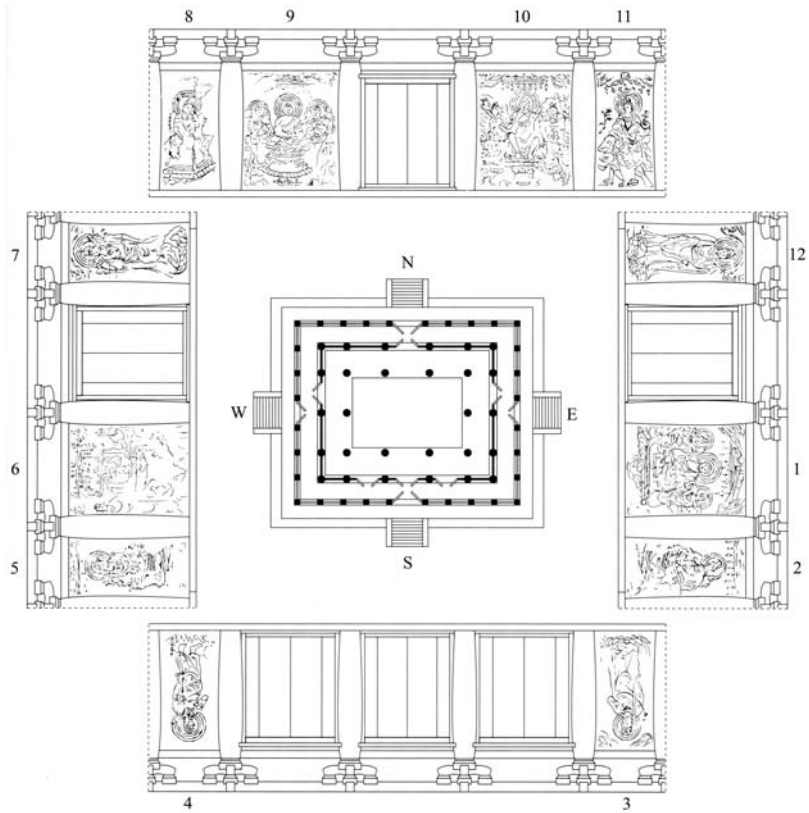


Fig. 5.1. Diagram of the mural paintings in the Kondō, Hōryū-ji. Adapted from Kameda 1968, Fig. 1.

The eight narrow panels:

	nos. 2, 5	nos. 3, 4	nos. 7, 12	nos. 8, 11
Majority view	Nikkō, Gakkō	Kannon, Seishi	Shō Kan- non, Juichimen Kannon	Monju, Fugen
Alternative identifications	pensive bodhisat- tvas	Kannon, Seishi	Shō Kan- non Juichimen Kannon	Monju, Fugen



Fig. 5.2. (Left) *Shaka's Assembly, Panel 1, east wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.*

Fig. 5.3. (Right) *Yakushi's Assembly (?), Panel 9, north wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.*

Panel 1 on the east wall portrays an assembly of Shaka 釋迦 (Skt. Śākyamuni), shown here as a buddha seated on a stepped throne and under a canopy, flanked by two great bodhisattvas and his disciples. Because a total of ten disciples are shown, the identification of the buddha as Shaka is generally accepted. Graceful *apsaras* (angel musicians and dancers) are seen at the top (Fig. 5.2).

Panel 6 on the west wall depicts Amida 阿彌陀 (Skt. Amitābha), the Lord of the Western Pure Land, flanked by his two attendant bodhisattvas: Kannon 觀音 (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) on the right, and Seishi 勢至 (Skt. Mahāsthāmaprāpta) on the left (Plate 12). Identification of this panel is certain because of the known iconography of Kannon the Bodhisattva of Compassion, who bears an effigy of Amida Buddha, the bodhisattva's forbear, on the crown. The figures seated on lotuses represent the beings born into the Western Pure Land, a destination for rebirth after death for those who believe in Amida. The trinity is clearly discernible, but much of the rest of the painting has lost its pigment. Apparently in the original composition Amida Buddha is surrounded by a large group of disciples, heavenly kings, and guardian deities.

Panel 9 depicts the assembly of Yakushi 藥師 (Skt. Bhaiṣajyaguru), or the Medicine Buddha (Fig. 5.3). Yakushi was popular because of his heal-



Fig. 5.4. (Left) Pensive bodhisattva, Panel 2, east wall south end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.



Fig. 5.5. (Right) Pensive bodhisattva, Panel 5, west wall south end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

ing power, attested to by the building of Yakushiji in 698 by Empress Jitō (645–702).¹² In the mural, the seated buddha is flanked by two bodhisattvas and guardian figures. Panel 10 represents the assembly of Miroku 彌勒 (Skt. Maitreya), the Future Buddha who succeeds Shaka (Plate 13). Shown with legs pendant, Miroku is represented here as a buddha, and he is accompanied by disciples, bodhisattvas, and guardian deities. (The majority of Japanese art historians reverse the identification of Panels 9 and 10; see discussion below.)

The eight panels of individual bodhisattvas are arranged in pairs: 2 and 5; 3 and 4; 7 and 12; and 8 and 11 (see diagram in Fig. 5.1). Panels 2 and 5 depict two pensive bodhisattvas, each with an elbow resting on the

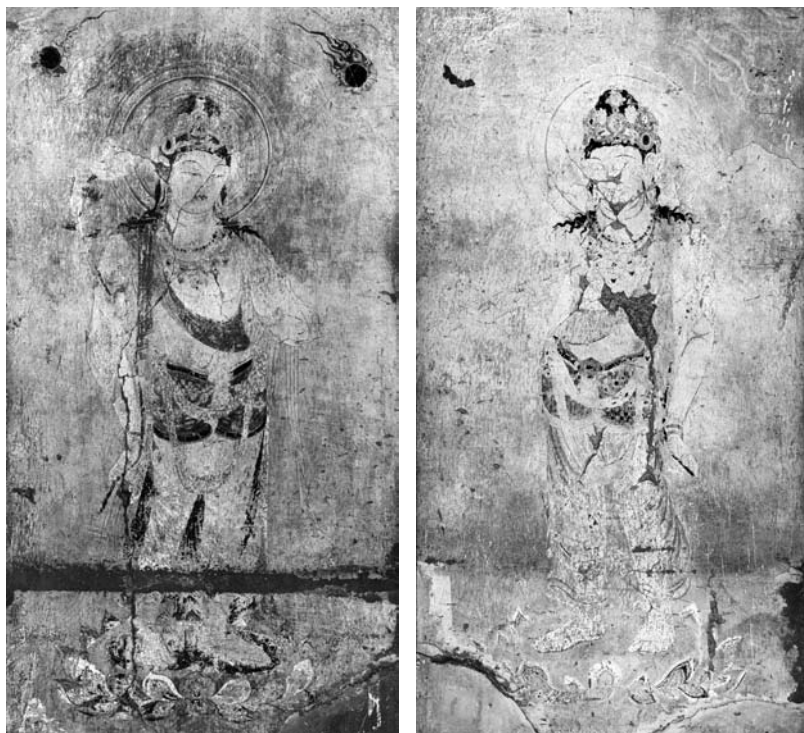


Fig. 5.6. (Left) Kannon, Panel 3, south wall east end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

Fig. 5.7. (Right) Seishi, Panel 4, south wall west end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

knee and a finger pointing at the chin (Figs. 5.4, 5.5). Pensive bodhisattvas are common as attendant bodhisattvas, and sometimes take on different identities. Japanese scholars suggest that they represent Nikkō 日光 (Skt. Sūryagarbha) and Gakkō 月光 (Skt. Candragarbha), or the Sunlight Bodhisattva and Moonlight Bodhisattva, attendant bodhisattvas of Yakushi Buddha, assuming that the pairing of bodhisattvas corresponds to the buddhas. However, it is not entirely clear that the eight bodhisattvas necessarily pair with the four buddhas.

Panels 3 and 4 on the south wall represent Kannon (Fig. 5.6) and Seishi (Fig. 5.7), the same bodhisattvas shown in Amida's Pure Land. Kannon has a small buddha-image on the crown. Panels 7 and 12 show two more Kan-

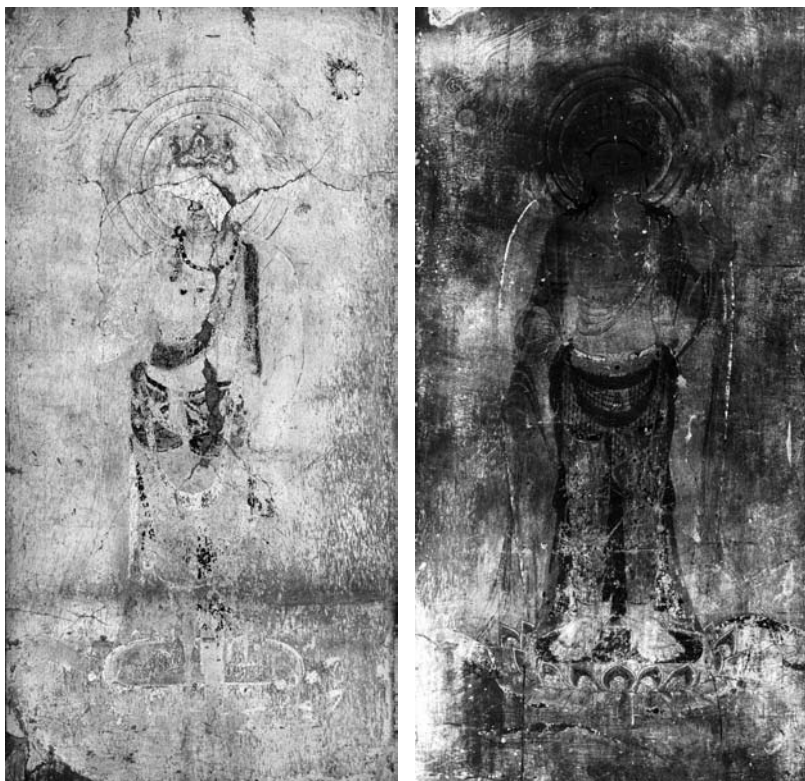


Fig. 5.8. (Left) *Shō Kannon*, Panel 7, west wall north end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

Fig. 5.9. (Right) *Eleven-Headed Kannon*, Panel 12, east wall north end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

non images: *Shō Kannon* 聖觀音 (Skt. Ārya Avalokiteśvara; Fig. 5.8) and *Eleven-Headed Kannon* 十一面觀音 (Skt. Ekādaśamukhā Avalokiteśvara; Fig. 5.9). The multi-headed figure is the earliest esoteric form of this popular bodhisattva. Known as a transformed Kannon (*henka Kannon* 變化觀音), this bodhisattva stands opposite the original Kannon, called *Shō Kannon*. (I discuss this new deity in greater detail below.)

Panels 8 and 11 on the north wall represent *Monju* 文殊 (Skt. Mañjuśrī; Fig. 5.10) and *Fugen* 普賢 (Skt. Samantabhadra; Fig. 5.11). *Fugen*, the Bodhisattva of Principle, rides an elephant, whose outline is discernible. His



Fig. 5.10. (Left) Monju, Panel 8, north wall west end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

Fig. 5.11. (Right) Fugen, Panel 11, north wall east end, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

companion Monju, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, usually rides on a lion, although none is shown here.

In addition, there are panels of *apsaras* (Plate 14) and depictions of monks meditating in mountain caves.

Dating of the Murals

One of the most hotly contested issues is the dating of the murals.¹³ The 747 inventory of the property assets of Hōryūji (*Hōryūji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō* 法隆寺伽藍縁起並流記資材帳) makes no mention of



Fig. 5.12. Bronze Yakushi Buddha (central figure of triad), Yakushiji, bronze, late seventh to early eighth century. Height 254.8 cm. From Uehara et al. 1977, Pl. 42.

the murals, but states that the clay sculptures of the Hōryūji Pagoda and the Middle Gate were completed in 711.¹⁴ Many scholars interpreted this to mean the completion of the rebuilding of Hōryūji after the fire in 670, and used this as a general guideline for dating the murals of the Golden Hall. Among them were Naitō Tōichirō and Mizuno Seiichi, both of whom also closely analyzed the style of the murals. Naitō noted the murals' proximity in style to the bronze Yakushi triad in the Yakushiji, which exhibits a mature Tang style (Fig. 5.12). (The Yakushiji, completed in 698 at Fujiwara, was moved and rebuilt in the new capital of Heijō between 713 and 723. There was debate as to whether the Yakushi triad was moved from the original temple to Nara or recast in Nara for the new Yakushiji, with the possibility of two dates—either before 697 or around 713–723.) Naitō thought that the Yakushi sculptures were cast after the temple was moved to Nara, and thus arbitrarily suggested roughly around 711, a date close enough to the Hōryūji paintings. Naitō was not the only scholar who observed the closeness in

figural style of the murals and the Yakushi triad, and the dating of the latter was a critical factor in other theories proposed.

Mizuno agreed that the murals were painted in the mature Tang style, noting that:

The Horyu-ji murals, like the door paintings on Lady Tachibana's Shrine, were influenced by mature T'ang painting. Such influence at this time is unusual. Decorous distribution of forms, rich fullness of figures, and substantial quality of costumes place the works in the Tempyo period (710–94). The drawing is smooth and fluid, the colors are rich, and the workmanship shows considerable advances over earlier paintings. The style appears to be a great development, probably based on importations from the continent.¹⁵

Even though the practice of painting murals had been known in the Korean kingdoms of Koguryō 高句麗 (37 BCE–668 CE) and Paekche 百濟 (18 BCE–663 CE), and in ancient tombs in Japan, the use of murals remained uncommon. Mizuno pointed out that embroidered hangings were more commonly used in Buddhist temples. However, contemporary records of Buddhist temples in China, such as Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai minghua ji*, indicate that the monasteries in the capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang were all decorated with murals by famed painters of the time. Thus the murals at Hōryūji can be seen as an example of direct influence from China, both in practice and in style. Ultimately, Mizuno gave weight to the documentary evidence of the completion of the Hōryūji Pagoda and the Middle Gate as stated in the 747 Inventory, concluding that the murals were likely completed before 711. He wrote:

The murals on the main walls of the Golden Hall, paintings of angels and arhats in the inner sanctuary of the Golden Hall and Pagoda, and also paintings on the ceilings and graffiti found in the roof, all exhibit a stylistic continuity, and it is difficult to imagine a gap of any length of time anywhere. This suggests that the murals were completed at the same time as the Golden Hall itself—about 680 to 690. Dating them exactly, however, remains a difficult task.¹⁶

Other propositions for the dating of the murals have ranged from the 670s to as late as the 730s. The bases for assessing the dating of the murals have included analysis of everything from decorative motifs to textile patterns, patronage, and possible financial resources. For example, the architectural historian Fukuyama Toshio 福山敏男 compared the decorative motifs found in the Kondō murals and the architectural motifs of the hall itself.¹⁷ He noted that the small details of the architectural designs are close

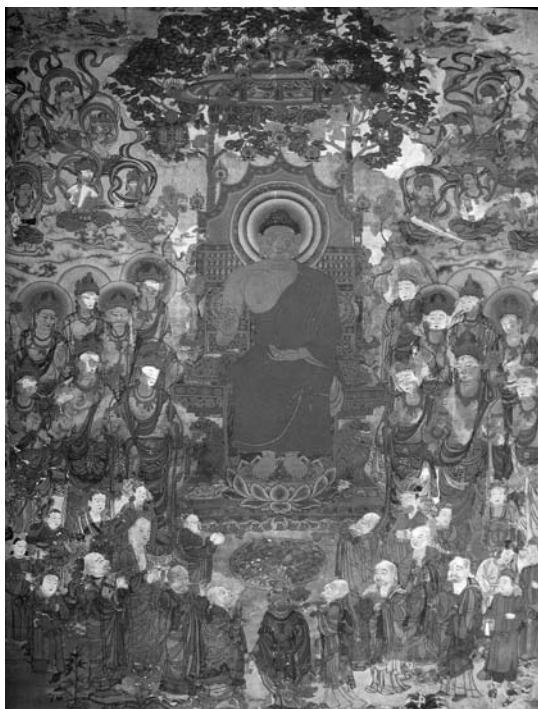


Fig. 5.13. The Buddha Preaching, Kanshūji, late seventh to early eighth century. Embroidery on silk. Height 208 cm. Nara National Museum. From Nakano 1992, Pl. 51.

to Chinese Six Dynasties (220–589) style, whereas the motifs in the murals and the application of color in them are similar to those of the Kanshūji 勸修寺 embroidered painting of *The Buddha Preaching* (Fig. 5.13), which probably dates to the second half of the seventh century (some scholars thought it was brought to Japan from China). Fukuyama did not, however, venture to account for the difference.

A textile specialist, Ōta Eizō 太田英蔵, compared the depiction of textile patterns in the Hōryūji murals with known examples of brocades and textiles that were available to Japan at the time—namely, those that had been brought back from China by returning Japanese envoys or by Koreans. Ōta observed that textiles associated with Empress Wu’s court of the latter part of the seventh century exhibit very strong sinicizing characteristics, unlike the earlier ones, which show Sasanian and other foreign motifs. He noted the absence of these later textile patterns, especially the *hōsōka* 寶相花 motif (“flower of precious form”—an imaginary floral medallion sometimes called the Buddha’s rose; Fig. 5.14), in the Hōryūji murals. Since



Fig. 5.14. Hōsōka (floral medallion) as decorative motif on ceiling, Dunhuang Cave 334, seventh century. From Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 83.

there was a gap in the Japanese missions to China between 669 and 702, Ōta surmised that the murals were probably completed between the 680s and 704; otherwise, new textile patterns introduced by the returning mission of 704 would have shown up in the murals.¹⁸ Ōta's attention to the impact of a specific Japanese mission to China is insightful, although a completely different dating can also be argued taking into account the same 704 return mission (see below).

Based on the prominence of the depiction of Amida's Pure Land on the Kondō's west wall, Kobayashi Taiichirō 小林太市郎 contemplated the linkage of the murals to patronage. Because of the well-known Tachibana shrine, which houses an exquisite bronze triad of Amida, in the Hōryūji Treasure Museum, Kobayashi suggested the possible patronage of Lady Tachibana (Tachibana Michiyō 橘三千代; ca. 670–733). A powerful court woman, Lady Tachibana was the mother of Empress Kōmyō 光明 (701–760), consort of Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (701–756, r. 724–749), and Kobayashi noted her connection to Hōryūji because Prince Shōtoku's consort also came from the Tachibana clan. The Tachibana shrine was commissioned by Lady Tachibana and donated to Hōryūji by Empress Kōmyō upon her mother's death in 733 (Fig. 5.15). Because of these connections and Lady



Fig. 5.15. Amida triad in Tachibana shrine, Hōryūji, late seventh to early eighth century. Height of gilt-bronze Amida: 34 cm. From Suzuki 1978, Pl. 88.

Tachibana's devotion to Amida, Kobayashi suggested her patronage of the Hōryūji murals, and that the murals were probably executed about the same time the Tachibana shrine was donated to the temple. In this context, the likely candidate to have introduced the new Tang style is Dōji 道慈 (d. 744), who was a pilgrim-monk in China from 702 to 718 and known for his skills in the arts and in architecture.¹⁹ He was highly regarded and was appointed to supervise the rebuilding of Daianji 大安寺 in Nara, which allegedly was modeled after the Ximingsi 西明寺 in Chang'an. Kobayashi wrote:

Although there is no positive proof, there are some reasons to surmise that all these murals of the Golden Hall were the work of the priest Dōji, who, after returning from China in the second year of Yōrō 養老 (718), received the patronage of Lady Tachibana or her daughter, the Empress Kōmyō, and

guided a group of painters to complete the murals.²⁰

Soper and Mizuno, however, both cast doubt on Kobayashi's dating.²¹ Soper also reviewed Tanaka Shigehisa's 田中重久 theory, which argued that the mural project started soon after the fire of 670 and took more than three generations to complete, a theory that Soper considered improbable and that is not discussed here.²²

In his recent tome on Hōryūji, J. Edward Kidder put forth yet another theory for dating the Kondō murals.²³ Kidder noted that a project like the mural cycle at Hōryūji was a major undertaking, and thus found the conspicuous lack of mention of this project in the 747 Inventory puzzling. He maintained that such a large project could have been supported only by a major land grant. After combing through the temple's records, he proposed that the grant made by Empress Genshō 元正 (680–748) in 722 could have provided the necessary financial resources for the mural project; in this grant, three hundred fiefs were assigned to the temple for up to five years. Such a major grant was generally assumed to have funded major repairs—in this case, the building of the cloister and the completion of the mural cycle.²⁴

Finally, one should also assess the compelling evidence that Dietrich Seckel reported in 1949.²⁵ Seckel drew attention to the preservation work on the pagoda carried out by the Hōryūji Kokuhō Hozon Kōji Jimusho 法隆寺國寶保存工事事務所 (Office of Public Works for the Preservation of the National Treasures of Hōryūji), which began in 1943 and resumed in 1945, after the interruption of the Pacific War. In a brief report published in *Ars Buddhica* in 1949, the Office noted that after removing the outer layers of paint, mural paintings were found on the large wall surfaces between pillars and also above, between the bracketing. Although the condition of these wall murals was not good, it was discovered that between the pillars of the ground floor eight bodhisattva figures had been painted. Comparisons with the murals in the Kondō showed that the bodhisattvas in both buildings were identical, in subject and arrangement. However, the walls in the pagoda are 1 *shaku* 尺 and 3 *sun* 寸 shorter than those in the Kondō.²⁶ Thus, for example, the Monju in the western panel of the north wall in the pagoda is identical to the one in Panel 8 in the Kondō, except that part of the halo at the top and part of the pedestal at the bottom are cut off. Similarly, the depictions of arhats in mountain scenes above the panels in the pagoda and in the Kondō are comparable. The implications of these findings are significant, as Seckel pointed out:

This discovery not only furnishes a strong argument in favor of the *nenji-no-hō* [tracing-paper method] theory but it reveals the interesting fact that evi-



Fig. 5.16. Stencil for a five-figure buddha group, Dunhuang Cave 17, mid-tenth century. Ink and pricked outlines on paper. Height 79 cm. The British Library. From Whitfield and Farrer 1990, Pl. 70.

dently Japanese temple murals in those times were transferred mechanically by means of stencils or the like—just as was done in Central Asia wherever a great number of devotional pictures was required. But since the Chinese and Central Asian habit of covering the walls of sanctuaries to the very last corner with pictures without much consideration for their aesthetic arrangement was never popular in Japan it is not very likely that designs like those of the Hōryūji murals were repeated over and over again in other temples. It therefore seems possible that the stencil process may have been used to facilitate the direct transfer to Japan of Chinese original wall-paintings in full size and with every detail and not only in small and inexact sketches.²⁷

The use of stencils, or pounces, has long been known as a method of transmitting Buddhist icons, and there are a number of examples from Central Asia and from the sealed library at Dunhuang (Fig. 5.16).²⁸ On the paper stencils, the outlines of figures were pricked with needles and then probably charcoal dust was applied through these tiny holes, transferring the drawing to the wall surface. In the not dissimilar tracing-paper method, “the outlines of the composition or its sections and details are first drawn on a sheet of paper in the full size of the mural to be painted, then its reverse side is covered with charcoal dust, which, after the paper has been attached to the wall, is transferred to the plaster surface by tracing the outlines on the paper with a slight pressure.”²⁹ Before the fire of 1949, preparatory outlines in pale red

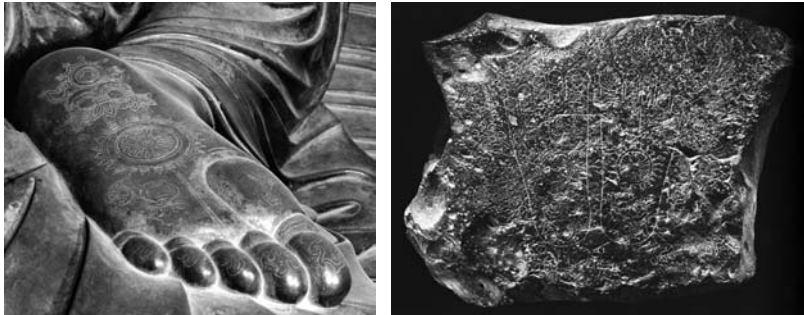


Fig. 5.17. (Left) Footprint design on the Yakushi Buddha in Fig. 5.12. From Uehara et al. 1977, Pl. 44.

Fig. 5.18. (Right) Buddha's footprint design, engraving on stone, Yakushiji, 753. From Itō 1979, Pl. 32.

and black had been discovered beneath the flaked-off pigments.³⁰ The fact that the same full-size stencils were probably used for both the pagoda and the Kondō presents strong evidence in favor of dating the murals to before 711, the time when the pagoda was completed.

If the stencils for these Buddhist paintings were imported, then the question is when and by whom. Many scholars have noted the important roles played by the *kentōshi*, or Japanese envoys sent to Tang China. Ōta noted the absence in the murals of mature Tang textile patterns that were introduced to Japan by the mission that returned in 704. Kobayashi suggested that the pilgrim-monk Dōji might have directed the mural project after his return from China in 718. Haruyama Takematsu 春山武松, however, has hypothesized that this role was played by Kibumi no Honjitsu 黄文本實, who went to Tang China on an earlier mission, in 669; his return date is not clear, although some scholars have suggested 671. Kibumi came from a painter's family of Koguryō descent and was known for his artistic skills. Among the artifacts he brought back to Japan was a copy of the Buddha's footprints, based on the copy made by Wang Xuance and his artists in Magadha, India. According to Xuanzang's *Xiyu ji* 西域記 (Records of the western worlds), shortly before the Buddha entered nirvana, he left imprints on a rock on which he trod. In addition, there were other locations where the Buddha left his footprints on rocks. The design that Kibumi brought to Japan is cast on the upturned sole of the Yakushi Buddha of Yakushiji (Fig. 5.17). In 753 the design of the Buddha's footprints was carved on stone, and the monument is preserved in Yakushiji (Fig. 5.18).³¹ The Buddha's footprints design thus

survives as an example of the transnational transmission of Buddhist motifs from India to China and Japan. Haruyama reconstructed the life of Kibumi to include a stay in China of about ten years, perhaps spent serving as an apprentice in the workshops of Tang masters who painted the mural cycles of the Buddhist temples of Chang'an and Luoyang. He further suggested that Kibumi might have been the director of a Kibumi atelier that executed the Hōryūji mural cycle.³²

From the mid-seventh to the early eighth century, the return dates for Japanese missions included 655, 661, 667, 668, 704–707, 718, 734–739. If the Kondō murals shared the same stencils used for the Hōryūji Pagoda murals, which were completed in 711, then the 718 date (when Dōji returned) would have been too late. Notable is the three-decade-long gap from 668 (or 671) to 704, due to tension caused by Tang China's alliance with Silla 新羅 (57 BCE–935 CE) that contributed to the defeat of both Paekche and Koguryō. If the murals show a mature Tang style, along with the Yakushiji bronze triad (see Fig. 5.12), then the models would not have been introduced as early as 671 (allegedly when Kibumi returned), although, of course, there might also have been other unofficial sources coming in by way of Korea. However, one must not overlook the date of 704, for this was the year when Awata no Mahito 栗田真人 (d. 719), the ambassador who led Japan's eighth mission to Tang China in 702, returned home (one of his assistants returned in 707; Dōji departed for China on this same mission).³³ In China, Awata was one of the last foreign envoys received and entertained by Empress Wu, who died in 705, at the Linde dian 麟德殿, the grand hall in the Daming gong 大明宮 in Chang'an where Tang emperors received foreign dignitaries of the highest rank. Awata was also noted for his decorous qualities. Having had the privilege of closely observing the imperial Tang court and its culture, he is a likely (though not the only possible) agent to have introduced this courtly culture and art associated with Empress Wu to Japan. Among the murals in Hōryūji's Kondō is a panel showing the Eleven-Headed Kannon (see Fig. 5.9), an esoteric deity promoted by Empress Wu—yet another thread that may connect the murals to Awata's 702–704 stay in China (see further discussion below).

Following up on Haruyama's lead is the research carried out by Shimomise Eiichi 下店静市 in the late 1950s and 1960s (edited and republished in his collected works in 1984), and thus not reviewed by Soper in 1952. Based on the physical evidence then newly available that the same stencils had been used for the murals in the pagoda and in the Kondō, Shimomise argued that these stencils were likely brought back by Awata no Mahito and his mission in 704, at a time when they represented the most advanced and



Fig. 5.19. Detail of bodhisattva depicted on Tachibana shrine, late seventh to early eighth century. From Takata and Yanagisawa 1969, Pl. 21.

current style of Buddhist painting in China. On the dating of the Kondō murals, his conclusion was that they were executed between 704 and 711.³⁴ Shimomise's comprehensive work examined not only the roles of Japanese envoys to Tang China and their accompanying painters and artisans, and the use of stencils in transmitting artwork, but also topics such as the painters' ateliers and their artistic practices. In his close analysis of the figural style of the murals, he observed that the paired bodhisattvas, whether on either side of a buddha figure or in facing individual bodhisattva panels, are often exact mirror images of each other, albeit with minor differences.³⁵ From the standpoint of artistic practice, this could have been achieved by reversing the stencil. The similarity of the Hōryūji bodhisattvas to those painted on the Tachibana shrine (Fig. 5.19), of a style markedly different from the bronze Amida triad housed in the shrine (see Fig. 5.15), suggests that these painted images were probably directly transferred from stencils brought from China.



Fig. 5.20. Pagoda and Thousand Buddhas, bronze plaque, Hasedera, 698. Height 91 cm. From Mizuno, Sekiguchi, and Ōnishi 1990, Pl. 93.

Thus far Shimomise has presented the most convincing argument, by providing both a date and the method of transmission of this rather advanced yet eclectic and international style of Buddhist paintings to Hōryūji at the beginning of the eighth century. Given the paintings' faithfulness to the stencils, the significance of these murals becomes all the more relevant. As Seckel put it:

It was never doubted that the Hōryūji murals were reproduced from Chinese models, their value being greatly enhanced by the very role they play as representatives of and substitutes for the virtually lost art of classical Chinese wall-painting; but perhaps this is true in a much more literal and technical sense than we have hitherto imagined.³⁶

The more recent works on the Hōryūji murals have taken into account these new findings. However, there is still divergence of opinion as to exactly when the stencils were brought to Japan, and thus the exact date of the execution of the murals. In Kameda Tsutomu's 亀田孜 (1968) detailed analysis of the murals, he considered the additional materials available from China as time went on, and cited works in both China and Japan that are similar in style to the Kondō murals, including those in Dunhuang Cave

332, dated to 698 (see Fig. 5.26 below). He analyzed these in conjunction with the small number of contemporary works in Japan at the time—the Kanshūji embroidered image of *The Buddha Preaching* (see Fig. 5.13); the bronze repoussé plaque of a pagoda and Thousand Buddhas based on the *Lotus Sutra* of Hasedera 長谷寺 of 698 (Fig. 5.20); the embroidered hanging of Amida's Pure Land for the Lecture Hall of Yakushiji in 692 (not extant). These works, Kameda argued, all represent a style of the last quarter of the seventh century—that last phase of the Early Tang style associated with Empress Wu's court, and the same style assigned to the Kondō murals. Following Shimomise's lead, he also pointed out that some of the large bodhisattva panels are exact mirror images (with minor variations), thus confirming the expedient method of reutilizing available models. Kameda also examined the establishment of an official atelier in 701, and the fact that an artist with the title *gashi* 畫師 (master artist) was recorded for the first time during the Wadō 和銅 era (708–714). With this proven, Kameda surmised that after the painting stencils were brought back to Japan in 704, the artists of the official atelier could have executed the murals within the time frame of 704–711.³⁷ In 715, maigre feasts were held in both Kōfukuji 興福寺 and Hōryūji, (even though the latter was not declared an official temple), so by that time the murals must have been completed. Publishing somewhat later, Hamada Takashi 濱田隆 (1978) similarly dated the murals to between 704 and 711, though he based his evidence primarily on stylistic analysis.³⁸

In 1994, in celebration of the designation of Hōryūji as a UNESCO World Heritage site, Kawahara Yoshio 河原由雄 favored the earlier connection of Kibumi no Honjitsu first proposed by Haruyama, suggesting that the stencils were brought to Japan when Kibumi returned to Japan in 671 or soon after.³⁹

Thus, after more than a century of research, some mysteries about the Hōryūji murals have been unlocked—namely, that they were direct copies of stencils brought from China to Japan, and therefore reflect very faithfully the kinds of Buddhist paintings that were painted in the monasteries of the Tang capitals, all of which are lost. That the pagoda and the Kondō murals shared the same set of stencils confirms that the Kondō murals were also likely completed before 711. As for the date when the stencils for murals were introduced to Japan, scholars have wavered between Kibumi's return in 671 and Awara's return in 704. I am inclined toward 704, on the grounds that the murals reflect a Chinese Tang idiom of the late seventh- rather than mid-seventh century. The presence of the Eleven-Headed Kannon rendered in a style close to the time of Empress Wu (see Fig. 5.9) lends support to this dating (see below).

Buddhas' Assemblies or Pure Lands?

The major iconographic issues concerning the four large panels in the Kondō include their naming and identification. Early pilgrims who visited the temple during the Heian and Kamakura periods (Hōryūji was one of the seven temples on a pilgrimage route to the southern capital of Nara) left behind writings recording the sites and views they had seen.⁴⁰ They were the first to call the large murals pure land images and to identify the buddhas. Ōe no Chikamichi 大江親通 mentioned Amida's Pure Land on the west wall and Yakushi's Pure Land on the east wall (in *Shichi daiji nikki* 七大寺日記 [Diary of visits to the Seven Great Temples], 1106). Priest Kenshin-tokugō 顯真得業 mentioned Amida's Pure Land on the west wall, Hōshō's 寶生 Pure Land on the east wall, and Yakushi's buddha land and Shaka's buddha land on the north wall (in *Taishiden shiki* 太子傳私記 [Private notes on the biography of the crown prince], 1237). These two entries and other sources were reviewed thoroughly by Naitō and Kameda, so there is no need to do so here.⁴¹ The problem with designating the large panels pure land scenes stems from the fact that later writers used their knowledge of Buddhism at the time to superimpose identifications on earlier materials. Panel 6 has the distinct iconography of the Western Pure Land (namely, the lotus pond), but the other three panels should simply be identified as assemblies of buddhas.

As for the identities of the four buddhas, there have been attempts to link the iconography to textual sources, most notably the *Golden Light Sutra* (Skt. *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*; J. *Konkōmyō kyō* 金光明經), a text already popular in seventh-century Japan and often recited at state rituals held at Buddhist temples. In chapter 8 (the chapter on Lakṣmi) of that text, the names of the buddhas of the four quarters are Akṣobhya (J. Ashuku butsu 阿閼佛) of the East, Ratnaketu (J. Hōsō butsu 寶相佛) of the South, Amitāyus (J. Muryōju butsu 無量壽佛) of the West, and Dundubhisvara (J. Mimyōshō butsu 微妙聲佛) of the North. Amitāyus (Buddha of Infinite Life, a variant form of Amitābha, Buddha of Infinite Light) is well known, but the other three buddhas are little-known cultic deities.⁴² There have also been attempts to interpret the program on the Kondō walls as an esoteric configuration of a mandala, such as the five *dhyāni* buddhas (the five wisdom buddhas)—buddhas of the four cardinal directions with Vairocana (J. Dainichi nyōrai 大日如来) in the center. However, there is no evidence that a fully developed esoteric iconography was available in Japan (or in China) at end of the seventh century, so such conjectures prove untenable.

Early on, several Japanese scholars pointed to the evidence of existing groups of four buddhas in temples contemporary to Hōryūji: namely,

Kōfukuji, Shitennōji 四天王寺, and Gangōji. All of them show a configuration of Shaka, Yakushi, Amida, and Miroku. Because these temples were associated with the Hossō school, Fukui Rikichirō 福井利吉郎 (1917) proposed that this grouping represents a Hossō iconography. The Hossō doctrine was introduced to Japan by the aforementioned pilgrim-monk Dōshō, who had studied with none other than Xuanzang, founder of the Faxiang (J. Hossō) school in China. However, Xuanzang's Faxiang teachings in China remained within the scholastic circle and did not have much influence in terms of creating their own cultic practice or iconography.⁴³ In fact, sectarian distinction in Buddhist iconography was not prominent in China, at least not in the seventh century, the only exception perhaps being pure land devotion. There were, however, deity cults, which were not defined by sects; Xuanzang himself, for example, expressed his devotion to both Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara. Śākyamuni, of course, was a central figure for devotion in all Buddhist traditions. In China, cultic devotion to Maitreya, both as a bodhisattva and as the Future Buddha, peaked from the late fifth to the early sixth century but saw resurgence in the seventh and eighth centuries. In seventh-century China, Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha became increasingly prominent as cultic figures, while at the same time other Buddhist deities with distinct iconographies gradually made their appearances, including Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and Vairocana (who were associated with the Huayan 華嚴 [J. Kegon] Buddhism patronized by Empress Wu). These developments are to some extent reflected in the Kondō murals. But the characterization of the four buddhas as specifically Hossō may also have been inspired by later consciousness of sectarian differences.⁴⁴

Alternatively, the four buddhas have been associated with the four directions. Naitō Toichirō observed that four buddhas are often found placed around the central pillars of pagodas, facing the four directions—Shaka to the south, Amida to the west, Yakushi to the east, and Miroku to the north—as in the pagodas of Kōfukuji, Shitennōji, and Gangōji mentioned earlier. Thus he convincingly argued that this configuration, which he called the Four-Stupa-Foundation Buddhas-of-the-Four-Directions (*tōki shihō shibutsu* 塔基四方四佛), might serve as an antecedent of the four buddha panels at Hōryūji.⁴⁵

In sixth- and seventh-century China, there were carvings named four-sided images (Ch. *simian xiang* 四面像) as well as stone or brick pagodas built as simple four-sided structures, some of which have buddha statues on four sides of the central pillar. The four-sided images are often stone carvings of miniature stupas/pagodas, with relief carving of a buddha-image placed in a recessed niche on each of the four sides (Fig. 5.21).⁴⁶ Most of them date



Fig. 5.21. Two sides of miniature pagoda with buddha-images in recessed niches on four sides. Chinese, dated 571. From Matsubara 1995, Vol. 2, Pl. 347.

to the sixth century. The configuration usually includes four seated buddhas, but none of the known dedicatory inscriptions gives the identity of these buddhas. Occasionally, one of the four niches shows a crossed-ankle seated bodhisattva, or a buddha with legs pendant, or twin buddhas seated side by side—which, based on known iconography of the time, can be identified as Maitreya Bodhisattva, Maitreya Buddha, and Śākyamuni and Prabhutaratna associated with the *Lotus Sutra*, respectively.

The well-known Simenta 四門塔, or Four-Entry Pagoda at Shentong Monastery 神通寺 in Licheng 歷城, Shandong province, which has an inscription dating to 611, is the earliest surviving stone pagoda in China that also contains relics (see Fig. 3.16 in this volume).⁴⁷ At 15 meters high and 7.3 meters wide, the single-story structure is square in cross section and made of blocks of stone slabs. The roof is shaped like a pyramid, with twenty-three levels of thin stone slabs in diminishing size, which in turn support a square-shaped basin with banana-leaf motifs at the four corners, and the top of the central mast with an umbrella. Inside is a central pillar, with a buddha statue facing each of the four directions.⁴⁸ During the Sui dynasty, Emperor Wen 文帝 (541–604), a devout Buddhist, modeled himself

after an ideal Buddhist king and from 601 to 604 promulgated the building of pagodas all over the country to honor Buddhist relics. He made gifts of relics three times, and apparently more than a hundred pagodas were built.⁴⁹ It is not clear whether the Simenta relates to the pagodas built according to Sui Wendi's edicts, but certainly it can be associated with the upsurge of pagoda-building activity in the early seventh century.

The four buddhas in the Simenta Pagoda are not identified.⁵⁰ In fifth- and sixth-century Chinese Buddhist art, the inscriptions make increasing reference to buddhas of the four quarters (Ch. *sifangfo* 四方佛) or buddhas of the ten regions (Ch. *shifangfo* 十方佛), which indicates a shift from earlier temporal categories (such as Seven Buddhas of the Past and Buddhas of the Three Ages) toward spatial categories. This shift, I argue, corresponds to a more developed Mahāyāna doctrine in which numerous buddhas were thought to coexist in different regions of the cosmos, delimited by both time and space—a metaphor referring to the omnipresence of buddhahood.⁵¹ The iconographies of these new buddhas (and bodhisattvas), however, lagged behind the development of doctrine, and many did not take shape until the following century. The cardinal directions figured prominently in early (pre-Buddhist) Chinese cosmological thinking, as demonstrated by the animals symbolizing the four quarters of the universe, and Buddhist thought and iconography easily adapted to this local tradition. Although not yet fully engaged in the rich cosmologies of mandalas in esoteric Buddhism, this shift nonetheless shows the early signs of cosmic, magical symbolism associated with space and directions.

The depiction of multiple buddhas and bodhisattvas in the Hōryūji murals is decidedly Mahāyāna in flavor, and corresponds to current developments in Tang Buddhist art. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the concept that more than one buddha exists simultaneously developed concurrently with that of a multiple-world cosmology.⁵² Each world system is presided over by a buddha and is called a buddha-field or buddha land (*buddhakṣetras*; J. *butsuto* 佛土). There are three types of buddha-fields: pure, impure, and mixed. A buddha-field is a sphere, a place that becomes pure and ideal because of a buddha's purification work through his vows and deeds. Thus Sukhāvātī is a pure land because of Amitābha's good deeds.

In the Buddhist cosmology centered on Mt. Meru, the world of human beings is located in the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, and is still an impure world known as the *sahā* world (*sahāloka*). In pure land devotion, devotees believe that one form of salvation is to be reborn in a pure land. This cult initially focused on Amitābha, whose pure land is located in the West and is called Sukhāvātī, or the Land of Bliss. Although Amitābha wor-

ship originated in India, it gained popularity in China in part because in pre-Buddhist times the Chinese already believed that the destination for afterlife and immortality was located somewhere in the western regions, presided over by the Queen Mother of the West. As a result, in China, Amitābha's Western Pure Land was the first to find visual representation; the pure lands of the Medicine Buddha and other buddhas came later. Maitreya's abodes—Tuṣita Heaven and Ketumatī—are still located in *kāmadhātu* (the realm of desire) and thus are not pure. But under the pressure of competition with Amitābha's pure land cult, Maitreya's abodes are portrayed as paradise-like places, and often appear on a wall opposite Amitābha's Western Pure Land at Dunhuang.

With the vast number of Dunhuang murals now available for examination on site or in publications, Dunhuang offers by far the most important visual evidence for placing the Hōryūji murals within the context of East Asian Buddhist paintings. Many Japanese and Western scholars have compared the Hōryūji murals with the wall paintings of Dunhuang. Here I briefly summarize what they have achieved and include additional observations.

The Dunhuang Academy has assigned more than forty cave-chapels to the Early Tang period (618–704), ending with the reign of Empress Wu.⁵³ A watershed chapel of this group of seventh-century cave-chapels is the well-known Cave 220, which has an inscription dated to the sixteenth year of Emperor Taizong's Zhenguan 貞觀 reign (627–649), or 642. In 640, Emperor Taizong annexed Gaochang 高昌 in Turfan, thus ensuring a smooth passage between Chang'an and the western regions via the Silk Road. Prior to this Dunhuang was relatively isolated, so the early seventh-century cave-chapels show a style developed locally from that of Sui-period caves. Scholars surmise that Cave 220 took about twenty years to complete, thus fully reflecting the momentous changes that occurred in the mid-seventh century: namely, the importation of a courtly style from the Tang capitals (art centers of the time) to Dunhuang, and the new fashion of foreign styles.

Cave 220 also marked the beginnings of large-scale pure land depictions. These pictorial scenes of the contents of sutras are called *bianxiang* 變相, or *hensō* in Japanese. Translated as “transformation tableaux,” the *hensō* paintings are intended to make manifest the essence of a sutra's teachings. On the south wall of Cave 220 is one of the earliest full-scale depictions of the splendor of the Western Pure Land (Fig. 5.22). The backdrop is a lotus pond, palatial pavilions and terraces, fragrant waters, lush vegetation, and the presence of music and dance. Beings reborn there emerge from lotus buds; they listen to Amitābha preach and enjoy the heavenly surroundings. The haloes, canopies, and all the details are luxuriously depicted. On the



Fig. 5.22. Amitābha's Western Pure Land, Dunhuang Cave 220, south wall, ca. 642–662. From Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 24.

opposite north wall is a depiction of the Medicine Buddha's Lapis Lazuli Pure Land, with the full iconography of seven buddhas and the twelve divine generals at two ends (Fig. 5.23). The terrace simulates the dazzling brilliance of a ground covered with precious materials. In the foreground, an orchestra plays lutes, drums, and other instruments, while dancers perform in swirling movements. Much of this appears to be of Central Asian origin—a testament to the cosmopolitan character of Buddhist art of this time. Two bodhisattvas can be seen lighting a tiered lamp as part of the ritual (Plate 15).⁵⁴

Maitreya's abodes are also abundantly represented at Dunhuang in the seventh century. Maitreya, or Miroku, has two abodes: Tuṣita Heaven, where he is still a bodhisattva, preaching and waiting to be reborn; and Ketumatī, an ideal world where Maitreya will be born and become enlightened as a buddha, thereby saving countless beings. In Buddhist cosmology, Maitreya's two abodes are still located in the realm of desire and thus are not purified space. However, because of the rivalry with the Amitābha cult, Maitreya's abodes were increasingly interpreted as pure lands. In the top tier of an early depiction from the north wall of Dunhuang Cave 329, for example, Maitreya is shown as a bodhisattva in Tuṣita Heaven, complete with palace-style pavilions, while in the bottom tier he is depicted as a fully



Fig. 5.23. The Medicine Buddha's Lapis Lazuli Pure Land, Dunhuang Cave 220, north wall. From Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 27.

enlightened buddha (Fig. 5.24). After enlightenment, Maitreya held three preaching assemblies under the dragon-flower tree, and these two other assemblies are shown at the top right and top left. The terraces are afloat on a lotus pond, a feature borrowed from Amitābha's Pure Land. The scenes at the bottom portray the king and queen of Ketumatī taking the tonsure, after being converted by Maitreya. The high viewpoint and tilted ground plane successfully create an illusion of spatial recession, a pictorial device that became further refined in the eighth century.

However, none of the large murals in the Kondō of Hōryūji shows any of these experiments in spatial depth except in the overlapping of figures. They are still primarily iconic groups without a lot of descriptive details of space or narratives. Panel 6 (Plate 12) does include the essential iconographic features of a pure land, but harks back to the simpler compositions developed from the buddha's assembly. At Dunhuang, beginning at the outset of the seventh century, compositions of buddhas' (sometimes bodhisattvas') assemblies gradually gained prominence as subject matter within the cave-chapels, at times occupying the central position of the main walls. Panel 6 has often been compared to similar compositions from Dunhuang Caves 57, 322, and 332. Caves 57 and 322 date to the first half of the seventh century, predating Cave 220, while Cave 332 includes an inscription of 698.⁵⁵



Fig. 5.24. *Maitreya's Paradieses, Dunhuang Cave 329, north wall, second half seventh century. From Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 45.*

In Chinese Buddhist art of the sixth and seventh centuries, the configuration of the buddha's assembly steadily grew from a simple triad to a grouping of five, seven, nine, or more images. Dunhuang Caves 57 and 322 both include a panel of a buddha's assembly on one wall and a pure land scene on the other.⁵⁶ In Cave 57, the presence of Amitābha's disciple Avalokiteśvara, with a small buddha on the crown, identifies the depiction as Amitābha's assembly (Fig. 5.25). Amitābha is flanked by two disciples, ten bodhisattvas, and two *lokapālas*—a total of fourteen subsidiary figures. The large heads and rather static figures are characteristic of Sui to Early Tang figural style of the early seventh century. The touch of pink on the bodhisattvas' cheeks is a shading technique of the indigenous Chinese painting tradition, unlike the shading within the contours and highlighting in the Indian tradition. The buddha's assembly in Cave 322 depicts a buddha seated with legs pendant, most likely Maitreya Buddha, with *apsaras* at the top and twin sala trees behind the canopy (Plate 16).⁵⁷ Maitreya's flowing robe and the static poses of the bodhisattvas are rather Chinese in character, as are the symmetry and the luxuriant, decorative quality. The composition has a greater sense of hierarchy and a more successful treatment of spatial depth than the



Fig. 5.25. Amitābha's Assembly, Dunhuang Cave 57, south wall, first half seventh century. From Dunhuang Yanjiu Yuan 1996, Pl. 34.

Amitābha's assembly in Cave 57. The same is true of the pure land scene from the same cave-chapel, which includes water birds and reborn beings floating on lotuses (Plate 17).

A pure land scene in Cave 332, depicting Amitābha and fifty bodhisattvas emerging from branches of a lotus plant (Fig. 5.26), is often cited for comparison with Hōryūji's Panel 6 (see Plate 12), and also with the Tachibana shrine that houses an Amida triad with figures sitting atop lotuses (see Fig. 5.15). The series of buddhas' assemblies and simple pure land scenes in these three Dunhuang cave-chapels clearly developed along the same path—a path on which the Hōryūji buddha panels can also be placed, unlike the large-scale *hensō* tableaux that begin with Cave 220.

Dunhuang Cave 220 is also key to understanding certain stylistic aspects of the Hōryūji murals, however. The depiction of the central figure of Amitābha with shading and a half-bare chest (Plate 18) already indicates the influence of an Indian style, while his slender proportions and body shape are virtually identical to those of the well-known seated image of the Buddha in classic Sārnāth style of the Gupta period (ca. 300–600; Fig. 5.27). The even, iron-wire-like line that delineates the contour and the hands of the central figure is also similar to that of the Amida of Hōryūji (Fig. 5.28, see also Plate 12). In figural proportion, however, the Hōryūji Amida is rounder and fuller, closer to the Tang gilt-bronze image of the Buddha of late seventh- or



Fig. 5.26. Amitābha and Fifty Bodhisattvas in the Western Pure Land, Dunhuang Cave 332, south side of east wall, 698. From Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 94.

early eighth-century date (Fig. 5.29). The robe of the Hōryūji Amida covers both shoulders, and the parallel drapery folds are rendered with a schematic shading that can be described as a Chinese interpretation of a foreign painting technique already found in pre-Tang and Early Tang court painting of the early seventh century, such as the famous *Emperors of the Successive Dynasties* scroll attributed to Yan Liben (ca. 600–673; Fig. 5.30).

Kannon (Plate 19) and Seishi of the Amida triad in the Kondō have often been compared to the bodhisattvas from Ajaṅṭa Cave 1 (Plate 20), for their remarkable “Indian” appearance. The resemblances between the two pairs of bodhisattvas in their poses and Indianized features are unmistakable. However, the approach to representation in the two pairs could not be farther apart. In the Ajaṅṭa example, shading and highlighting were employed to achieve plastic effects, whereas the conception of the Hōryūji bodhisattvas is entirely linear. The traditional Chinese preference for the linear—combined with the iconographic drawing tradition and a greater understanding of the human form in the round in Tang Buddhist art—gave rise to a mature linear figural style. Again Dunhuang offers ample examples of intermediaries between these two vastly different styles. A bodhisattva from Dunhuang Cave 329, of the second half of the seventh century, is rendered



Fig. 5.27. Seated image of the Buddha, Sārnāth, fifth century. Stone. Height 161 cm. Sārnāth Museum. From Harle 1986, Fig. 84.



Fig. 5.28. (Above) Amida, detail of Amida's Western Pure Land, Panel 6, west wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. Detail of Plate 12.

in a style more “foreign” than those from Cave 57 or 322 of early seventh-century date, as shown in the blue hair draping over the shoulder and a slight contrapposto stance (Plate 21). The bodhisattvas or reborn beings on lotuses find similar examples at Dunhuang, such as those from Dunhuang Cave 71 (Plates 22, 23). The graceful depiction of flying *apsaras* at Hōryūji (see Plate 14), in the main murals as well as in horizontal panels above, also finds many parallels at Dunhuang (Fig. 5.31).

The buddha in Panel 6 is definitively Amida (see Plate 12), and most scholars agree that the identity of the buddha in Panel 1 is Shaka because he is surrounded only by two bodhisattvas and ten disciples. As pointed out by Shimomise, the two flanking bodhisattvas are mirror images and could have been drawn or copied by reversing the same stencil, although Panel 1 also had been retouched in later times (see Fig. 5.2). One small detail often noticed by Japanese scholars is the transparent, decorated glass dish held in the hand of the bodhisattva on the right (Plate 24). There are also abundant examples of this detail from Dunhuang, such as the bodhisattva on the far



Fig. 5.29. Seated image of the Buddha. Chinese, late seventh to early eighth century. Gilt bronze. Height 20.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From Tokyo National Museum 1987, Pl. 168.



Fig. 5.30. Detail of Emperors of the Successive Dynasties, attributed to Yan Liben (ca. 600–673). Handscroll; ink and color on silk. Height 51.3 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. From Barnhart et al. 1997, Fig. 53.



Fig. 5.31. *Apsaras (heavenly dancer)*, Dunhuang Cave 57, north wall, first half seventh century. From *Dunhuang Yanjiu Yuan* 1996, Pl. 51 left.

right in the mural of Maitreya's assembly in Cave 322 (Plate 25). Glass was a highly valued material in Buddhist offerings, and most glass objects found in China and Japan at this time were exotic objects imported from Sasanid Persia (224 BCE–642 CE).⁵⁸

For Panels 9 and 10, the majority of Japanese scholars favor the identification of Miroku and Yakushi/the Medicine Buddha, respectively, even though the buddha seated with legs pendant (as in Panel 10; Plate 13) is traditionally identified with Miroku/Maitreya. The argument for identifying the buddha in Panel 10 as Yakushi rests on the depiction of divine generals (a total of six in the mural) to represent Yakushi's Twelve Divine Generals (*J. jūni shinshō* 十二神將, for Yakushi's fulfillment of twelve great vows).⁵⁹ In Panel 9 (see Fig. 5.3), the seated buddha is flanked by two disciples, four bodhisattvas, two *lokapālas*, and four other figures identified by Kameda as coming from the eight classes of Indian deities that were converted to Buddhism and became protectors of the Dharma.⁶⁰ The murals of the Medicine Buddha's Lapis Lazuli Pure Land in Cave 220 (see Fig. 5.23) and Maitreya's Ketumatī in Cave 445 do include, respectively, the Twelve Divine Generals and the Eight Classes of Beings.⁶¹



Fig. 5.32. Infrared photograph of guardian deity in Miroku's Assembly (?), Panel 10, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.



Fig. 5.33. (Above) Guardian deity in the Medicine Buddha's Lapis Lazuli Pure Land, Dunhuang Cave 220. Detail of Fig. 5.23.

The strong realism in the portrayal of the military figures in Cave 220 also finds parallels in Panel 10 of the Hōryūji murals, as though these figures were copied from pattern books (Figs. 5.32, 5.33). The skillful use of a modulating brush line, associated with Chinese figure painting and calligraphy, coexisted with more foreign painting practices, such as the even (or so-called iron-wire) line in iconographic drawings and the use of shading and highlighting for plastic effects. Both Cave 220 and the Kondō murals demonstrate the coexistence of these eclectic styles.

If the Hōryūji four buddhas are associated with the four directions, then a logical way to depict them would be to put one on each of the four walls. But since the south side is the entryway, some readjustment is necessary. If we start with Panel 1 (representing Shaka in the south) and proceed in a clockwise direction, then Panel 6 is the west and Panels 9 and 10 become the north and east, respectively. This hypothesis guided Naitō and others to favor Panels 9 and 10 as representing Miroku/Maitreya and Yakushi, respectively.

However, as observed by Mizuno and others, the buddha seated with legs pendant (as in Panel 10; see Plate 13) is usually identified as Maitreya Buddha; contemporary evidence in China and Japan includes the Maitreya



Fig. 5.34. Standing Medicine Buddha with two bodhisattvas, Dunhuang Cave 322, south side of east wall, first half seventh century. From Dunhuang Yanjiu Yuan 1996, Pl. 151.

Buddha at Huijian 惠簡 Cave at Longmen (completed in 673) and the clay Maitreya Buddha statue in the south side of the Hōryūji Pagoda (ca. 711).⁶² At Dunhuang, Cave 220 (see Fig. 5.23) and another example from Cave 322 (Fig. 5.34) both show Yakushi as a standing buddha. Though it is also common to show the Medicine Buddha as seated, there are almost no examples of this buddha seated with two legs pendant. The arguments on both sides seem equally valid, and the two murals at Hōryūji perhaps can be considered an anomaly.

The Bodhisattvas

The scale and prominent positions of the large standing bodhisattvas in the Hōryūji murals indicate the increasing status of the great bodhisattvas. A central tenet in Mahāyāna Buddhism is the bodhisattva doctrine, which prescribes a path of spiritual progression, usually in ten stages. A bodhisattva of the tenth stage is one step short of becoming a buddha but remains in this



Fig. 5.35. Dunhuang Cave 328, showing two large standing bodhisattvas painted on either side of the main niche, west wall, early eighth century. From *Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 111*.

world to save suffering beings. Like buddhas, advanced bodhisattvas have supernatural powers and are worshipped as saviors. At Dunhuang, beginning in the latter part of the seventh century, it is common to see two large bodhisattvas on the two edges of the main wall, either flanking the main niche holding the sculptural group on the west wall (Fig. 5.35) or on two sides of large *hensō* murals on the north and south walls, suggesting that bodhisattva pairs were a configuration common in both monasteries and cave-temples. At this time, however, the flanking bodhisattvas were usually not named, unless they had acquired distinct iconographic attributes. This casts doubt on how vigorously we can pursue the firm pairing of two attendant bodhisattvas with the four buddhas at Hōryūji. (The same set of eight bodhisattvas painted in the pagoda also argues against their pairing with specific buddhas.) Nevertheless, it is also clear that some bodhisattvas were emerging as independent icons.

Other than Śākyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva was the first Buddhist deity to become a cult figure from India across Central to East Asia. The Maitreya cult was at its peak in northern China from the late fifth to the early sixth century. Following the Indian and Central Asian form, Mai-



Fig. 5.36. (Left) Pensive bodhisattva, Qingzhou. Chinese, mid-sixth century. Limestone with pigments and gilt. Height 80 cm. From Nickel 2002, cat. no. 32.

Fig. 5.37. (Right) Miruk/Maitreya Bodhisattva. Korean, sixth century. Gilt bronze. Height 83.2 cm. National Museum of Korea. From Kim et al. 1986, Pl. 65.

treya Bodhisattva was usually shown seated with legs crossed at the ankles, with numerous examples at the Yungang and Longmen cave-temple sites in northern China.⁶³ In sixth-century China, the pensive bodhisattva was quite popular, and is sometimes identified by inscription as Prince Siddhartha, or Śākyamuni before he gained enlightenment; the example recently excavated at the Qingzhou 青州 site in Shandong still has gilding and pigments on the surfaces (Fig. 5.36). In the sixth century, when the Maitreya cult was transmitted to Korea, for some reason the bodhisattva became identified with the pensive type rather than the crossed-ankled type; an example now in the National Museum of Korea recalls the Chinese early sixth-century style with flattened, linear treatment of drapery folds (Fig. 5.37).⁶⁴ Introduced from Korea, the Japanese Miroku/Maitreya bodhisattvas are also shown in the



Fig. 5.38. (Left) Miroku/Maitreya, Kōryūji, first half seventh century. Wood with lacquer. Height 123.2 cm. From Kuno and Suzuki 1966, Pl. 112.

Fig. 5.39. (Right) Miroku/Maitreya, Chūgūji, second quarter seventh century. Wood with pigments. Height 126.1 cm. From Mizuno, Sekiguchi, and Ōnishi 1990, Pl. 65.

pensive pose, including two graceful wooden statues: one from the Kōryūji in Kyoto, said to be of Korean workmanship (Fig. 5.38), and one from the Chūgūji (the nunnery adjacent to Hōryūji; Fig. 5.39). Both have slender torsos, naturalistic drapery folds, and gentle expressions, and are among some of the most beloved images of this bodhisattva in Japan.

By the time of the Tang dynasty, Maitreya was more popular as a Buddha than as a bodhisattva. The revitalization of the Maitreya cult occurred in part because of Empress Wu's proclamation of herself as Maitreya Buddha Incarnate, and in part because of rivalry with the Amitābha cult, with competing pure lands as destinations for rebirth. In the Hōryūji murals, it



Fig. 5.40. Seated Maitreya Buddha, Chinese, Dayan Pagoda, Chang'an, ca. 703–705. Rubbing of engraving. From *Shikexianhua* 1988, Pl. 34.

is also Miroku as a buddha and not as a bodhisattva that we encounter. In the engraving on the lunette above the doorway of the Dayanta 大雁塔 of Ci'ensi 慈恩寺, in Chang'an, dated to about 703–705 (Fig. 5.40), the proximity in style of this seated buddha to the one in Panel 10 is immediately noticeable (see Plate 13).⁶⁵

The pensive bodhisattvas of Panels 2 and 5 of the Kondō murals have been tentatively named Nikkō and Gakkō, or the Sunlight and Moonlight Bodhisattvas (see Figs. 5.4, 5.5). Mizuno and others suggested this identification assuming that they were the bodhisattvas attending Yakushi. Sawa Ryūken rejected this identification but suggested that they represent Maitreya, based on the fact that Maitreya Bodhisattva is shown in the pensive pose in both Korea and Japan.⁶⁶ From Gandhāra to early Chinese Buddhist art, the pensive bodhisattvas—often in pairs, though not always—are shown as relatively low-ranking attendant bodhisattvas without any identity. If the stencils for the Kondō murals came directly from China, this would also argue against a Maitreya/Miroku identification. Nikkō and Gakkō were relatively unknown at the time and never shown in the contemplating pose. Thus it might be prudent to simply call the images on Panels 2 and 5 contemplating or pensive bodhisattvas. Hamada likewise thought there is not sufficient evidence to name these bodhisattvas, based on what was known in China and Japan at the time.⁶⁷

The identification of Monju/Maṅjuśrī and Fugen/Samantabhadra in Panels 8 and 11 is more certain, because of the vehicle of the elephant sur-

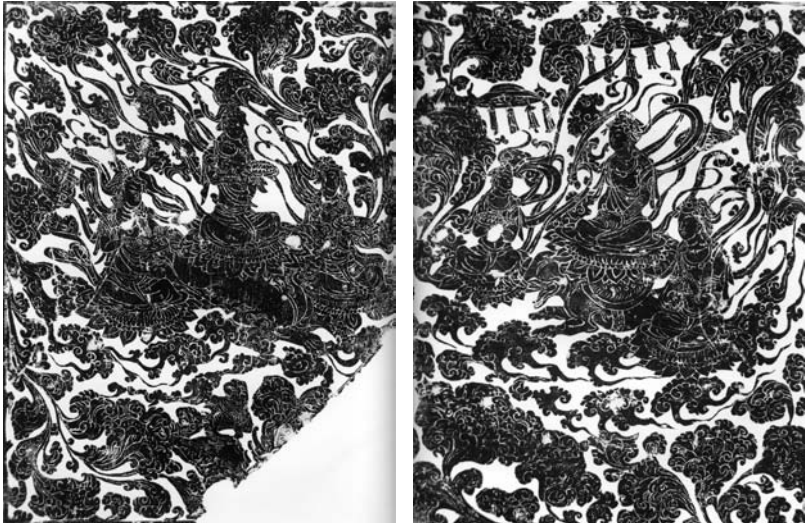


Fig. 5.41. *Mañjuśrī* (left) and *Samantabhadra* (right), Chinese, second half seventh century. Rubbings of engravings. From *Shikexianhua* 1988, Pls. 38, 39.

mounted by the latter (see Figs. 5.10, 5.11). The vehicle for Monju is the lion, not yet shown in this example. Because of the popularity of the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* in China since the latter part of the fifth century, there were already abundant visual representations of the debate scene between the layman Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, including the clay tableau on the east side of the Hōryūji Pagoda (see Fig. P.2). In these examples Monju is simply shown as a seated bodhisattva, which may be the reason he lacks a vehicle in Panel 8. In China, beginning in the latter part of the seventh century, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra became the popular attendant bodhisattvas of Śākyamuni, as seen in an engraving (Fig. 5.41). Specifically, they are the attendant bodhisattvas of Vairocana, the transcendent form of Śākyamuni and the chief deity of the Avatamsaka, or Flower Garland, school. Called Kegon in Japanese, this school of Buddhism was favored by the court both in Tang China under Empress Wu and in Nara Japan under Emperor Shōmu, and had much influence on the contents of Buddhist art in Japan in the eighth century.

Avalkiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, was another major devotional figure. Known in Chinese as Guanyin and in Japanese as Kannon, the worship of this bodhisattva grew in China in the fifth and sixth centuries, and continued to do so afterward.⁶⁸ The Kannon cult was also transmitted



Fig. 5.42. Kudara Kannon, Hōryūji, mid-seventh century. Wood with pigments. Height 210.9 cm. From Mizuno, Sekiguchi, and Ōnishi 1990, Pl. 22.

to Korea and Japan in the sixth and seventh centuries. Numerous statues of Kannon were already associated with Hōryūji in the seventh century, including the Yumedono Kannon, said to be an effigy of Prince Shōtoku (see Plate 6); the willowy Kudara Kannon associated with Korean workmanship (Fig. 5.42); the smaller six Kannon in gilt wood; and the graceful bronze image of the Yumechigai (Dream-Changing) Kannon 夢違観音 of late seventh-century date (Fig. 5.43), so called because people pray to this



Fig. 5.43. Yumechigai Kannon, Hōryūji, late seventh to early eighth century. Gilt bronze. Height 86.9 cm. From Mizuno, Sekiguchi, and Ōnishi 1990, Pl. 77.



Fig. 5.44. (Above) Infrared photograph of head of Eleven-Headed Kannon in Panel 12, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

deity to calm bad dreams.⁶⁹

In the Kondō murals, Kannon is included in two pairs of bodhisattvas: Panels 3 and 4, and Panels 7 and 12 (see Figs. 5.6–5.9). The bodhisattva in Panel 3 has a buddha effigy on the crown, which would identify him as Kannon, and thus Panel 4 would be Seishi, making these two panels depictions of the same pair of bodhisattvas that flanks Amida in Panel 6. Panel 7 is another Kannon, and since Panel 12 depicts the Eleven-Headed Kannon, many scholars favor identifying the bodhisattva in Panel 7 as Shō Kannon, or the original form of Kannon, as opposed to the transformed or esoteric form of Kannon with multiple heads. An infrared photograph of Panel 12 shows the main head with an additional one emerging from each side, seven bodhisattva heads above, each with an image of Amida on the crown, and a

buddha head at the top, thus showing a 3–7–1 arrangement (Fig. 5.44).

As an advanced bodhisattva, Kannon has supernatural powers that enable him to manifest in different forms according to those in need, a technique called skills-in-means (Skt. *upaya*). The name Kannon literally means “One Who Sees and Hears the Sufferings of the World.”⁷⁰ The portrayal of this bodhisattva as having multiple heads, and sometimes multiple arms, is derived from the cosmic symbolism of the Indian tradition, such as that of the Hindu god Śiva, who has three heads.⁷¹ The adoption of Hindu symbolism into Buddhist iconography is a feature of esoteric Buddhism.

The Buddhist text associated with the Eleven-Headed Kannon consists of a series of *dhāraṇī*, or magical spells, intended to invoke the power of the deity. The text was discovered among the Gilgit manuscripts in Kashmir, of fifth- or sixth-century date. It was translated into Chinese around the 570s, and retranslated twice in the seventh century, once by Xuanzang.⁷² One of the earliest representations of an Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara is found in the Kanheri cave-chapel in western India dating to the sixth century; the heads are piled up vertically, in the 1–3–3–3–1 style (Fig. 5.45). It is clear that the worship of this bodhisattva originated in India and was introduced to China in the sixth century. In subsequent periods this deity was not prominent in India, despite becoming significant in China in the latter part of the seventh and early eighth century.

One of the early images of this deity in Japan is a wood statue with polychrome pigments, thought to have been brought from China to Japan by the pilgrim-monk Jōe 定恵 in 665 (Plate 26). Here the additional heads are arranged in three groups of three each in a crown around the main head, while the tenth head is placed at the top. The bodhisattva holds a vase in the left hand and a rosary in the right hand. While the body is rendered in slender proportions and covered with heavy jewelry reminiscent of early seventh-century bodhisattva statues in China, the rather large main head is fashioned with foreign features that include arched eyebrows and the deep-set, sinuous curves of downcast eyes, perhaps suggesting influence from Indian sculptures of the Gupta period. This is one of the examples that attest to the “Indian fashion” inspired by men such as Xuanzang and Wang Xuan-ce in the Chinese capitals in the mid-seventh century.

At Dunhuang, there are two main types of representations of this deity, both from the latter half of the seventh century. In Cave 334, the seated deity has an Indian flavor, both in the vertical arrangement of the heads, stacked up in the 3–2–3–2–1 fashion, and in the sinewy proportions of the figure and shading of the dark-skinned bodhisattva.⁷³ In the example from Cave 321, the standing bodhisattva has six arms, while the eleven heads are

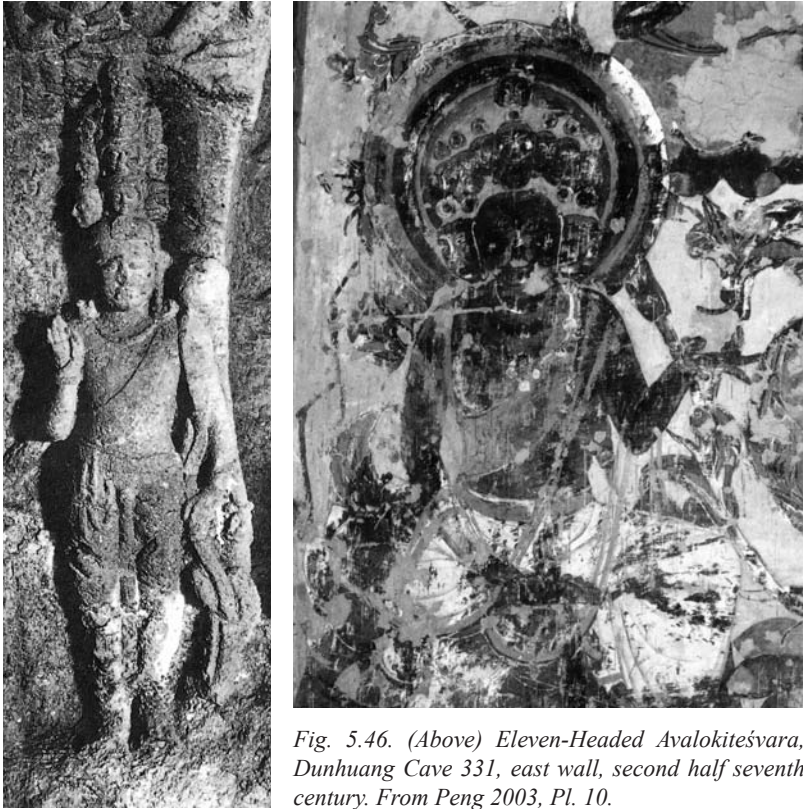


Fig. 5.46. (Above) Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara, Dunhuang Cave 331, east wall, second half seventh century. From Peng 2003, Pl. 10.

Fig. 5.45. Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara, Kanheri, India, ca. sixth century. Stone relief. From Neville 1998, Fig. 9.

arranged in the conical fashion: 3–5–2–1.⁷⁴ Another example, from Dunhuang Cave 331, shows two seated Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvaras (Ch. Guanyin) flanking a seated buddha; their heads are arranged in the 3–7–1 crownlike arrangement (Fig. 5.46). The eighth-century example from Dunhuang Cave 32, which has six arms, has the same configuration of heads.⁷⁵ Both these examples anticipate the one depicted in the wall paintings of Hōryūji in Japan (see Fig. 5.44). The Early Tang images of the Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara at Dunhuang are all found depicted on the east wall (the interior wall of the entrance), above the door or on the side of the doorway. Their positions within the cave-chapels suggest the transformed Avalokiteśvara's role as a protective deity.

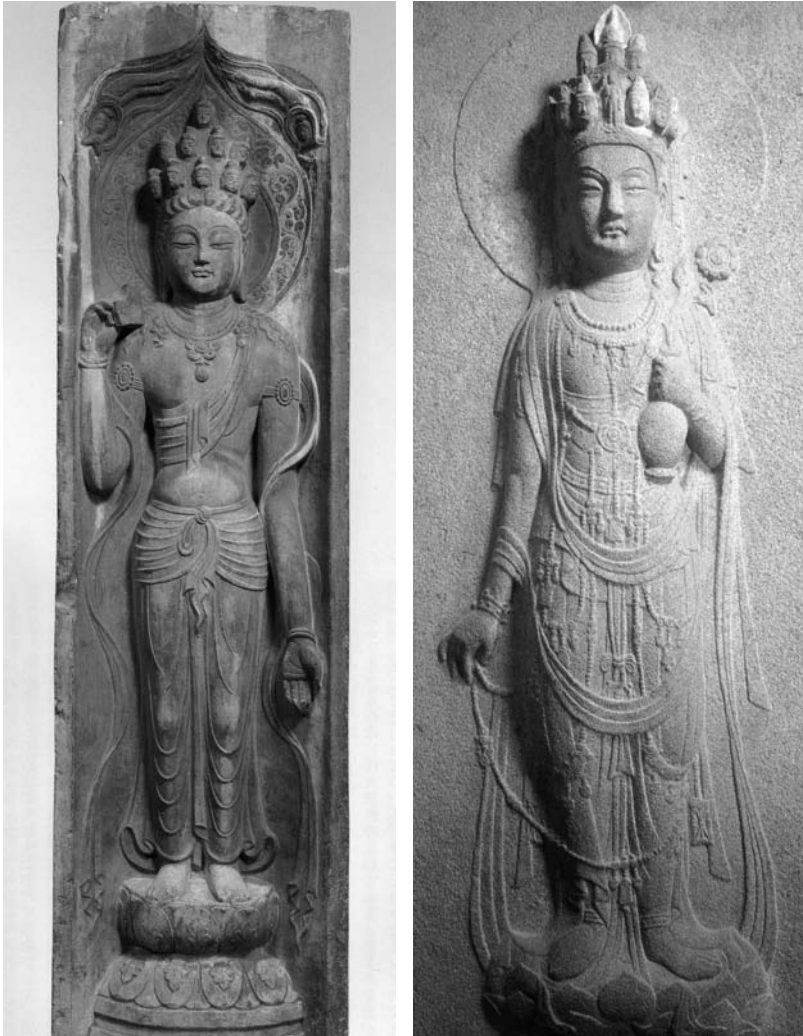


Fig. 5.47. (Left) Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara, Qibaotai. Chinese, early eighth century. Stone. Height 85.1 cm. Nara National Museum. From Nara National Museum 2005, Pl. 1.

Fig. 5.48. (Right) Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara, Sökkuram. Korean, ca. 752. Stone relief. From a postcard sold at the cave-temple.

Of about the same time, a number of Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara images are also known from the Tang capital of Chang'an. Most prominent are the sculptures that originally adorned a multi-faced pillar called the Tower of Seven Treasures, or Qibaotai 七寶臺, which was commissioned by Empress Wu and was the centerpiece of a temple in Chang'an.⁷⁶ The tower, or pillar, has since been dismantled, but thirty-two relief sculptures have survived. Some have inscriptions dating between 703 and 724. There are seven Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara images among the sculptures, clearly indicating that the bodhisattva was one of the most significant deities represented on the pillar. In these relief sculptures, Avalokiteśvara's heads are piled in the 1–5–4–1 conical fashion (Fig. 5.47). For Empress Wu, Buddhism was an instrument to augment her political status and legitimacy. The powers of Buddhist deities were invoked to protect the state, and her patronage was one of the reasons the Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara gained such prominence in China, and subsequently in Japan.

The style of the Qibaotai Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara images is characterized by the frontal treatment of an upright, tubular body with a small waist, a slightly bulging abdomen, and tightly clinging drapery delineated in sharp lines. As with these images, the Hōryūji bodhisattva in Panel 12 is shown in the frontal, erect pose, giving the figure an iconic status (see Fig. 5.9). Other bodhisattvas in the Kondō are portrayed in a more relaxed manner, sometimes with the contrapposto pose, flanking a central buddha. The upright pose of the Eleven-Headed Kannon/Avalokiteśvara image thus presents the bodhisattva as an icon with its own individual status rather than as a subsidiary figure. This similarity in style between Panel 12 and the Qibaotai images suggests that the blueprint for the Eleven-Headed Kannon in Panel 12 is of a style close to about 700 CE, whereas the other bodhisattvas in the Kondō perhaps belong to a somewhat earlier style.

Other examples of the Eleven-Headed Kannon from Japan of this period include a bronze plaque.⁷⁷ And in the year 719, a sandalwood statue of the Nine-Headed Avalokiteśvara, a variant of the eleven-headed form, was presented to the Hōryūji (Plate 27). The statue shows a rather sensuous figure with meticulous carving in the details of the jewelry. Most scholars believe this was brought back to Japan from China by one of the returning pilgrim-monks. A likely candidate is Dōji, who spent sixteen years in China, from 702 to 718, and who had previously studied at Hōryūji.⁷⁸ He is considered the most plausible cultural agent to have introduced to Japan the Buddhist culture promoted by Empress Wu that permeated the Tang court from the late seventh to early eighth century. Since the Jōe statue (see Plate 26) was brought to Japan in 665 and the Nine-Headed Avalokiteśvara was presented

to Hōryūji in 719, it is very clear that the former belongs to the mid-seventh century and the latter to the late seventh- to early eighth-century styles in Tang China and the forces that shaped them, from a raw imitation of aspects of a foreign style to a mature, integrated idiom. These two examples add to the argument that the stencils of the Kondō murals were introduced to Japan closer to the eighth century, such as on the 704 returning mission.

These artifacts of cultural transmission attest to the close connection between Japan and China, and to Japan's engagement in an increasingly cosmopolitan Buddhist art. Slightly later, in Korea, around 750, the cave-chapel Sōkkuram 石窟庵 was built with a circular chamber with a dome ceiling. Surrounding the central image of the Buddha are relief figures of bodhisattvas and guardian figures, including an Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara (K. Kwannum; Fig. 5.48). One of the capabilities of the bodhisattva is to protect the state, and thus it played a significant role in state Buddhism, from Tang China to Japan to Korea. A century earlier, a new deity probably would have appeared first in Korea rather than in Japan, but in this particular case Japan trumped Korea. The Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara became increasingly popular in Japan after this initial introduction, and other esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara were introduced as well. Fugen and Monju also became popular with the increasing prominence of Kegon Buddhism.

Conclusion

The buddha panels in the Kondō at Hōryūji resemble the compositions already current in China in the seventh century but do not include the grand descriptive and narrative details of *hensō* paintings known from Dunhuang from around the mid-seventh century. In figural style and painting techniques, however, the examples at Hōryūji are on a par with contemporary developments in China in the latter half of the seventh century. Evidence that these murals were direct copies made from stencils brought to Japan from China enables us to analyze in some detail the process of synthesizing various elements that formed the international Buddhist style. The inclusion of new cultic deities, especially the esoteric form of Kannon, demonstrates how closely Japan had been tracking the latest trends on the continent. Like the Qibaotai sculptures of Empress Wu, the configuration of the buddhas of the four directions along with the great bodhisattvas at Hōryūji conveys a powerful statement of the divine protection of the state. From this broad, cross-cultural perspective, the murals of Hōryūji offer invaluable materials for comparison with those in China and Korea, and they chronicle the course of transcontinental cultural and artistic transmissions vividly. If the Hōryūji's architectural look was antiquated by the time reconstruction of

the temple was complete, as indicated in Kidder and Steinhardt's chapters in this volume, the murals inside the Kondō show none of this archaicism. Instead, there is every indication that Japan was looking forward rather than back, anticipating the country's full participation in an international Buddhist idiom in the eighth century.

Notes

¹ In April 2006 I gave a talk on the Hōryūji murals at the University of Heidelberg that the late Professor Dietrich Seckel (1910–2007) attended. He gave me copies of his essays (1949a, 1949b), which are not widely circulated, and for that I am very grateful. These essays proved to be crucial in understanding the artistic practices related to, and the dating of, the murals. I would like to dedicate this essay to the memory of Professor Seckel, whose work introduced me to the field of Buddhist art.

² Under the auspices of the Kokuhō Chōsa Inkaikai 國寶調査委員会 (Committee on the Investigation of National Treasures), full-sized infrared photographs of the murals were taken by photographers of Benridō in 1935; see Tanaka 1951.

³ These include a sandalwood image of the Buddha preaching his First Sermon at Sarnath; another sandalwood image after the image commissioned by King Udayana when he was desirous to see the Buddha; a silver image of the standing Buddha descending from heaven at Sāṅkāśya; a gold image of the Buddha preaching the *Lotus Sutra* on Vulture's Peak; a sandalwood image after the Buddha's shadow left in the Cave at Nagarahāra; a gold image of the Buddha Turning the Wheel of the Law at Sarnath; and, finally, another sandalwood image of Buddha at Vaiśālī; see Beal 1973, 213–214.

⁴ Feng 1976; Sen 2001; Wang 2002.

⁵ Zhang (847) 1963, 67.

⁶ Whitfield 2004.

⁷ Zhang (847) 1963, 50; Wen 1981.

⁸ Japanese missions to the Tang were sent in 630, 653, 654, 659, 665, 667, 669, 702, 717, 733, 746, 752, 759, 761, 762, 777, 779, 803–804, 836–838, and 894. For a review of the literature on the subject, and of Japan's relations to other countries in the ancient and medieval periods, see Verschuer 2000.

⁹ Shimomise 1984, 115–178. It was common to use the term *kikajin* 歸化人 to designate these immigrants, but Donald McCallum cautioned against the use of such a term because of the conception of “us” versus “them” in the formation of the Japanese state, especially in the Japanese writing of their history; see McCallum 1984, 186.

¹⁰ Ishida Mosaku studied Nara Buddhism based on the texts available at the time; see Ishida 1930. For an overview of Nara Buddhist art see Yiengpruksawan 1998.

¹¹ Zhang (847) 1963; Duan (843) 1964; Zhu (early ninth century) 1982.

¹² For a discussion of the bronze statue of Yakushi Buddha that had served as one

of the main icons of Hōryūji, and which has an inscription dated 607, see Kidder's discussion in Chapter Four of this volume.

¹³ For introduction of works carried out by Japanese scholars immediately after World War II, see Seckel 1949a, 1949b; Soper 1952. Soper reviewed works by Tanaka, Kobayashi, Sawa, and Haruyama.

¹⁴ *DNBZ* 85:114–124. For discussion of the icons and gifts listed in this inventory, see Kidder 1999, 209–213, and Chapter Four of this volume.

¹⁵ Mizuno 1974, 126.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁷ Fukuyama and Ōta 1953, 1–42.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 43–73.

¹⁹ Wong 2007b.

²⁰ Kobayashi 1949, 41–46. Kobayashi also suggests that the Yakshi triad in the Yakushiji, which heralds the new Tang international style, rather than being brought from the old Yakushiji in Fujiwarakyō, was in fact freshly cast, reflecting the new knowledge of Tang art brought back by people like Dōji.

²¹ Soper 1952, 215–216; Mizuno 1974, 128.

²² Soper 1952, 213–214.

²³ Kidder 1999, 349–352.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 351.

²⁵ Seckel 1949b.

²⁶ One *shaku* is 0.994 feet, or 30.3 cm; 1 *sun* is one-tenth of a *shaku*, 1.19 inches, or 3.03 cm.

²⁷ Seckel 1949b, 150–151.

²⁸ Whitfield 1982, vol. 3, Fig. 138; see also the recent work by Fraser 2004.

²⁹ Seckel 1949b, 149.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ For a discussion of the textual sources and translations of the poems on the Buddha's footprints stone in Yakushiji, see Mills 1960.

³² In evaluating Haruyama's argument, Soper pointed out the author's failure to address why the Buddha's footprint design was absent in the Kondō murals, as one would expect the artist to include the important design that he copied in China; Soper 1952, 214–215.

³³ Wang 2000.

³⁴ Shimomise 1984, 178.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 541, 547, Figs. 133 & 134, 136 & 137.

³⁶ Seckel 1949b, 150–151.

³⁷ Kameda 1968, 18–80. Kameda estimated that with three artists working, the twelve panels of the Kondō murals would take about four years to complete, but two years if a total of five artists were working; *ibid.*, 75.

³⁸ Hamada 1978, 172–182.

³⁹ Kawahara 1994, 85–92.

⁴⁰ The seven temples are Tōdaiji 東大寺, Kōfukuji, Gangōji, Daianji, Saidaiji 西大寺, Yakushiji, and Hōryūji.

⁴¹ Naitō 1943, 43–75; Kameda 1968, 25–28.

⁴² On a Chinese Buddhist stele dated 535, the names of the Buddhas of the Four Quarters from the *Golden Light Sutra* are inscribed, among forty-two buddhas. The representation of these forty-two buddhas show identical images, resembling the Thousand Buddhas motif, and there is no iconographic distinction. The recording of numerous buddhas' names might relate to repentance rituals; see Wong 2008b.

⁴³ In the aftermath of the An Lushan Rebellion of 755, some monks of Xuanzang's Faxiang school left the turmoil of the Tang capital for the relative calm of Dunhuang, bringing with them the translated works and teachings of their master Xuanzang. As a result, from the 770s onward, a number of mural subjects that became popular can be associated with Xuanzang's translations or his teachings, such as transformation tableaux of the *Devatā Sūtra*, a text usually associated with the Hinayāna school; see Fan 2004.

⁴⁴ Many scholars of Buddhism have noted that the Japanese were more concerned with "sects" in Buddhism than the Chinese were, and this attitude also affected the historical study of Buddhism in both Japan and China.

⁴⁵ Naitō 1943, 113–121.

⁴⁶ These are probably also related to four-sided stupas, which have recessed buddha niches on all four sides; see Wong 2004, 65–66, Fig. 4.2. See also Chen 2004, 151–155.

⁴⁷ Steinhardt, Fu, et al. 2002, 122. In 1970, during restoration work, a reliquary was discovered above the central pillar, inside a cavity made of six stone slabs; the discovery, however, was not reported until 2001. It consists of a stone reliquary encasing a copper one, wrapped with silk fabrics, which in turn contains crystal and glass beads, a small green glass bottle, rings made of bone, silver and copper, and some spices and herbs; see Anonymous 2001.

⁴⁸ The dedication inscription below the buddha facing the south identifies the donor as Yang Xianzhou 楊顯州, a local dignitary with both military and civil rank titles. It records that in 544 Yang donated four stone statues in honor of his deceased parent(s). Wai-kam Ho, however, thought the sculptures are of the late-sixth to early seventh-century style and doubted the veracity of the inscription; Ho 1968–1969, 21–23. See also Wang 2005, 340–347.

⁴⁹ *T* no. 2122, 53:601; You 2002.

⁵⁰ Chen Qingxiang interprets the four buddhas as Akṣobhya (East), Ratnaketu (South), Amitāyus (West), and Dundubhisvara (North), the same set of four buddhas as mentioned in the *Golden Light Sutra*. She cites, however, the *Guanfo sanwei hai jing* 觀佛三味海經, since *juan* 9 of the text mentions the practice of meditating on the four buddhas upon entering a pagoda (*T* no. 643, 15:688–689); Chen 2004, 155–157.

⁵¹ See my discussion of themes and motifs in sixth-century Chinese Buddhist steles, in Wong 2004, 74–75, 145–148.

⁵² Wong 2008c.

⁵³ Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1982, 180.

⁵⁴ The iconography of depicting seven buddhas, the lighting of lamps, and the twelve divine generals (for the fulfillment of the twelve vows made by Bhaiṣajyaguru when he was still a bodhisattva) correspond to contents of the sutra on Bhaiṣajyaguru newly

translated by Xuanzang: *Yaoshi liuliguang rulai benyuan gongde jing* 藥師琉璃光如來本願功德經 (*T* no. 450). Evidence of use of Xuanzang's translation as textual source for the mural shows the close connection between Dunhuang and the Tang capital in the mid-seventh century.

⁵⁵ Rhie suggests the dating of Cave 57 to ca. 627 to ca. 630, anticipating Cave 322 and 220 (dated 642); see Rhie 1995, 294–297.

⁵⁶ At Dunhuang, the south and north walls are the main surfaces for large murals, while the entrance is located on the east end and the west wall is punctuated by a recessed niche.

⁵⁷ Dunhuang Yanjiu Yuan 1996, Pl. 112.

⁵⁸ The seven treasures of Buddhism are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, agate, rubies, and cornelian (or coral), and glass is sometimes used as a substitute for crystal. Objects made of these substances are often found in relic deposits; see Liu 1988, 58–63; An 2004, 57–65. For a long time the well-known amber-colored Sasanian cut-glass bowl in the Shōsōin collection was thought to be found only in Japan, though recently a similar one has been excavated in China; see Watt et al. 2004, cat. no. 117. Such bowls are also depicted in Dunhuang silk banner paintings; see Whitfield and Farrer 1990, pl. 39. Alternatively, a set of the seven jewels of the *cakravartin* (universal monarch) in Buddhism includes the horse, wish-fulfilling gem, elephant, minister, wheel, queen, and general.

⁵⁹ Kameda also mentioned the jewel held in the buddha's hand, though the esoteric text he cited that mentions this iconography is of a later date and was not introduced to Japan until the ninth century; see Kameda 1968, 38.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33–38. The eight classes of beings include Deva (*J. ten* 天), Naga (*J. ryū* 龍), Yakṣa (*J. yasha* 夜叉), Gandharva (*J. kendatsuba* 乾闥婆), Asura (*J. ashura* 阿修羅), Garuda (*J. karura* 迦樓羅), Kimnara (*J. kinnara* 緊那羅), and Mahoraga (*J. magoraga* 摩訶羅伽). A well-known sculptural group is in Kōfukuji, of early eighth-century date.

⁶¹ Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 175.

⁶² Mizuno 1974, 126.

⁶³ See Wong 2004, 91–96.

⁶⁴ See Blum's discussion of the *hwarang* movement in Chapter Six of this volume.

⁶⁵ The Dayan Pagoda was rebuilt with the support of Empress Wu in 703–705, after the five-story Indian-style earth-core stupa built at the recommendation of Xuanzang collapsed.

⁶⁶ Sawa 1949, 73–78.

⁶⁷ Hamada 1978, 175.

⁶⁸ Lee 2000, Wong 2007a.

⁶⁹ Mizuno, Sekiguchi, and Ōnishi 1990, Pl. 77; Kidder 1999, 220–222; see also Kidder's Chapter Four in this volume.

⁷⁰ For a detailed discussion of Guanyin, see Yü 2001.

⁷¹ See the depiction of Maheśvara (the name of Śiva in this region) on a votive panel found in Khotan, probably dating to the sixth century, in Whitfield and Farrer 1990, cat. no. 134.

⁷² Wong 2008a.

⁷³ Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 82.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Pl. 55.

⁷⁵ Peng 2003, Pl. 32.

⁷⁶ Yen 1986.

⁷⁷ See Figure 4.9 in this volume.

⁷⁸ Wong 2007b.

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Abbreviations

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Plate 12. Amida's Western Pure Land, Panel 6, west wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.

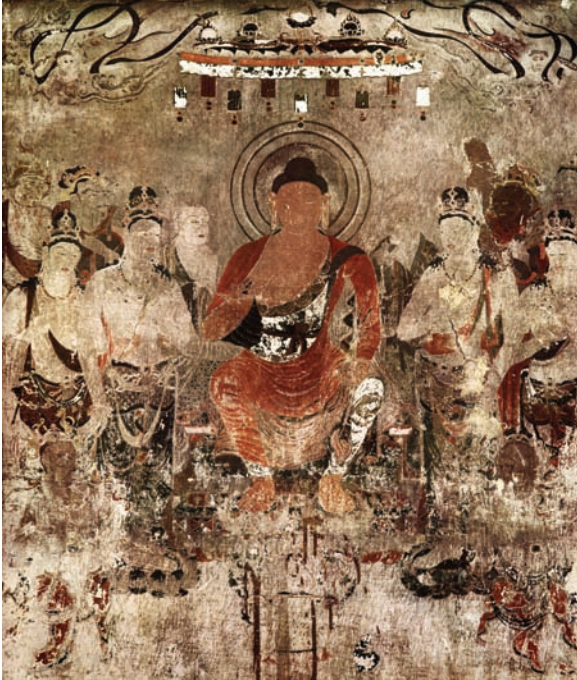


Plate 13. Miroku's Assembly (?), Panel 10, north wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.



Plate 14. Apsarasas (angel musicians and dancers), Kondō, Hōryūji. From Tanaka 1951.



Plate 15. Bodhisattva lighting a lamp, detail in the Medicine Buddha's Lapis Lazuli Pure Land, Dunhuang Cave 220. Detail of Fig. 5.23.



Plate 16. *Maitreya's Assembly*, Dunhuang Cave 322, south wall, first half seventh century. From *Dunhuang Yanjiu Yuan* 1996, Pl. 112.



Plate 17. *Amitābha's Western Pure Land*, Dunhuang Cave 322, north wall, first half seventh century. From *Dunhuang Yanjiu Yuan* 1996, Pl. 123.



Plate 18. Amitābha Buddha, detail in Amitābha's Western Pure Land, Dunhuang Cave 220. Detail of Fig. 5.22. From *Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo* 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 26.



Plate 19. Kannon, detail in Amida's Western Pure Land, Panel 6, west wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. Detail of Plate 12.



Plate 20. Bodhisattva, Ajaṅṭa Cave 1, second half fifth century. Wall mural. From Behl 1998, p. 69.



Plate 21. Bodhisattva. Detail in Buddha's Assembly, Dunhuang Cave 329, north side of east wall, second half of the seventh century. From *Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo* 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 50.



Plate 22. Bodhisattva in Amida's Western Pure Land, Panel 6, west wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. Detail of Plate 12.



Plate 23. Bodhisattvas, Dunhuang Cave 71, north wall. From *Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo* 1980–1982, Pt. 3, Pl. 84.



Plate 24. Attendant bodhisattva holding a glass dish in Shaka's Assembly, Panel 1, east wall, Kondō, Hōryūji. Detail of Fig. 5.2.



Plate 25. Bodhisattva holding a glass bowl, detail in Maitreya's Assembly, Dunhuang Cave 322. Detail of Plate 16. From Dunhuang Yanjiu Yuan 1996, Pl. 114.

Plate 26. (Right) *Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara*, Chinese, brought from China to Japan in 665 (?). Wood with pigments. Height 42.1 cm. Tokyo National Museum. From Nara National Museum 2005, Pl. 4.



Plate 27. (Left) *Nine-Headed Avalokiteśvara*, Chinese. Presented to Hōryūji in 719. White sandalwood. Height 37.5 cm. From Ono 1967, Pl. 59.

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