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<https://doi.org/10.15017/2244129>

出版情報 : 史淵. 100, pp.1-29, 1968-03-01. 九州大学文学部
バージョン :
権利関係 :

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE BUDDHISM IN JAPAN

Encho Tamura

In ancient times, during the Yamato period, it was the custom for each succeeding emperor at the beginning of his reign to seek some site on which to build a new imperial palace and relocate himself. In other words, successive emperors neither inherited their palaces from the previous emperor nor handed them down to the following emperor. Hardly any example is to be found of the same palace being used by more than two emperors successively. The fact that the emperor in ancient times was called by the name of the place where his palace was located* is based on this custom of seeking new sites and founding new palaces.⁽¹⁾

This custom was strictly adhered to until the 40th Emperor, Temmu (672-686 A. D.).** The palaces, though at times relocated at Naniwa (the present Ōsaka Prefecture), or at Ōmi (Shiga Prefecture), in most cases were built in different locations within the boundary of the Yamato area (Nara Prefecture). It is true that there is a theory denying the existence of emperors previous to the 14th Emperor, Chūai, but it is clearly stated in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* that all of the emperors including Jimmu, the 1st Emperor, strictly adhered to this custom of relocating the palace. This reflects the fact

*For example, Emperor Kimmei was called "Shikishima no Kanazashi no Miya ni Ame ga shita Shiroshimesu Sumeramikoto" (The Emperor who rules the whole area under heaven at his Kanazashi Palace in Shikishima). Empress Suiko was called "Oharida no Miya ni Ame ga Shita Shiroshimesu Sumeramikoto" (The Empress who holds reign at the Oharida Palace).

**The dates given after imperial names indicate the length of the imperial reign.

(1) Numbers indicate references from the author's work. The list of references will be found at the end of this paper.

that the custom of relocation had great meaning to the imperial family.

Another point to note is that this custom seems to have originated in Japan. The dynasties on the continent of China had semi-permanent capitals, for instance, Lo-yang in Ancient China, Shibe of Paikche, Kyongju of Silla, and P'yongyang of Koguryo. This makes clear one point: that the custom of relocation was established without the influence of the ancient dynasties on the continent. Not only was this idea limited to Japan, but even within Japan it was a custom followed only by the imperial clan.

Local chieftains of the time commanded certain territories. They had been living on them permanently since the time of their ancestors and continued ruling the land and people of the clan areas. The sepulchral mounds of these clans were built in clusters in the vicinity of the central dwelling places. These clans adopted the names of the locations of their family seats and used them for the name of the clan--examples are the Katsuragi clan, the Heguri clan, and the Soga clan.

These territorial chieftains were originally of opposing and independent clans. When their clans were incorporated under the emperors, the leaders were given the Kabane (title) of Omi after the establishment of the Yamato imperial power.

The imperial clan, which had the custom of migration, did not own an established family seat and was clearly different from the clans led by territorial chieftains.

Why did not the imperial clan take a permanent domicile, instead of changing the location of the site for the palace? According to the mythology of the Kojiki and Nihonshoki, which explain the beginnings of the imperial clan, Amaterasu Ōgami, the Sun Goddess, handed down a mirror to Ninigi no Mikoto, her grandson, and ordered that he and his descendants should revere it in successive generations. From Takama ga Hara she sent him to be ruler of Japan, which was then called Ashihara no Nakatsu Kuni. Since this mirror symbolized

Amaterasu Ōgami, the possessors of this mirror were considered to be the rulers of the whole land of Japan. Therefore, successive emperors of ancient times showed strong characteristics that were connected with their roles as ritual performers of Amaterasu Ōgami in the context of an agricultural society. This mythology was probably created after the establishment of political unification by the imperial family.

It is noteworthy that there were two professional groups of people surrounding the emperors who held the mirror. One of them was the group of shinkan (ritualists) who could participate in imperial religious ceremonies. The other was the bujin group (warriors) who protected and guarded the imperial clan. Various clans belonged to these two groups. On ceremonial occasions celebrating the divine mirror, which was kept in the imperial palace for safety, the Nakatomi clan recited Norito (congratulatory words) and the Imbe clan purified with heihaku, while the Ōtomo clan and the Mononobe clan guarded the divine mirror with their warriors. These Shinkan Dan (ritualists) and Bujin Keibi Dan (guardian warriors) were both the direct hereditary retainers of the emperors and were given the titles of Muraji and Obito according to their rank. They acquired their family names by the form of their service to the emperors. For instance, the Nakatomi clan's job was to soothe the minds of Kami and to act as mediator between Kami and the emperors. The name of the Mononobe clan referred to people who bore weapons, while the Ōtomo clan meant a conglomeration of different groups.

The powerful chieftains of the Yamato states belonged either to the Omi Kabane clans or to the Muraji Kabane clans. However, these two types of clans were distinctly different in nature. The Soga clan, for example, was one of those Omi Kabane clans which preserved a relative independence from the imperial clan. On the other hand, the Mononobe and Nakatomi clans, who were of the Muraji Kabane, were bound to a hereditary relationship in which they were

the vassals of the emperor. Consequently, the privilege of presenting girls of one's own clan to the imperial clan was limited to the Omi clans and not to Muraji clans. In contrast with the Omi Kabane clans which owned ancestral territory and stayed in their areas permanently, the Muraji Kabane clans, which owed direct allegiance as vassals to the divine mirror, found themselves migrating every time a new imperial site was chosen since they were bound to follow the emperor.

The migratory procession of the divine mirror (symbol of Amaterasu Ōgami), and hence the imperial procession also was the best opportunity to demonstrate the superior authority of the emperors to the people of Yamato and Kawachi. The procession of the divine mirror was followed by Shinkan Dan, such as Nakatomi and Imbe clans, and guarded by soldiers of Ōtomo and Mononobe clans both in front and behind. This procession apparently gave inspiration for the creation of the last stages of the mythological times, when the grandson of Amaterasu Ōgami, Ninigi no Mikoto, landed on earth with the divine mirror from the heavenly plain (Takama ga Hara).

After the latter half of the fourth century when the Yamato clan realized national unity, powerful chieftains of the Omi Kabane clans and the Muraji Kabane clans were assigned as Ō-omi and Ō-muraji respectively and were the chief political assistants of Ōkimi (emperors). Ōkimi meant the most powerful person of the imperial clan, but this name was changed to Tennō during the regency of Shōtoku Taishi (593-622 A. D.).⁽²⁾ The word Tennō in Chinese classics meant the North Star which governed the heavenly world, Ten Kai.

These considerations of the religious connection of the imperial clan and the position of other clans in relation to the emperor still do not answer the basic question of relocation. Why did the successive emperors in ancient times repeat this relocation at the beginning of their reigns? Let us look further into some of the possible answers to this interesting query. One possibility is that Japanese houses of the time were so simply with thatched roofs and pillars placed directly on

the ground that they could not stand long usage. If this were the reason, however, the palace could be rebuilt on the same spot, instead of being moved to an entirely new site.

Another opinion holds that the relocation of the imperial palace stems from the fact that father and children as a matter of custom lived separately in ancient times. Children as a rule were brought up in their mother's house. Therefore, when the new emperor succeeded to the throne, his native house was changed to a palace. As a result of this, relocation of the palace followed automatically. However, the fact that the 16th Emperor Nintoku's three sons, the 17th Emperor Richū, the 18th Emperor Hanzei, and the 19th Emperor Ingyō, though assuming their thrones successively, all relocated their palaces in different places, makes this hypothesis difficult to accept.

There is a third reason for imperial relocation which seems to be quite plausible. I believe that we may safely assume that the main reason for this successive relocation of palaces was the idea of contamination by death--particularly as it relates to the religious functions of the imperial clan. According to this idea, since the palace was polluted by the death of the emperor, it followed that the next emperor must choose a new site and build his palace there. Contamination by death was considered a most serious thing among the Japanese of the time. The death of the emperor, who possessed the divine mirror, was a grave pollution of the palace where the divine mirror was safeguarded. The imperial palace functioned first of all as the earthly repository for this divine mirror, and only secondarily as an imperial residence, since the emperor was, as it were, the mere custodian of this mirror.

When we look into the history of the intercourse between Japan and the Korean Peninsula, it is not too difficult to presume that Buddhism was introduced to Japan by the latter half of the fifth century A. D. through the Korean immigrants who settled in Japan. Among these naturalized citizens it is likely that there was already a

number of followers of Buddhism, for Buddhism was introduced to Silla during the fifteenth year (528 A.D.) of King Hōkō and to Paikche during the first year (384 A.D.) of King Chinru. However, the official introduction of Buddhism into Japan was during the reign of the 29th Emperor Kimmei⁽³⁾ (532-571 A.D.). King Sho of the Paikche sent an envoy who presented Buddhist images and sutras to Emperor Kimmei. The following half century was a turmoil of argument among the powerful chieftains in the court; while some favored the adoption of Buddhism, others rejected it. The main cause of this turmoil was the fact that the emperor faced for the first time the problem of how to receive Buddhism.

In regard to the date of the official introduction of Buddhism into Japan, there are two theories: one takes the date of 538,* while the Nihon Shoki takes the date of 552 (the thirteenth year of Emperor Kimmei). The former probably had stronger support among the followers of Buddhism at that time as the more appropriate date. Nihon Shoki favored the latter date (552 A.D.) owing to the ideas of the Priest Dōji (?-744) of the Daian-ji Temple, who participated in the compilation of the Nihon Shoki. According to the historical views of Buddhism, 500 years after the entrance of Buddha to Nirvana was considered the period of right Buddhism (Shō Hō). At this time, three essential principles of Buddhism are well preserved: (1) the teachings of Shaka, (2) the actual practice of this teaching, and (3) the enlightenment, as a result of this practice. The following thousand years are called the “period of Zōhō,” where the sutras and their practice existed, but the enlightenment is unobtainable. The next ten thousand years are called the “Mappō period.” There remain only sutras, but not exercise nor enlightenment. This indicates that the further we depart from the period of Shaka, the worse become human beings, and the times.

*This is found in “GANKŌJI GARAN ENGI NARABI NI RUKI SHIZAICHŌ” and “JŌGŪ SHŌTOKU HŌŌTEISETSU.”

Suppose that the death of Shaka occurred in 949 B. C. ; then 552 A. D. (the thirteenth year of Kimmei) is the 1501st year, corresponding to the first year of Mappō. ⁽⁴⁾ The persecution of Buddhism and the end of Buddhism, which could be seen to manifest themselves in social phenomena, were experienced keenly by Priest Dōji during his seventeen years' stay with the T'ang. The suppression of Buddhism by Emperor Taibu of Hoku Gi in 446 (seventh year of Taihei Shinkun) and also by Emperor Bu of Hoku Shu in 574 (the third year of Kentoku) was a serious blow to Buddhism. Sects of the new Buddhism such as the Sangai Kyo, Jodo Kyo hoped to revitalize the old one. While the compilation of the Nihon Shoki was going on, Dōji returned from the T'ang in 718, and he participated in this project by request. He intended to demonstrate to the T'ang dynasty the national supremacy of Japan by placing the date of importation of Buddhism at the first year of Mappō. In Japan Buddhism was, in spite of its complications, somehow accepted by the upper nobility and was adhered to eventually by the imperial clan and was rising in a steady upward swing. ⁽⁵⁾ This nationalism and ethnocentrism were shared commonly by the nobilities and the intellectuals of the time. ⁽⁶⁾ The Priest Dōji stayed in the Daian-ji Temple--the highest ranking national temple--and played an important role in the formation of state Buddhism. ⁽⁷⁾ In connection with this idea Dōji rejected the traditional date of 538, replacing it with the thirteenth year of the Emperor Kimmei, which corresponded to the first year of the Mappō period.

The official envoy of King Sho of Paikche came to the palace of Emperor Kimmei at Yamato. He presented the image of Buddha and sutras and recommended to the emperor that he worship Buddhism. In view of the importance of the matter, the emperor consulted with Ōomi Soga no Iname and Ōmuraji Mononobe no Okoshi concerning the issue of Buddhism before he expressed publicly his attitude about adoption or rejection. Soga no Iname, who had strong ties with the powerful Yamato no Aya clan, consisting of Korean immigrants, and

who also had a good knowledge of the culture of the continent, recommended that the emperor adopt Buddhism. According to his opinion, the Buddha and Japanese Kami (divinity) were not opposed to each other ; they belonged in the same category. On the other hand, Mononobe no Okoshi expressed strong opposition to the adoption of Buddhism. Nakatomi no Kamako aligned himself with this view. The Mononobe clan, a Muraji Kabane clan, was a hereditary vassal, and was naturally strongly attached to the authority of Amaterasu Ōgami. Mononobe no Okoshi felt quite uneasy about introducing the unknown Kami-Buddha into the lineage of Japanese Kami, including the guardian Kami of the respective clans, which were headed by Amaterasu Ōgami. According to the viewpoint of the Mononobe and Nakatomi clans,⁽⁸⁾ which adamantly rejected Buddhism, Kami and Buddha were opposed and repelled each other. At least they were different in nature. Japanese Kami would be likely to be disturbed by the alien Buddha.⁽⁹⁾ When the split of opinion between these two most powerful clans developed, the Emperor Kimmie reached the decision that it was desirable to assume the attitude of a neutral on-looker. The Emperor temporarily gave the image of Buddha and the sutras which were presented by King Shō of Paikche to the Soga clan, who admired Buddha, and thus saved his honor with the king of Paikche. In other words, the emperor succeeded in maintaining his position as a performer of religious ritual for the divine mirror of Amaterasu Ōgami.

Religious faith basically is an individual matter. The king of Paikche who sent the image of Buddha and sutras to Kimmie simply recommended this religion. However, this matter of individual faith caused the split of the two most powerful clans--one for the adoption of Buddhism, the other for the rejection of it. The main reason for this split was the fact that the imperial clan preserved the tradition of performing religious service for the Mirror and also the assumption that the political unity of Ancient Japan was maintained by the power

of Kami, headed by Amaterasu Ōgami. In other words, the imperial hegemony over clans is inseparably related to the sovereignty of Amaterasu Ōgami over the guardian Kami of clans. Therefore, the issue of acceptance of the alien Kami-Buddha to the imperial palace could mean a challenge to the Japanese Kami, especially to Amaterasu Ōgami. It could no longer be a matter of private faith, but became a matter of public concern in relation to the political order.

The reason Emperor Kimmei was so cautious about the acceptance of Buddhism and why the Mononobe and Nakatomi clans insisted so strongly against the Buddha was the fear that the newcomer Buddhism might have an important influence on the authority of the Kami that functioned as the backbone of the political order of the Yamato court. Soga no Iname placed the image of Buddha, which was given by Emperor Kimmei, in his home at Asuka. In so doing, he signified his faith in Buddhism. The conversion of the powerful Soga clan to Buddhism pleased the Korean immigrant Japanese who had held the faith in Buddhism previously. Especially delighted by this were the Yamato no Aya clan, which was living in a group adjacent to Asuka.

Antagonism between the Soga clan and the Mononobe and Nakatomi clans was getting more serious, however. The Buddha rejecting group insisted that the acceptance of the Buddha in Japan would arouse the rage of Japanese Kami and might cause damage to the stability of society which owed its well-being to the benevolence of the Kami. This consequently increased insecure feelings among these people. Epidemics of the time and crop failures were considered to be the result of the anger of Kami. The Mononobe and Nakatomi clans--the Buddha rejecting groups--were deeply concerned with this fit of rage of Kami, and thought that the best measure they could take was to banish the image of Buddha which was revered by the Soga clan. They were waiting for an opportunity to carry out their plots to achieve this goal.

In the latter part of Emperor Kimmei's reign, when Soga no Iname

died, the Mononobe and Nakatomi clans raided the mansion of Soga no Iname, and taking the image away, they carried it to the Province of Naniwa (Ōsaka City) and dumped it into the sea. At this time a plague was raging, and the anti-Buddha group ascribed this to worship of the image of the alien Buddha. This action of casting the image into the sea was considered helpful in clearing out the plague.

During the reign of the 30th Emperor Bidatsu (572-585 A. D.), this conflict continued. Soga no Umako, son of Iname, became Ōomi and Mononobe no Moriya, son of Okoshi, became Ōmurai. Both of these rivals participated in imperial politics; yet any reconciliation between the two was highly unlikely.

The emperor, avoiding any involvement with their political conflicts, remained in the position of a neutral onlooker to the end of his life. The 31st Emperor Yōmei (585-587 A. D.) was the first emperor to show signs of actually being converted to Buddhism. When he fell ill, he voluntarily sought the help of the Buddha. A capable priest of curing ability was summoned to the court from Kyūshū, where Buddhism had started its early propagation successfully. This expression of private imperial conversion encouraged those in favor of Buddhism, on the one hand, especially Soga no Umako. At the same time, it increased uneasiness among the groups rejecting Buddhism, especially Mononobe no Moriya. A collision involving both of these clans looked almost inevitable. Emperor Yōmei died in the midst of this unusually bitter political turmoil. Right after Yōmei's death, Soga no Umako challenged Mononobe no Moriya to a decisive battle; and with the assistance of the superior military power of the Yamato no Aya clan Umako secured victory.

After Mononobe no Moriya was defeated at his estate in the Province of Kawachi in 587 A. D. , the Soga clan with the help of Paikche started the construction of a full-scale Buddhist temple at Asuka in Yamato. Although this Asuka no Tera (the Hōkōji Temple) was the private temple of Soga no Umako, it was the forerunner of

the temples in Japanese Buddhism. During the reign of the 32nd Emperor Sushun (587-592 A.D.), the grand beauty of the Hōkōji Temple began to unfold as it underwent construction. Emperor Sushun, however, kept the attitude of a neutral onlooker as the previous emperors had. The result of this attitude, though, was in effect a rejection on his part, which blocked Buddhism from entering his court.

The fall of Ōmuraji Mononobe no Moriya led to an upset in the balance of power between Ōomi and Ōmuraji,⁽¹⁰⁾ which were the pivotal components of the political system of the imperial family. Consequently all the power shifted to the Ōomi the Soga clan. There not only appeared no power strong enough to restrain the Soga clan in the absence of the Mononobe clan, but the power of the Soga clan was all the more enhanced by the wealth captured from the Mononobe clan.

Emperor Sushun, who clashed with Soga no Umako, was slain by Umako. Confronted by this extraordinary crisis of the imperial clan, the 33rd ruler, Empress Suiko (592-628), the first empress in the history of Japan, succeeded to the throne and delegated to Prince Shōtoku, the son of Emperor Yōmei, all political authority. Empress Suiko seated herself on a sham throne in that she was not actually involved in administration.⁽¹¹⁾ In this way she managed to avoid direct contact with Soga no Umako.

At long last the Hōkōji Temple at Asuka was completed. Around this time Prince Shōtoku started the construction of his private temple, the Hōryūji, adjacent to his own palace at Ikaruga. The power which had once hindered the expansion of Buddhism was now destroyed, and the rise of Buddhism became the general trend of the age. Many clans had now come to own their own temples. In this manner the construction of grand sepulchral mounds as the expression of the worldly power of chieftains became obsolete, and clan temples replaced them.

Buddhism taught the Japanese that there were existences previous

to and following this world. Up to this time the Japanese had the concept of three existences besides this earthly one, namely, Takamaga Hara in the sky; Tokoyo no Kuni, far away beyond the sea; and the Yomi no Kuni where one goes after death. The present world, Ashihara no Nakatsu Kuni, was connected with these other lands and could communicate by human powers--without depending on divine forces. These three lands, in other words, were simply the reflections of this world, whereas in the Buddhist explanation, the previous and after lives were lives entirely separated from this world. It is our Gō (karma)—which is uncontrollable by human power--that all living things including human beings have to rotate these three lives and be subjected to diverse agonies. Separation from this agony is the way to Satori, and this state of enlightenment is made possible through Buddhism alone.

Chieftains who constructed clan temples hoped for the salvation of their relatives in the afterlife. The so-called memorial service for “the repose of the souls of one’s seven successive parents” --in other words, the worship of one’s ancestors, --was the great impetus in getting the Japanese to accept Buddhism. Together with this idea of ancestor worship, worldly gains, such as the curing of sickness and victory in battle, were also expected from Buddha. Thus to its original mission, Buddhism added guarantees for the gains of this world as well as the next world. However, the gains in this world had also previously been guaranteed by the Japanese Kami. Buddhism, from this functional similarity, came to be regarded as being more compatible with the belief in Kami. They need not then be regarded as repellent or antagonistic to each other. In this way, then, Buddhism could be accepted by the chieftains and would be regarded as “clan Buddhism.” During the Asuka Period, especially during the reign of Empress Suiko, Buddhism undeniably observed its peak in popularity.

Empress Suiko, however, did not take a decisive step to adopt Buddhism; and in order to understand why, we first of all have to

take into account the division of political responsibility between the empress and Prince Shōtoku. The empress delegated the political authority to Prince Shōtoku. Under these circumstances, the prince's avowed inclination to Buddhism would have actually nothing to do with the empress because she could still maintain a neutral position for herself. Secondly, we have to look into the political opposition between the empress and Ōomi Soga no Umako. Umako, who had slain Emperor Sushun, exceeded the empress in power. He also held in his hands power over the rise and fall of Buddhism. The attitude of neutral onlooker held by the imperial family had existed traditionally since Emperor Kimmei, and resulted in isolating the empress regarding the matter of the adoption of Buddhism. After the fall of the Ōmuraji Mononobe clan who were the strong opponents to Buddhism, an increasing number of the chieftains became converted to Buddhism and constructed their own temples after the manner of the Soga clan. The thriving of Buddhism was the inevitable main stream of the time.

As long as the empress kept a neutral attitude, she not only remained isolated, but also she could not help worsening her relations with the Soga clan which was devoted to Buddhism. Although the empress and Prince Shōtoku had in common their membership in the imperial clan, the Prince and Umako had in common the fact that both were devoted Buddhists. There was no common bond between the empress and Umako to tie them together closely; in fact, they were on opposing sides. During her long reign of 36 years, she tried neither to have her own temple nor to welcome the image of Buddha to court. The main reason for her official rejection of Buddha could be sought in the traditional view of the imperial family towards Buddhism. She could not take a decisive step and place the "alien" Buddha into a court which originally served as the palace for the religious ritual in connection with the divine mirror. Empress Suiko, however, seemed to have some interest in Buddhism, and the story is told that she attended lectures of sutras given by her nephew Prince Shōtoku, but nevertheless this would have been merely her private inclination towards Buddhism.

An interesting point concerns the place where she heard his lectures. These lectures were never given at her palace, but always at the palace of Prince Shōtoku. This implies that Buddhism did not enter her own court and that the image of Buddha was not enshrined there.⁽¹²⁾

The Hōkōji Temple at Asuka, though a private clan temple of Soga no Umako, had come to have official significance as the original temple of the rise of Buddhism. As the chieftains were placed under the Ōomi Soga clan for political reasons, so too were the clan temples placed under the Hōkōji Temple in a hierarchy. The priest Eji from Koguryo and the priest Esō from Paikche, who were the first priests installed in the brand new Hōkōji Temple, and succeeding priests of Hōkōji, carried on their missions as leaders of Buddhism in Japan. The Soga clan was the only powerful clan at this time which could push Buddhism forward.⁽¹³⁾

Empress Suiko thought of obtaining some political right to voice her opinion in the matter of Buddhism. This idea was suggested by the returning priests from the T'ang who were known as Daitō Gakumon Sō. They observed the system of the Sui and T'ang dynasties in which emperors exercised the control of power over Buddhism. The empress received some encouragement from this practice, and she actually carried out her idea immediately after the death of Prince Shōtoku, by establishing institutions for the control of Buddhism under the pretext of punishing an ill-behaved priest.

A system, then, was developed which was patterned after the priest system of the Chinese mainland. It consisted of three priestly ranks: Sōjō (the highest), Sōzu, and Hōzu, with one priest to each of these three ranks.⁽¹⁴⁾ According to an investigation of the time there were 46 temples, with 816 priests and 569 nuns--a total of 1,385--in attendance. Among this number of temples there were some which were under construction. These were all private temples of the chieftains; none of the imperial temples were included in the figures above. It was a matter of great importance that Empress Suiko, who neither

owned her own temple nor made any contribution to the flourishing of Buddhism, was responsible for the official institutions for control of Buddhism. In other words, the empress modified the traditional attitude of being a neutral onlooker towards Buddhism and introduced a positive policy in approaching the question of Buddhism. This policy of controlling Buddhism and disregarding the Buddhistic faith resulted in sharpening the already severe political opposition of Umako. At any rate, it took thirty years after the completion of Hōkōji Temple and ninety years after the introduction of Buddhism to reach a stage towards state Buddhism in Japan--which means controlling of Buddhism by state power.

The drastic change, the adoption of Buddhism, came during the reign of the 34th Emperor Jomei (629-641). This emperor built, for the first time, his own clan Buddhist temple, Kudara no Tera, and also sent for priests to give him lectures on sutras in his palace. He thus set the first example of an imperial conversion to Buddhism. Empress Suiko made a beginning in the state control of Buddhism whereas Emperor Jomei took a decisive step by personally adopting Buddhism. In so doing he paved the way to "court Buddhism." Kudara no Tera, by nature, was exclusively the temple of the imperial clan and hence not open to the public. Its mission was not on a national scale. The motivation for the construction of this temple was exactly the same as that for other private clan temples. In short, the "court Buddhism" of Emperor Jomei was basically nothing more than clan Buddhism. Those priests who recommended the adoption of Buddhism to Emperor Jomei were the Daitō Gakumon Sō group which included such men as Sō Min and Eon. They were sent by Prince Shōtoku to China during the Sui dynasty. After studying in China for more than twenty years, these priests came back separately with a full knowledge of the rich continental culture during the reign of Emperor Jomei. During the Sui and T'ang dynasties, Buddhism was not only believed in by the imperial

court, but reached the stage of being state Buddhism.

Since Prince Shōtoku pursued a policy of imitation of the civilization and systems of the Sui and T'ang dynasties, many influential people felt that if Japan refused Buddhism any longer it would mean her staving outside of the cultural sphere of Asia, which centered around the Sui and T'ang. The fact that, owing to the suggestion of these Daitō Gakumon Sō, the traditional policy of the imperial family toward Buddhism changed and Buddhism was introduced to the court, meant a sharp withdrawal of the group of Kami supporters, such as the Nakatomi and Imbe clans who performed the religious services related to Amaterasu Ōgami in the court. While the number of clans converted to Buddhism was increasing, these clans could not escape being isolated from the court unless the group which supported the Kami modified its intransigent stand. In other words, the adoption of Buddhism by Emperor Jomei yielded a situation in which the hereditary vassals of the imperial clans who had been sheltered under the influence of Kami--which originated from Takamaga Hara--made a concession to the influential priests who possessed a higher degree of culture from the continent.

The 35th Empress Kōgyoku (642-644), the wife of Jomei, was also a believer in Buddhism like her husband. Neither had the intention of supporting a Buddhism which would function for the public and state. Nor did either indicate an intention to establish "state Buddhism." Thus Buddhism remained in the stage of "clan Buddhism" and "court Buddhism" as before. There was a reason for this.

The Ōomi Soga clan since the introduction of Buddhism, resisting anti-Buddhist pressure, carried on the mission of protecting Buddhism. The leading power, which supported the rise of Buddhism, rested with them. This fact was recognized equally by emperors and chieftains. Hōkōji Temple, which dominated all the other clan temples, became a symbol of the political power of the Soga clan. Even though Empress Suiko obtained a foothold in the control of Buddhism, she

could not take the place the Soga clan had built up as supporter-protector of Buddhism. Buddhism, in fact, actually was helping the political position of the Soga clan.

It was meaningless to talk about “state Buddhism” at this point, however, because to be a state religion it would have to function to reinforce the political position and functions of the emperor. As a premise in establishing state Buddhism, the leading power over the rise of Buddhism had to be in the hands of the emperor. In order to achieve this, the Ōmi Soga clan had to be overthrown.

Prince Naka no Ōe and others succeeded in a coup d'état. The 36th Emperor Kōtoku (645-654) succeeded to the throne after the Empress Kōgyoku. As a result of the overthrow of the Soga clan, the political as well as religious power fell automatically into the hands of the imperial family. After the fall of the Soga clan, the new government, rearranged by the Taika Reform, ordered priests and nuns to assemble at the Hōkōji Temple and announced the official stand of the government towards Buddhism. It revealed the following four points: (1) The emperor himself would take the initiative and lead the expansion of Buddhism. (2) He would positively protect Buddhism. (3) He would introduce a new central guiding institution, which would consist of ten high-ranking priests. (4) He would strengthen the controlling organization of Buddhism.

This new government of Taika now took a complete hold of the leadership as well as the controlling of the power over Buddhism.⁽¹⁵⁾ It extended a helping hand for the construction of the temples of chieftains and contributed material and money to temples. The religious services held at court became more grandiose in scale. The anniversary of the birth of Buddha, on the 8th day of the 4th of month, and the Bon Festival, on the 15th of the 7th month, were especially instituted as official religious ceremonies and were next in importance to the ceremony of the accession to the throne and to the Chōga ceremony (offering congratulations to the emperor on an auspicious occasion).

High-ranking officials were asked to attend these ceremonies in formal gowns and caps appropriate to their status. It also became the tradition for priests to enter and leave court freely. The religious services of Buddha at court were thus held with the attendance of the nobility and in this way the private adoption by the imperial family gradually acquired official meaning and unctious. These nobles, moreover, had been converted to Buddhism and had started religious services at their own temples long before the imperial control of Buddhism. The imperial clan, in other words, started a little later. Finally, though, it did make the step towards Buddhism. The Ex-empress Kōgyoku, together with her court attendants, produced embroideries of Buddha's image and placed them in her court at Naniwa.

After the death of Emperor Kōtoku, the Ex-empress Kōgyoku again ascended the throne and was posthumously called the 37th Empress Saimei (655-661). In the year 660, one hundred priests were summoned to her court at Asuka and held the religious service of "Ninnō-Hannya-e." At this time on the Korean Peninsula, the country of Paikche was attacked by the combined forces of the Silla and the T'ang and was in trouble. Japan, which adhered traditionally to a policy of assisting Paikche, was involved in this, and social unrest increased. "Ninnō-Hannya-e" was the religious service of asking guardian gods of Buddhism to protect the land and to suppress the enemy. Furthermore, only the empress could preside over this religious service. The fact that the empress, in order to meet this military crisis from abroad, prayed for national protection by Buddha was clear evidence of the advancement of "court Buddhism" towards "state Buddhism."

Putting an end to his position of Crown Prince, Naka no Ōe no Ōji assumed the throne and became the 38th Emperor Tenchi (668-671). He changed the palace of his mother, Empress Saimei, at Asuka to a temple and named it "Kawara no Tera" for the repose of her soul. The remaining marble-base stones at the site, now desolate and forgotten, remind us of the splendor and magnificence of the bygone

days. Empress Saimei had gone down to the Province of Tsukushi in the northern part of Kyūshū to take command of the troops for the rescue of Paikche. She died there, and the Kanzeon Ji Temple was built on the site. It was erected for the repose of her soul, as the Kawara no Tera Temple. The Sūfuku Ji Temple was also built for the same reason near the imperial palace in Ōtsu in Ōmi Province which was the new capital of Emperor Tenchi. The Hall of Buddha was built and included within the cluster of his court buildings. An interesting thing to note concerning this hall is that when Emperor Tenchi lay on his death bed, he entrusted his retainers with the future affairs of the country. In making an oath in front of this hall, his retainers vowed to observe strictly the imperial commands; these concerned principally Ōtomo no Ōji, the young crown prince. Buddhist ceremony was used, based on the doctrine of “Konkōmyō Kyō” sutra.⁽¹⁶⁾ In order to hand over his right to the throne to his nephew, Ōama no Ōji, the uncle of Ōtomo no Ōji announced his retirement from the political world and became a priest at the south of this Hall of Buddha. Buddhism spread into the court and captured the hearts of the people. This Buddhism, however, was still “court Buddhism” and private in nature and not the “state Buddhism.” The Buddhism which could correspond functionally to the state and the public was as yet too immature in its system and doctrine.

At the so-called War of Jinshin, Ōama no Ōji, who defeated the army, led by Ōtomo no Oji, returned to secular life and to the throne. As the 39th Emperor Temmu (672-686), he refined and brought to completion the state system of government by a code of laws, which originated from the Reform of Taika. This emperor was the one who finally and firmly established “state Buddhism,” found on the former “clan Buddhism” and “court Buddhism.” In short, Japanese Buddhism, casting off the old shell of “clan Buddhism,” reached its full growth in the form of “state Buddhism”.

There are four points worthy of note in relation to Emperor Temmu

and Buddhism. First, Emperor Temmu was personally converted to Buddhism at the age of fifty-four. Though his motivation for entering the priesthood was most likely political, yet he regularly observed the ceremonies of Ango and Urabon-e at his palace at Asuka. He even made an imperial visit to the Hōkōji Temple on the day of the Urabon-e service in the seventh and paid homage to Buddha. An entrance into the Buddhist priesthood from the imperial family for the spiritual benefit of the imperial clan was the one conspicuous phenomenon of the time. These were all manifestations of the private adoption of Buddhism by Emperor Temmu. Second, he gave consideration to better treatment of priests and nuns and also to the economic protection of temples. Although these were largely motivated by the emperor's interest as an individual, the government was the means by which his intentions were carried out. From this point of view, the whole affair could be considered as "official" support of Buddhism. Third, some measures were put into effect by the government to control Buddhism. For example, regulations were made in regard to clerical robes, horses and attendants. Also included was the appointment of Sangō consisting of Sōjō, Sōzu and Shō Sōzu, and other priest officials such as Risshi. The system of differentiation of rank between state temples and clan temples was also established. Emperor Temmu moved Kudara no Ōtera which his father built at the site of Kudara to Asuka and renamed it the Ōtsukasa no Ōtera (great governmental temple). This indicated that the entire power over the future of Buddhism was now exclusively in the hands of the emperor. Unlike Kudara no Ōtera Temple, which was the private emperor Kimmei and built at a time when Buddhism was still in the stage of "court Buddhism", Ōtsukasa no Ōtera was a "state temple" and was given the highest rank among temples. This temple changed its name to Daian-ji Temple later, and the Priest Dōji resided there. Fourth, Emperor Temmu guided heretofore "clan Buddhism" to "state Buddhism." In the summer of 676 there was a long drought and fear that the drought would hinder the sowing of rice. The government

dispatched messengers to the shrines in various provinces and had them offer prayers for rain. The government simultaneously requested priests and nuns to hold religious services for rain. In autumn of the same year, messengers were again dispatched all over the country to give people lectures on the Konkōmyō Kyō sutra and the Ninnō Hannya Kyō sutra, so that they could pray for the peace of the nation. According to these sutras, when the ruler of the country was converted to Buddhism and respected the sutras, the good gods who protected Buddhism were supposed to defend the country too. These sutras were thus called “sutras of national defense.” In this manner the religious services for national defense were held on a national scale. We cannot ignore the influence upon the emperor by leading priests who propagated their individual types of doctrine at this time. Basically, however, Buddhism was expected to protect the nation.

“State Buddhism,” an “official” adoption of Buddhism by the emperor, is now distinguished from “court Buddhism” and “private” acceptance of Buddhism by the imperial clan. Japanese Buddhism, having gone through the process of private and clan Buddhism, reached the stage of official “state Buddhism.” In this connection, however, we have to pay special attention to the importance of “court Buddhism,” which is considered to be one stage before reaching “state Buddhism.” The foundation of Kudara no Ōtera Temple by Emperor Kimmei, the embroidered image of Buddha by Empress Saimei, the construction of Kawara no Tera Temple by Emperor Tenchi, and other chain happenings in relation to Buddha had all been executed by the direct line of Emperor Jomei. The “court Buddhism” started by Emperor Jomei was taken and developed by his wife and children. “State Buddhism” as established by Emperor Temmu was founded on this “court Buddhism”—he “privately” adopted Buddhism of Emperor Jomei and his family. ⁽¹⁷⁾

When Emperor Temmu died, Buddhist priests and nuns participated in an emperor’s funeral for the first time. They performed the regular

Buddhist service around his coffin, left on the funeral spot for the mourning. It was an appropriate funeral for this emperor who once entered the priesthood and who led Buddhism to its flourishing state. The imperial throne was next assumed by his wife, the 41st Empress Jitō (686-697). Fujiwara Kyō, the capital of this empress, was the last migratory capital in Japanese history. In other words, with this last move there was an end to the custom of successively relocating the imperial palace. This custom, as we recall, was peculiar to the imperial clan. Fujiwara Kyō, which was built within the area of Asuka, followed the style of Chang An, the capital of the T'ang dynasty. The planned city with streets running east-west and north-south like a checkerboard made its appearance in Japan. Ancient chieftains now became bureaucrats within the system, which was based on the code of law, let their estates, and lived permanently in the capital. This tendency, already begun during the reign of Empress Suiko, had been accelerated by the public service regulations in the constitution of seventeen articles and also by the Kani-Junikai--twelve stages of offices and ranks of the governmental system. In fact, after the time of Empress Suiko, the site of the successive relocation with few exceptions was limited to the area of Asuka. The establishment of Fujiwara capital, which had divisions into districts, fixed the permanent residences of the high-ranking bureaucratic officials. The aristocrats then began to build their clan temples near their residences in the capital.

There were already four main temples in Fujiwara Kyō at this time : Ōtsukasa no Ōtera by Emperor Temmu (the main temple), Yakushi-Ji Temple by Empress Jitō, Kawara no Tera Temple by Emperor Tenchi, and Hōkōji Temple (Asuka no Tera) which carried on the history and tradition of Buddhism in Japan. These four temples were given the rank and status of state temples and were placed above the private clan temples in the capital. ⁽¹⁸⁾ It was true that these state and clan temples made the relocation of the imperial palace difficult. With this Fujiwara Kyō, the primitive style of the palace of the divine

mirror Dairi, which traditionally had a thatched roof and unpolished pillars placed directly on bare ground, faded into the background; and in its place a great edifice of continental style with tiled roof and round pillars appeared as the central focus, placing the Chōdōin (the council hall) at the center of cluster of the government buildings. Thus, the tradition of the imperial clan which assumed the mission of carrying the divine mirror as its major function was drastically changed. Because of this, officials of the Jingi Kan, the group of court ritualist clans, finished their traditional function and yielded their seats to officials of the Dajo-kan, the bureaucratic officials who favored rule by imperial power—a system which was based on the “code of law” and regulations from the continent.

Although the Jingi-kan was placed above the Dajo-kan, the essential difference between these two ranks was actually somewhat the reverse, as the arrangement of the buildings at Fujiwara-kyō indicates. The Chōdōin was placed in front of the Dairi.

The Nakatomi and Imbe clans, which survived even after the Mononobe clan had long since been abolished, continued their resistance persistently against the adoption of Buddhism. They had yielded once before to the pressure of Daitō Gakumon Sō and accepted the inflowing of the Buddhism into the court. Now again they were forced to withdraw by the rising of new bureaucratic officials. In the ancient state of Yamato the act of relocation of successive emperors was itself a demonstration of great imperial authority and power. On the other hand, at the time of the Fujiwara Kyō, the capital itself, with its council hall, Chōdōin, in a cluster of official as well as clan temples, manifested the authority of the ruler.

The four big temples, Ōtsukasa no Ōtera (Daian Ji), Yakushi-Ji, Kawara no Tera, and Hōkōji--although the reasons for construction were different--were all private temples of the imperial family, and its regular and special religious services were held in these temples. In addition to this private function, they assumed the mission of

controlling and guiding many private clan temples. Sōgō, a collective term which refers to three highest ranking priests--each representing priests of the high ranks of Sōjō, Sōzu, and Risshi as provided for in the Sōni Ryō (law for priests and nuns)--were appointed from the priests of these four temples. In all these temples, services were performed in praise of the emperor and in prayers to Buddha for the protection of the nation and for his blessings on the emperor.

Although the dispatching of Buddhist priests all over the country to explain Kōnkomyōkyō and Ninnō-hannya Kyō sutras was a temporary and special incident, it indicates that state Buddhism was formed and expanded throughout the country to central as well as local areas. In the year 685, Emperor Temmu sent down an imperial edict to the nobles and chieftains the central and local areas to build temples. In these temples they were to place the images and sutras, and they were to worship them. The nature of Buddhism in this case did not remain in the stage of clan Buddhism, but rather had advanced when it eventually joined the stream of state Buddhism. An interesting fact concernig the relationship of Buddhism and Shintoism brought out when we consider the construction of the Jingūji* (shrine temple) and the sutra-chanting ritual in woshipping Kami. Both of these phenomena took place from the latter half of the eighth century. When we note the construction of the Jingūji temple for various Kami, we can see that Kami enjoyed a very favorable place under Buddhism.

We summarize the relations between Japanese Kami and the alien Buddha, from the time of its introduction up to the 8th century, into the following four categories: (1) Kami and Buddha are equal in rank and quality; (2) Kami rejects Buddha and abhors it; (3) Kami needs and enjoys Buddhism; (4) Kami is indifferent to Buddhism.

For about a hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism (538),

* Kehi no Kami at the Province of Echizen (Fukui Prefecture), Wakasa hiko no Kami at Wakasa (Fukui Prefecture), Tado no Kami at Ise, Kashima no Kami at Hitachi (Ibaragi Prefecture).

the conflict between the pro-Buddhist Soga clan and the anti-Buddhist Mononobe clan continued. The anti-Buddhist group abhorred Buddhism and insisted that Kami reject Buddha. The pro-Buddhist view was that Kami and Buddha were equal in quality and rank. After the fall of the Mononobe clan in 587, the viewpoint of the pro-Buddhists became dominant, and Buddhism enjoyed worship by chieftains and even by the imperial families. During the period of Emperor Temmu, it is true that Buddhism reached the stage of "state Buddhism." But even in this case Shintoism and Buddhism existed independently and with equal standing, yet without any opposition to each other. As is self-evident, at the base of "clan Buddhism" and "state Buddhism" there was the underlying concept that Kami and Buddha were equal in rank and quality; therefore there was no sign that Kami depended on Buddha. Buddhism could claim its equality to Kami by assuming two missions. First, it guaranteed the gains of this life and the afterlife to the respective clans through their clan temples. Secondly, it assumed the mission of protecting the country. Behind the movement towards "state Buddhism" was the intention of strengthening the imperial stand as the ruler of a country based on a firm code of law and regulations. This would consist of expanding and reinforcing the traditional function of the emperor as a spiritual head of an agricultural society. On this point Buddhism as a religion could participate hand-in-hand with Shintoism in the protection of the new nation. Therefore, equality of Kami and Buddha was the official position of the government. This view was taken by the government of the successive emperors: Temmu, Jitō, Mommu, Genmei, and Genshō. It finally appeared in mature form during the reign of the 45th Emperor Shōmu in the construction of Tōdaiji Temple and the Kokubunji and Kokubun Niji Temples all over the country.

The motives behind the construction of shrine temples and sutra changing in front of Kami stemmed from different sources than the movement towards state Buddhism. The underlying concept strongly

implied behind this motive was that Kami needed Buddhism, and this meant the shattering of the view that Kami and Buddha were equal in rank and status. The principal reason for Kami to seek Buddhism was that Kami had to transcend the self to attain enlightenment by the power of Buddha. According to Buddhism, it is a Kami's karma that he was born as a Kami. Like human beings, Kami cannot be relieved from the agony of transmigration involving the three lives--present, past, and future. Therefore, the Kami are basically of unstable nature. The insecurity of Kami-hood is manifested in such happenings as plague, drastic change of weather, and various sorts of disasters in general. The main cause of illness and of poor crops--which were the main concern of the people of the agrarian society--was not some curse, or evil spell of Kami, but the agony intrinsically caused by being Kami. In other words, sickness and poor crops, which threatened the agricultural society, were the expressions of the insecurity and agony of the Kami. Salvation of Kami who were suffering from these troubles was a problem directly related to the lives and existence of the people who worshipped them as guardian Kami. Therefore, it was thought that if these Kami could be saved from their karma and attain enlightenment by the power of Buddhism, this would bring peace and prosperity to society.

On account of these ideas, local chieftains constructed shrine temples and held sutra chantings for Kami. The Kami, in seeking salvation through Buddhism, exactly met the needs of the local people who longed for peace and prosperity in their agricultural society. The movement towards the rise of Buddhism was inspired by high sources in the government bureaucracy, whereas the construction of shrine temples and sutra chanting was urged on by local chieftains. Local chieftains, in other words, carried on this kind of conduct for the sake of local Kami from whom they expected special favor. The Buddhism which the government intended to give "from above" and the Buddhism which local Kami sought "from below" were apparently

different in fundamental character.

The construction of shrine temples and sutra-chanting for Kami thus have the nature of individual worship. These shrine temples, however, differ in nature from clan temples. Clan temples were private temples built for the basic purpose of ancestor worship and worldly gain, while the object of shrine temples and sutra-chanting was to worship the guardian Kami of the area. Thus, the function of the clan temple was limited in that it served the blood relationships of the clan, whereas shrine temples were based on the agrarian society in a geographical relationship. ⁽¹⁹⁾

(Translated by Fumi M. Norcia)

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