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The Major Buddhist Institutions of the Asuka and Hakuhō Periods in the Initial Capital Region of Japan

Several times the *Shoku Nihongi* (completed in 797) refers to Four Great Temples when particular ceremonies were conducted. In 703, these are specified by their formal Nara-period names: Daianji, Yakushiji, Gangōji, and Gufukuji. For the seventh century, these are the Kudara-ōdera (Daikandaiji), Yakushiji, Asukadera, and Kawaradera. All are today only archaeological sites, three in the general Asuka/Fujiwara area and one possibly an abandoned temple site on the edge of Kibi Pond in Sakurai city. Endless conflicting statements in the old documents require an inordinate amount of attention to the roof tiles as the dating mechanism, and ultimately considerable conjecture as to the temples' features and religious significance. Fortunately for the arguments, numerous illustrations, ground plans, and some projected elevations allow readers to decide for themselves if they are convincing. A glossary and a thirteen-page bibliography supplement the text.

Donald F. McCallum takes up the four temples in chronological order beginning with the Asukadera (Hōkōji). This was the monumental establishment of the Soga clan that served as the temple of the capital. It is the only temple for which the details of construction are recorded in sequence in the *Nihon shoki*, from the arrival of a team of Korean builders in 588 to its completion in 596. But McCallum accepts the *Gangōji engi* account as more accurate and Ōhashi's view that much more time would have been needed to construct an early temple of this size. To the surprise of the archaeologists when dug, it had three golden halls, all within the rectangular cloistered compound. The Asukadera was not transferred in its present plan to Heijō, the new capital to which the court moved in 710; a successor to it there was called Gangōji.

By far the most knotty problems arise when dealing with the Kudara-ōdera, a temple said in the *Nihon shoki* to have been ordered by Emperor Jomei in the seventh month of 639, along with a new palace, on the bank of the Kudara River. And only five months later, the same document says its nine-story pagoda was built. The *Daianji engi* gives the same date, but the *Nihon shoki* virtually repeats itself when Jomei's wife, who followed him as Empress Kōgyoku, in 642 ordered the building of a "great temple." The former text has the golden hall and nine-story pagoda destroyed by fire "about that time," a catastrophe not recorded in the *Nihon shoki*. That leaves the initial location in doubt, as the Kudara River is an elusive name today.

For no explained reason the temple was moved to Takechi in 673, spoken of as Takechi-ōdera–for which no site has yet been identified–and then renamed Daikandaiji by 677 (in the *Daianji engi*), by which name it gets much more attention. McCallum then accepts the remains of an abandoned temple at the Kibi Pond, dug intensively between 1997 and 2000, as the pre-673 site of the Kudara-ōdera. The present identifiable Daikandaiji site shows that the block system of the Fujiwara capital, occupied in 694, was marked off with the temple–and the Yakushiji–already in place. It burned down in 711. The succeeding temple, Daianji, was built in Heijō in the early eighth century.

The Kudara-ōdera was huge, and the Kibi Pond site meets the specifications. In the mound identified as the pagoda platform, archaeologists uncovered a large hole that had contained the base stone of its center pole (the reader will have to get used to McCallum's "heart stone"). The ground plan of this temple is what is popularly called the "Hōryûji plan," that is to say, the golden hall and pagoda lie side by side instead of in a longitudinal south to north sequential relationship. The conclusion of this chapter is largely a defense of the claim in the old texts that a nine-story pagoda was built so early, referring to models in China and Korea.

For the Kawaradera, no early texts are useful, and

later texts only cloud the issue by giving dates ranging from 584 to 774, most of which are meaningless. McCallum follows a common pattern of accepting its construction by Emperor Tenji who held the reins of government from 661 to 671, as its roof tiles and presumed structural features belong to about his time. It was probably built as a memorial to his mother, Empress Saimei, where she had had a palace. The Kawaradera played a major role in the burgeoning Buddhist activities of Asuka, and, to judge by the distribution of its style of tiles, it was the center of wide-ranging connections in the provinces, another feature indicating substantial royal patronage. The temple eventually decomposed, probably around the middle of the ninth century. Archaeological finds indicate some of the statuary was polychromed clay. Tenji's connection with temple building leads to an excursion into the Ōtsu and related temples.

In a chapter half the length of the Kudara-ōdera chapter, the Yakushiji becomes the fourth of the great temples. Emperor Temmu ordered it in 680 to alleviate his wife Jitō's illness, but since subsequent ceremonies do not mention its use, it may be assumed that it was not built until well after his death, and was therefore her work. The *Nihon shoki* has it at the point of celebrating the installation of its Buddhist triad in 697, and the *Shoku Nihongi* has the temple ready for occupancy by the priests in late 698. The Yakushiji had the distinction of being the only one of the four temples to be rebuilt in an almost similar plan, size, and structural style when the palace was moved to the new city of Heijō, hence the site known today as Moto-yakushiji (Original Yakushiji). At least parts of the temple in Fujiwara remained in use. Since McCallum believes the Yakushi bronze triad in Nara was made for that temple, he does not deal with the icons of the Moto-yakushiji.

McCallum says that the temples fit quite neatly into the four quarters of the seventh century, as though erected in an orderly fashion. One was not started before its predecessor was finished. But style and generational patronage indicate there was no connection between them. Calling them the Four Great Temples in the *Shoku Nihongi* was an afterthought, simply because they were well established, Heijō was not yet thriving, and some family connections still existed. A closer look provides a very different picture. The first quarter is not represented at all. As McCallum has written elsewhere, a theme, established early, is the unimportance of Prince Shōtoku and Empress Suiko in the first decades of Buddhism in Japan. Until their murder in 644, the Asuka Soga then get the credit for the Buddhist activities. The editors of the *Nihon shoki* mistreated the Soga, for example, "it became necessary to conceal Soga dominance during these years" (p. 6). Additionally, "usual characterization of the Soga clan results from the desire of those who formulated *Nihon shoki* to erase significant Soga achievements from the historical record, shifting credit to the winning side, the 'imperial' line" (p. 92). But was their role really diminished? The part they played in early Buddhism is fully described: the construction of their Asukadera is the only temple recorded building by building, Suiko ordered icons for it, it was the only nonroyal temple titled an "official" temple, many ceremonies were held there, the park to its west was the favorite place for entertaining special guests, the construction of the Soga tomb and its problems were included, and their clan temple was even noted (how many other clan temples were?-). The Soga contribution was not minimized; in relative terms it was inflated. Later writers appreciated their contribution to early Buddhism. This is far from trying to "erase" significant Soga achievements.

Therefore, the Asukadera (590s), Kudara-ōdera (640s+), Kawaradera (660s), and Yakushiji (690s) neatly skirt the time of the prince (d. 622) and the empress, a Soga (r. 592-628), and so imply that they were nonentities in the whole process of early Buddhist evolution. Among statements on page 24 to that effect: "no evidence that Suiko herself was directly associated with either the religion or the production of art." And "there are no records of Suiko commissioning a royal temple." Nor is there one that Kōtoku commissioned a temple. Incidentally, for Kōtoku, it is said that "no efforts either with regard to architecture or imagery is (sic) attributed to Kōtoku," but the *Nihon shoki* reference in 650 to Ōguchi Aya Atae carving one thousand images "in obedience to an imperial order" is supported by what appears to be the same man's name on the back of the halo of Kōmoku-ten, one of the four heavenly kings in the Hōryûji (p. 148). Suiko's temple in Asuka was the convent Toyuradera, and the Sakatadera was built for her. Later, "certainly Suiko had little if anything to do with the new religion" (p. 83). That Suiko and Prince Shōtoku were building elsewhere makes them inconsequential.

Suiko is dwarfed. Can all the references in the *Nihon shoki* be discounted? And what about the generous attributions to her in the *Daianji engi*? In the *Nihon shoki* alone, Suiko instructed the prince and the top level of nobles to promote the Three Precious Things; ordered the large bronze and embroidery images for the Asukadera and rewarded the makers, for which the Sakatadera was constructed for her; had the prince lecture to her on the *Śrīmālādevi-siṃhanāda* and Lotus sutras; received tribute images and relics from Silla and Mimana; proposed dis-

cipline for errant priests; appointed temple supervisors; and ordered a census of temples, the number totaling forty-six. Add to this her enthusiastic support (in its inscription) for having the Mandala of Heavenly Longevity made as a memorial for the prince. Regarding Hōryûji: "we do not know who founded it, when or why" (p. 25).

It certainly would have been unwise for anyone else to build beside the prince's palace, and the *Nihon shoki* has Empress Suiko rewarding the prince with land in Harima (Hyōgo) in 606, which was then given to the Ikarugadera (original Hōryūji). If there is one thing most Japanese historic period archaeologists agree on it is that Prince Shōtoku was involved with the construction of the Tachibanadera, Shitennōji, Hōryūji, and Chūgūji. That is a reasonably notable achievement. Prince Shōtoku is called Prince Stable Door from his given name. No other is similarly titled or treated this way, for instance, Prince Tamura (Field Village). It borders on the insulting. If one is so disposed, somewhat more gracious would have been Prince Upper Palace (Jōgū).

McCallum belongs to the skeptics' school pioneered by Toshio FUKUYAMA in the 1930s, with followers after World War II (one of the most common phrases in the book: "I have my doubts"). This means fine tuning selectivity of documents, and questioning or ignoring entries that disagree with his views. It is only fair to point out a few of the statements that are flawed or incorrect. Starting with trivia: The Yamadadera tiles almost all have seven seeds, not six, and the Kibi Pond tiles nine, not eight (pp. 132-133). It is a shame that the pretty tiles pictured on the jacket are all from other temples. Not one comes from the Four Great Temples. More significant: he writes that the Asukadera is " the *only* temple [his emphasis] for which accurate data exist," yet he tears this data down (pp. 24, 44). In some cases, he is quite wrong. For example, the palaces in Asuka until the 690s were "essentially at the same location" (p. 10). They were in many different locations in the general Asuka area: Suiko was at Toyura and Oharida; Jomei at Okamoto, Tanaka, Umayazaka, and Kudara; Kōgyoku at Okamoto, Oharida (?), and Itabuki, and as Saimei at Itabuki and Kawara; Temmu at Shima, then Kiyomihara in 672; and Jitō at Kiyomihara, and finally Fujiwara in 694. Only Itabuki and Kiyomihara may have been in the same location.

Here again, in regard to the capital of Fujiwara, "the building of the capital and palace is not documented in the *Nihon shoki*" (p. 202). This is the best documented event of the late decades of the seventh century. Twelve direct and two oblique entries begin with 684.2.28 when the site was chosen by divination in Temmu's thirteenth year and end with 694.12.6 when the impatient Jitō moved into the palace. The emperor decided on a site for the palace (684.3.9), Prince Takechi inspected the site (690.10.29), Jitō inspected the site (690.12.19), a service was held there for the tranquility of the new capital (691.10.27), the empress inspected its roads (692.1.12), Prince Naniwa and dignitaries conducted a service there for the tranquility of the palace site (692.5.23), the empress inspected the palace site (692.6.30), bodies dug up there were to be reburied (693.2.10), the empress went to the palace site (693.8.1) and visited a few months later (694.1.21), and the empress took up residence in Fujiwara at the end of the year.

Because of inadequate information on relics, "we must rely more on generalizations than on specific material remains" (p. 250). If those of the Sūfukuji and the superb set of relics of the Hōryūji had been elaborated on the periods for which inadequate information exists would have been covered. But using useful information from the Hōryūji dilutes the message. The Hōryūji was never the most important temple then, was always low on imperial donation lists, and was last on the pilgrimage route from Heian, but by virtue of the fact that its buildings (and those of the rebuilt Shitennōji) stand today and many icons remain, one can reconstruct from archaeological sites the appearance of buildings of its time, know what the spacing between column bases means structurally, visualize how upper levels and roofs were designed, see the physical features of Asuka-period images and how they were placed; and, in broader terms, understand the magnetism of the temple precincts. The fact that over twenty-five temples were built in that latitudinal plan–although it was not invented at Hōryūji–and over forty temples had variations of roof tiles of the types begun in Ikaruga (used at Hōryūji, Hōkiji, and Hōrinji) suggests to me that its role in early Japanese Buddhism was not insignificant.

I was looking for more on icons. There was a great display and adornment of a full complement of images at the Kudara-ōdera in 642. What did the Daikandaiji have? The statement that the Yakushiji's bronze triad in Nara was made for that temple leaves the *Nihon shoki* reference to the installation of the images in 697 (in the Moto-yakushi) unspeculated. I found the constant references to what has been said, will be considered later, or need not concern us here, disrupting the reading, and the omnipresent "we" frequently without the majority support it normally implies. Thanks to the finds of the ambitious archaeologists in the Asuka area, which never fail to astonish, important contributions are being made toward a better understanding of the relative textual data.

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