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Rewriting Nara Buddhism: Sutra Transcription in Early Japan

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REWRITING NARA BUDDHISM:

SUTRA TRANSCRIPTION IN EARLY JAPAN

Bryan Daniel Lowe

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the practice of copying Buddhist scripture in Japan from the late seventh through early ninth centuries. It draws on a rich documentary record to analyze the institutional, ritual, cosmological, and social meanings of sutra copying in the Japanese Buddhist tradition. It traces the emergence of scriptoria across the archipelago in the eighth century, assesses the significance of ritualized forms of writing from the perspectives of patrons and scribes, uncovers the religious aspirations that inspired people to copy scripture, and explores the political and discursive functions of Buddhism in early Japan. Transcribing scripture was never a simple act of copying a text but a ritualized practice performed by people from diverse social and geographic backgrounds that helped them realize both this- and other-worldly ambitions.

Sutra copying is significant for the academic study of Buddhism in the Nara period (710-784), because it represents one of the few practices for which there are extant sources to document the religious activities of a wide cross-section of the population. This study will use the case of sutra copying to challenge dominant scholarly narratives regarding Nara Buddhism. These include models that have classified the religion of the period as "state Buddhism" (*kokka Bukkyō*), as well as more recent attempts to highlight the activities of individuals and communities working outside of official structures. I show how these models emerged out of

debates in modern Buddhist reform movements, twentieth-century projects to construct a national history, and post-war suspicions over the power of the state. Rather than assuming that religious practices are best characterized by stable social categories such as "state Buddhism" or "popular Buddhism," this dissertation explores a single practice from multiple perspectives across a broad range of the population. It argues that sutra copying united individuals from various backgrounds while simultaneously generating social distinctions between them.

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In eighth-century Japan, people often sponsored projects to transcribe Buddhist scripture as a means to repay debts. Writing a dissertation has had the opposite effect. Over the course of my graduate school career, I have incurred so many debts that copying the entire Buddhist canon would only repay a fraction of them.

First, I have been blessed with great teachers throughout my life. When I was deciding where to attend graduate school, I heard time and time again that it would be impossible to find a more dedicated advisor than Jacqueline Stone. What I thought must be mythic praise turned out to be an understatement. Jackie exemplifies rigorous scholarship and compassionate mentorship. Her willingness to meet the individualized needs of each student and make constant sacrifices of her own time for the benefit of those around her has set a model that I will forever aspire to.

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ago forever changed my life and her presence in it has brought me more joy than I could have ever imagined. Michiru, if there is anything that cannot be fully expressed in words, it is my love and gratitude for you.

Abbreviations

BD	Beijing Dunhuang manuscript in the National Library of China
Ch.	Chinese
DBZ	*Dai Nihon Bukkyo zensho*
DNK	*Dai Nihon komonjo*
DZ	*Daozang*
HI	*Heian ibun*
HM	*Heijōkyō mokkan*
HMG	*Heijōkyū hakkutsu chōsa shutsudo mokkan gaihō*
Jp.	Japanese
JK	*Jinkai*
JZ	*Jōdo shū zensho*
KDZ	*Kōbō daishi zenshū*
KT	*Kokushi taikei*
NDZ	*Nihon daizōkyō*
N	Nakamura Fusetsu manuscript from Shodō hakubutsukan.
NI	*Nara ibun*
NCS	*Nara chō shakyō*
NST	*Nihon shisō taikei*
NKBT	*Nihon koten bungaku taikei*
P	Pelliot manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale de France
S	Stein manuscript in the British Library
SNKBT	*Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei*
SK	*Shōgozō kyōkan*
Skt.	Sanskrit
SMM	*Shōsōin monjo mokuroku*
SS	*Seishū*
SSJZS	*Shi san jing zhushu*
T	*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*
Z	*Shinsan Dai Nihon zoku zōkyō*
ZS	*Zokushū*
ZSBS	*Zokushū besshū*
ZSKS	*Zokushū kōshū*
ZZS	*Zokuzokushū*

Conventions

・I have converted all years to approximate western equivalents. I have tried to preserve uniformity within a single reign year. For example, Tenpyō 12 is listed as 740 regardless of the particular day and month, even if the exact conversion for certain days in Tenpyō 12 would actually correspond to 741. I have not converted days and months to the Gregorian calendar.

・For romanization, I have used a modified Hepburn for Japanese, pinyin for Mandarin, and McCune-Reischauer for Korean. Terms are romanized following the language they were composed in. In other words, I romanize terms found in texts composed or translated in China in accord with modern Mandarin pronunciation and terms cited from texts composed in Japan in Japanese. When it is unclear, I provide Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese as appropriate.

・I have provided Chinese characters in the body of the text. I have tried to use "old form characters [*kyūjitai* 旧字体]" in accord with the original manuscript or printed publication whenever possible. Similarly, I employ "new form characters [*shinjitai* 新字体]" when authors employ this script. I have made no effort to follow the rich and diverse use of character variants (*itaiji* 異体字) found in Nara period and Dunhuang manuscripts.

・All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. With regard to Buddhist terms of Sanskrit origin, I have generally tried to translate into English words that rely on the semantic value of Chinese characters and maintain the Sanskrit for those transliterated into Chinese.

There are some exceptions, most notably the character 經, which I have translated as "scripture" and "sutra." I have used sutra for texts such as the *Heart Sutra*, which have fairly standardized English and widely employed translations. I have also used sutra for works that have titles fully transliterated into Chinese, such as the *Mahāmāyā Sutra* (Ch. *Mohe moye jing* 摩訶摩耶經). For other sutras translated to Chinese, I have used "scripture" whenever possible.

・For articles published in multiple places, I have cited the edition I referred to. I have tried to use the most common and recent editions whenever possible. When the original publication date is relevant to the argument, I have provided that in brackets in the main text but not in the bibliography.

・For citations of Shōsōin documents, I give the published version in *Dai Nihon komonjo* 大日本古文書 (*DNK*) followed by the manuscript version in accord with the conventions outlined in *Shōsōin monjo mokuroku* 正倉院文書目録. For the volumes of *Zokuzokushū* 続々修 (*ZZS*), I have simply listed the bundle (*chitsu* 帙) and scroll number (*kan* 巻). I have consulted the photographic reproductions of *Seishū* 正集 (*SS*), *Zokushū* 続修 (*ZS*), *Zokushū kōshū* 続修後集 (*ZSKS*), *Zokushū besshū* 続修別集 (*ZSBS*), and *Jinkai* 塵芥 (*JK*) published in *Shōsōin komonjo eiin shūsei* 正倉院古文書影印集成. For the *Zokuzokushū*, I have referred to the bound printed versions of the microfilm edition published by the Kunaichō.

- In citing the Taishō canon, I follow the conventions of SAT's online edition in providing the Taishō number followed by the volume, page, and register.

Introduction: The State Buddhism Model and Its Critics

This dissertation examines the practice of copying Buddhist scripture in Japan from the late seventh through early ninth centuries.[1] The period under study represents a watershed moment in the history of Japanese Buddhism. During this time, Buddhism spread beyond the limited sphere of elite clans in the capital. Patrons from various regions and social backgrounds began to commission Buddhist statues, construct temples, and transcribe scripture for the first time. The number of extant titles and scrolls expanded dramatically at this time, a development that resulted in the emergence of an active scholastic culture in the

[1] I use the term Buddhist scripture to refer to texts known as sutras (Ch. *jing,* Jp. *kyō* 經) but also to include the various Buddhist treatises (Skt. *abhidharma*, Ch. *lun*, Jp. *ron* 論) and monastic codes (Skt. *vinaya,* Ch. *lü*, Jp. *ritsu* 律) that were copied in eighth-century Japan. Most of this dissertation focuses on the eighth century proper, but I will occasionally refer to the late seventh century and draw upon some early ninth-century texts as well. I use the terms Nara period and eighth century interchangeably, unless I explicitly establish a more precise definition for a particular passage. There are numerous political and religious continuities from the late seventh through early ninth centuries that support my choice to treat this period as a single unit. For the political perspective, see Ooms 2009, who speaks of a Tenmu dynasty roughly corresponding to the period under study. Ryūichi Abé has emphasized the religious continuities from the Nara (710-784) through early Heian periods (794-1185). See Abé 1999, especially 19-65 and 399-404. For the purpose of this dissertation, it is most significant that the late seventh and early eighth centuries correspond to the emergence of sutra transcription on the Japanese archipelago. There was a significant quantitative decline in sutra transcription in the ninth century that further supports my decision to end my narrative there.

second half of the eighth century.[2] In short, Buddhism became a widely shared religious tradition with a solid textual presence in the Nara period (710-784). Sutra copying played a pivotal role in these developments.

Sutra transcription represents one of the most widely performed devotional acts in East Asian Buddhism from ancient times to the present day. In the premodern era, the Buddhist faithful treated scripture as an empowered object created through ritual practices dependent on the purity of scribes and the pious prayers of patrons. The practice is perhaps better documented in eighth-century Japan than any other subsequent time period or geographic setting. This dissertation draws on this rich documentary record to analyze the institutional, ritual, cosmological, and social meanings of sutra copying in the Buddhist tradition. It traces the emergence of scriptoria across the archipelago in the eighth century, assesses the significance of ritualized forms of writing from the perspectives of patrons and scribes, uncovers the religious aspirations that inspired people to copy scripture, and explores the political and discursive function of Buddhism in early Japan.

This dissertation will analyze sutra transcription as a particular religious practice and use it as a means for reassessing early Japanese Buddhism as a whole. Sutra copying is

[2] For the emergence of a scholastic commentarial tradition in the late eighth century, see Inoue 1994 [first published 1948] and Sone 2000, esp. 67-78.

significant for the academic study of Nara Buddhism, because it is one of the few practices for which there are extant sources to document the religious activities of a wide cross-section of the population. The nature of these records, which include manuscripts sponsored by people from diverse social and geographic backgrounds and over ten thousand documents from a single scriptorium, provides an unparalleled perspective on the role of Buddhism in the lives of individuals ranging from lay proofreaders to the sovereign. A careful study of the practice of sutra copying from multiple perspectives promises to highlight a new side of eighth-century Japanese religion and to problematize some widespread assumptions about the period.

The primary goal of this dissertation is to challenge dominant scholarly models for characterizing Nara Buddhism. These include both traditional narratives, which have described the religion of the period as "state Buddhism" (*kokka Bukkyō* 国家仏教), as well as more recent attempts to highlight the activities of individuals and communities working outside of official structures.[3] In contrast to the most well-known articulations of the state Buddhism model, this dissertation shows that individuals and groups across a broad social and geographic spectrum participated in Buddhist practice in early Japan. Buddhist patronage in the Nara period was by no means limited to the ruling class. At the same time, my analysis

[3] As will be discussed below, the most representative scholars for each viewpoint are Inoue Mitsusada and Yoshida Kazuhiko, respectively.

raises serious questions about recent proposed alternatives to the state Buddhism model. As will be discussed below, these revisionist histories have emphasized plurality by classifying different types of Buddhism such as that of the state, aristocrats, and the masses, and have focused particular attention on the religion of the "folk." The argument that eighth-century Buddhism was diverse and had already penetrated the populace at large is a helpful first step, but it fails to account for religious cultures shared across social groups and largely ignores the way power relations structured early Japanese religion. The revisionist models do not fully consider the role variables such as geography, access to material goods, ritual practices, cosmological models, and literary skill played in delineating social and religious communities. This dissertation will highlight these aspects of eighth-century social and religious life.

Both the state Buddhism model and the recent revisions assume that religious practices are best characterized by stable social categories such as "state Buddhism" or "popular Buddhism." In contrast to these approaches, this dissertation explores a single practice from the perspective of a broad range of the population. It argues that sutra copying functioned to simultaneously unite individuals from various backgrounds and, at the same time, draw social distinctions between them. In this way, it contributes more generally to debates in religious studies about the relationship between "elite" and "folk" traditions as well as discussions about religion, the state, and society.

This introduction will begin by tracing the way the state Buddhism model was constructed over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since the category of state Buddhism has shaped understandings of the Nara period for more than a century, it will be necessary to outline the contours of its history and uncover the circumstances in which it developed. This section will highlight the role of nineteenth-century Buddhist reformers and early twentieth-century national historians in developing interpretive frameworks that would continue to influence scholarship to the present day. It will then turn to some recent attempts by Japanese scholars to redefine Nara Buddhism and assess their work while offering an alternative methodology. This will be followed by a brief discussion of English language scholarship on early Japanese Buddhism, an overview of the sources used in the dissertation, and summaries of the individual chapters.

State Buddhism Models I: Restoration and Reform (1884-1906)

The most commonly employed framework for assessing the religion of the Nara period is the state Buddhism model (*kokka Bukkyō ron* 国家仏教論), often associated with Inoue Mitsusada 井上光貞 (1917-1983). While Inoue was the scholar who most systematically and influentially developed this framework, its origins date back at least as far as the Meiji period (1868-1912). Scholarly opinions regarding the classification of Nara Buddhism developed in

response to late nineteenth- and twentieth-century debates about the role of religion in modern Japanese society. Burning issues in academic and religious circles related to the separation of church and state, Japanese imperialism and national identity, and, after 1945, the role of religion in post-war society, shaped the way scholars in the modern period discussed eighth-century Japanese religions. The category of "state Buddhism" is a historically contingent concept that speaks as much to modern concerns as it does to Nara Japan.

Modern historical studies of Japanese Buddhism first appeared in mid-Meiji.[4] Buddhist reformers authored many of these works shortly after the persecutions of Buddhism in the

[4] By modern historical studies of Japanese Buddhism, I refer to scholarly projects with Buddhism in Japan as their main focus that aim for impartiality and were produced and consumed outside of traditional monastic centers. Murakami Senshō, a figure we will return to momentarily, outlined the historical approach in the opening issues of *Bukkyō shirin*, the first Japanese periodical to focus on Buddhist history; see Sueki 2004, 93-100 and 2005, 12-18, as well as Klautau 2008, 204. There were, of course, earlier historical works on Buddhism dating back at least as far as the medieval period. The most influential medieval historian was surely Gyōnen 凝然 (1240-1321), who took a sectarian approach to history that traced the lineage of the various sects from India to Japan in works such as the *Sangoku buppō dentsū engi* 三國佛法傳通緣起 and the *Hasshū kōyō* 八宗綱要. The other major medieval Buddhist history is Kokan Shiren's 虎関師錬 (1278-1346) *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書. The vast majority of this work is composed of biographies, but there are also sections containing chronologically arranged annals and miscellaneous records. For Gyōnen, see Blum 2002. For the *Genkō shakusho*, see Bielefeldt 1997 and Ury 1970. I am currently unaware of the precise ways in which Nara Buddhism was understood in the Tokugawa period (1600-1867) but hope to return to this topic at a future date by looking more at monastic writings as well texts such as the *Dai Nihon shi*, which was compiled by the Mito branch of the Tokugawa clan throughout the early modern period. For Tokugawa historiography on topics not directly related to Buddhism, see Brownlee 1997, 15-65. Gyōnen's writings were picked up by modern Buddhist reformers interested in

1870s. Buddhists in this period turned to history as a means to reconstruct a tradition to meet the demands of the modern age and respond to the criticisms of their enemies (Ketelaar 1990, 175-176 and 2006, 66-79). Modern scholarship on Nara religiosity emerged out of a climate where the future of Buddhism was still relatively uncertain. History served as a means to critique the present and envision a brighter tomorrow.

There were various approaches to writing religious history at this time, but chronological surveys played the most pronounced role in the construction of the state Buddhism model. The earliest studies of this nature that I have found are Tajima Shōji's 田島象二 (1852-1909) *History of the Buddhist Dharma in Japan with Headnotes* (*Hyōchū Nihon Buppō shi* 標注日本佛法史) and Ōuchi Seiran's 大内青巒 (1845-1918) *A Brief History of Japanese Buddhism* (*Nihon Bukkyō shiryaku* 日本佛教史略), both published in 1884.[5] These work were little more than chronological arrangements of entries from official records related to Buddhism with

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forging a new transsectarian Buddhism; for this, see Ketelaar 1990, 177-206. The *Genkō shakusho* remains a widely cited source by scholars of Buddhism in Japan and the West to this day,

[5] James Ketelaar discusses what he refers to as an 1883 work by Tajima entitled *Nihon Bukkyōshi*; I have been unable to locate this work in any databases and cannot ascertain if it is identical to the 1884 volume entitled *Hyōchū Nihon Buppō shi*. See Ketelaar 1990, 196-197. Tajima was an active Buddhist reformer and critic of Christianity. Ōuchi was also part of Meiji Buddhist reform movements. He founded the Great Association for Revering the Emperor and Worshipping the Buddha (Sonnō Hōbutsu Daidōdan 尊皇奉仏大同団) and later became the president of Tōyō University. For some background on these figures in English, see Thelle 1987, 103-107 and 196-197. Ōuchi actively participated in contemporary debates about the position of Buddhism relative to the Meiji state; see Ikeda 1976, 112-116 and Kashiwahara 1990, 98-100.

small bits of commentary, but the organizational principle is significant. Both are structured around the succession of emperors and highlight the Buddhist events under each ruler's reign.[6] From the perspective of these early reformers, the history of Buddhism in Japan focused on the sovereign, a feature that would continue to shape historical writing through the postwar period and is a key component of the state Buddhism model.[7]

In the 1890s, reformers began to employ more explicitly defined analytic frameworks for assessing the relationship between Buddhism and the state in eighth-century Japan.[8] As would be the case in the twentieth century, opinions about the appropriateness of the

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[6] This organizational principle is not unique to these Meiji histories of Buddhism but can be found in medieval ones as well. For example, the annals section of the *Genkō shakusho* is structured similarly. See *Genkō shakusho*, *KT* 34: 289-402. Of course, the more general pattern of structuring histories (Buddhist or otherwise) around successive reigns of emperors has origins in China and was followed in Japan from the eighth century.

[7] For example, see Tamura 1982, 1: 208-226. The primary difference in Tamura's narrative is that he describes state Buddhism as emerging gradually over time and traces a shift from clan based Buddhism to state Buddhism beginning under the reign of Tenmu 天武 (r. 673-686). Tamura shares a basic organizational principle with the earlier scholarship in that he structures his narrative around reigns of successive emperors.

[8] Most of these scholars did not limit their analysis to the Nara period. The sections on the eighth century were parts of larger works covering the entire history of Japanese Buddhism from the sixth century through the time in which they were writing. The eighth century, however, provided a particularly useful reference point for assessing the relationship between Buddhism and the state. This is partially a product of sources. The most readily available sources for Buddhist historians writing in the Meiji period were officially sanctioned chronicles compiled in the eighth century, which focus on imperial patronage of Buddhism. These authors also often wrote on the so-called six Nara schools, but this scholarship had little influence on the state Buddhism model and is outside of the scope of this dissertation.

proximity of state and religion in the Nara period varied. Some saw it as an ideal to be emulated, while others cautioned against its excesses. The Sōtō priest Kuriyama Taion 栗山泰音 (here publishing as Murakami Taion 村上泰音; 1860-1937) clearly positioned himself in the former camp. He outlined his approach to history in the preface to an 1891 survey entitled *Great Treatise on Establishing Religion* (*Rikkyō tairon*立教大論). Here, he argued that contemporary Buddhists could strengthen the foundations of their religion by turning to the past. In his section on the Nara period, Kuriyama highlighted the prosperity of Buddhism under the patronage of the court and argued that the lavish state sponsorship of Buddhism during the eighth century offered an alternative to the "contemporary fuss [*yakamashiki kyō* 喧しき今日] over freedom of religion [*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由]" (Murakami 1891, 55).[9] Kuriyama's book appeared just two years after the promulgation of the Meiji constitution, which enacted a clause guaranteeing limited freedom of religion. The precise boundaries of the law and its future were still a matter of debate amongst Buddhist activists and politicians. In writing a treatise aimed at "establishing religion," Kuriyama envisioned an idealized past

[9] In the main text, I will refer to this figure as Kuriyama Taion. He is better known by this name and this choice is intended to avoid confusion with Murakami Senshō, whom we will turn to shortly. Kuriyama served as the director of the Sōtō 曹洞 headquarters and played a major role in shaping Buddhist debates on issues such as clerical marriage (Jaffe 2001, 220-223). I will cite his monograph *Rikkyō tairon* as Murakami 1891, since he published under this name.

where state support of Buddhism was unimpeded by constitutional concerns.[10] In short, he saw the support of Buddhism by the state as a favorable alternative to separating the political and religious spheres under the guise of religious freedom.

An 1892 historical survey by Katō Kumaichirō 加藤熊一郎 (also known as Katō Totsudō 加藤咄堂; 1870-1949), entitled *History of Japanese Buddhism* (*Nihon Bukkyō shi* 日本佛教史), built upon Kuriyama's analysis and contributed to the emergence of a state Buddhism model. Katō (1892, 3), who was an active voice in Meiji Buddhist journals, cited the influence of Kuriyama's *Treatise* on his own work. He argued that Buddhism in the Nara period represented "the state religion (*kokkyō* 國教) and held power over state education (*kokka kyōiku* 國家教育)" (Katō 1892, 15-16). His choice of the word *kokkyō*, a term that had a semantic range from national teaching to state religion in the Meiji period, is significant. It had been used a few decades earlier in a massive campaign by the government to assert a radically reformulated version of Shintō as the "National Teaching" through the appointment of doctrinal instructors and the creation of a network of teaching centers.[11] By the 1890s, bureaucrats had abandoned this National

[10] Here I follow James Ketelaar's argument for translating *kyō* as religion in this particular context; see Ketelaar 1990, 125. The word I have translated as religion had a range of other meanings in late nineteenth-century Japan such as teaching, doctrine, or creed, but by the 1890s it was commonly used to denote religion. For an overview of the development of the concept of religion in Japan in the modern period, see Isomae 2003, 29-66 and Josephson 2006.
[11] Hardacre 1989, 66-78. I am following Hardacre's translation of "National Teaching," which is closer to the meaning of the word in the 1870s.

Teaching campaign, but some Buddhist organizations began to adopt the term to bolster the position of their tradition. Katō, therefore, appropriated the phrase *kokkyō* and used the Nara period as a model to assert Buddhism's ancient role as a teaching promoted and protected by the state. The creation of a "National Teaching" posed a threat to Buddhists in the 1870s, but it became an opportunity for those writing in the 1890s.

These reformers nostalgically turned to the strong state support of Buddhism in the Nara period as an alternative to their present troubles. The past represented an ideal that could be enacted in the present. This sentiment is captured in the educator Sawayanagi Masatarō's 沢柳政太郎 (1865-1927) preface to Katō's survey: "For Buddhism to flourish, restoration (*fukko* 復古) [is needed], not reform (*kairyō* 改良)" (Katō 1892, preface ii [page numbers not listed in original]).[12] This statement advocates a turning back the clocks rather than the construction of a new tradition. Part of the reason modern Buddhist reformers focused on the state's promotion of Buddhism in the Nara period was as a means to critique

[12] The choice by Katō to have Sawayanagi write the preface is significant. Sawayanagi was an educator who spent his career as a principal of private and public schools and as an official in the Ministry of Education. He advocated state support of a public school system and viewed Buddhist ethics as a key component of moral training and pedagogy. He published both on Buddhist ethics and educational policy. See Kobayashi 1990, 48-49. Katō's emphasis on the role of Nara Buddhism as a form of state education and his choice of Sawayanagi to write the preface is surely no coincidence. Sawayanagi went on to become one of the most influential bureaucrats in crafting Meiji educational policy.

contemporary power configurations in which state support was becoming increasingly withdrawn and to offer historically grounded alternatives.

The positive vision of the Nara period presented by Katō and Kuriyama differs in tone from Inoue Mitsusada's more well-known thesis, which views state Buddhism as a stage to be transcended. Katō and Kuriyama, however, did not monopolize Meiji historiographical discourse. A second group of reformers including Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851-1919) and Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋 (also known as Sakaino Satoshi 境野哲 and Tekkai 哲海; 1877-1933), who were two of the most influential scholars of Buddhism in the Meiji period, took a more critical perspective of the past that served their broader projects of purifying Japanese Buddhism from secular corruptions.[13] While Sawayanagi, Katō, and Kuriyama saw Nara Buddhism as an ideal to be emulated, Murakami and Sakaino viewed the past as a lesson whose

[13] Murakami had an illustrious career. He chaired the department of Indian philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University and later became the president of Ōtani University. His earliest writings are primarily historical and provide a somewhat different perspective than his mid-career works, which focus more on universalistic and transsectarian themes. The latter topic has received a great deal of attention, but his historical scholarship has undergone very little critical analysis. Sueki Fumihiko provides an overview but focuses primarily on the publication of the journal *Bukkyō shirin*. See Sueki 2005, 12-18. Orion Klautau has examined Murakami's writings on Tokugawa Buddhism; see Klautau 2008, 284-286. For more on his life and transsectarian activities, see Mohr et al. 2005 and Staggs 1979, 273-324. Sakaino became one of the leading scholars of the early twentieth century on Chinese Buddhism, served as president of Tōyō University, and taught as a Professor at Komazawa University. He was also a founder of the New Buddhist movement. See Ikeda 1976, 274-275 and 287-297.

excesses and mistakes could prove instructive for the future. The critical tone found in more recent attempts to classify Nara Buddhism as state Buddhism first appeared in the writings of these latter figures.

Murakami, who was Sakaino's mentor, voiced his concerns about the intimate relations between state and religion in a succinct two-volume set called *Outline of Japanese Buddhist History* (*Nihon Bukkyō shi kō* 日本佛教史綱), first published between 1898-1899. Here, Murakami ([1898] 1938, 5) dismissively referred to Nara Buddhism as "political Buddhism" (*seiji Bukkyō* 政治佛教) possessing an exclusively this-worldly (*genze* 現世) character. He was particularly cautious about the problems that emerge when religion and governance (*seikyō* 政教) were unified (Murakami [1898] 1938, 81).[14] Orion Klautau (2008, 285) has pointed out that Murakami's historical writings employed a normative definition of what Buddhism should look like in the present. For Murakami, Buddhism ought to be an austere tradition that focused on spiritual rather than material concerns. This idealized version of Buddhism would reappear as

[14] His distrust of conflating church and state echo those of other earlier influential Meiji Buddhists such as Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838-1911), who also wrote vehemently against the unification of religion and governance beginning in 1872. See Ketelaar 1990, 125-130 and Maxey 2005, 222-237.

an assumption guiding the development of the state Buddhism model in the decades to follow.[15]

Murakami's basic arguments that the state potentially threatened Buddhism's integrity would be further developed with a much sharper tone and more concise reasoning by Murakami's student Sakaino, who would go on to be a founding member of the New Buddhism movement.[16] Sakaino's views anticipate the arguments that Inoue Mitsusada would advance almost seventy-five years later. In an 1897 article published in *Grove of Buddhist History*, Sakaino set out to define the "distinguishing characteristic" (*tokusei* 特性) of Nara and Heian (794-1185) Buddhism. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he claimed that Nara Buddhism was set apart from other periods by its conflation with politics.[17] For Sakaino, this feature of Nara Buddhism resulted in

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[15] There is some degree of ambivalence in Murakami's writings. For example, the 1894 inaugural issue of the historical journal *Grove of Buddhist History* (*Bukkyō shirin* 佛教史林), which was founded and largely written by Murakami, noted the ancient connection between Buddhism and the state: "Since Buddhist history and the national history of Japan are so closely related, we are guided by feelings of loyalty and duty toward the state" (Murakami 1894, 10). In this way, it would be incorrect to describe Murakami's views as disloyal to the throne. While Murakami expressed his dedication to the state, he cautioned against the possible corruption of Buddhism that could arise from intimate interactions with secular authorities.

[16] For more on his involvement with the New Buddhism movement, see Ikeda 1976, esp. 287-297. For a brief English language overview of the New Buddhist movement, see Thelle 1987, 194-213; Snodgrass 2003, 115-136; and Josephson 2006, 192-196.

[17] The following discussion is drawn primarily from Sakaino 1897, but he began to develop these ideas in two earlier articles also published in *Grove of Buddhist History*. See Sakaino 1896a and b. Some of these ideas also appear in the two chapters from a large collaborative history of Japanese Buddhism, entitled *History of Buddhism in Great Japan* (*Dai Nihon Bukkyō shi* 大日本佛教

the decay (*fuhai* 腐敗) of the clergy. He provocatively suggested that Buddhism's expansion under the patronage of sovereigns Shōmu 聖武 (r. 724-749) and Kōken/Shōtoku 孝謙/称徳 also marked the beginning of its decline (*suitai* 衰頽) and necessitated a separation of religion from governance.[18] Moreover, Sakaino argued that Nara Buddhism with its focus on politics and this-worldly practices had not yet reached the foundational conception (*konpon gainen* 根本概念) of Buddhism, which, for him, focused on achieving enlightenment. Clearly this distrust of state patronage differs from the perspective offered by other reformers such as Katō and Kuriyama.

Sakaino's narrative must be understood with relation to his larger political projects and the religious context of the day. With regard to politics, it should be noted that, in other writings, Sakaino positioned himself as a leading opponent to making Buddhism a state

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史) that Sakaino compiled with Murakami Senshō and Washio Junkyō 鷲尾順敬 (1868-1941). See Murakami et al. 1897, 594-643. This was intended to be a five volume set, as indicated by an advertisement in the back of the first volume, but the later volumes were never published. Murakami noted in the preface to his *Outline of Japanese Buddhist History* that he decided to compose the shorter two-volume summary because he realized that the longer project would not be completed for many years. See Murakami [1898] 1938, *ii*.

[18] In general, I refer to the female sovereign who reigned once as Kōken (r. 749-758) and again as Shōtoku (r. 764-770) as Kōken/Shōtoku throughout this dissertation. When my discussion is focused on the period before her ascension, I call her Princess Abe and sometimes use Kōken or Shōtoku when explicitly referring to a specific reign or when translating a text that uses one name.

religion.[19] His frequent criticisms of the union of religion and governance in his historical writings should be viewed as one aspect of his broader project to reconsider the appropriate role of religion with respect to politics in Meiji Japan. In general, this view mirrored the official position of the New Buddhists, as is made clear in one of the six founding principles listed in the inaugural issue of their journal *Shin Bukkyō*, which claimed that "the members reject any form of political protection and interference."[20] Second, his narrative idealizes Kamakura Buddhism, which perhaps reflects the institutional climate in which he was writing, where the schools founded in the Kamakura period had risen to become the strongest sects in modern Japan. While he recognized that Kūkai 空海 (774-835) and Saichō 最澄 (767-822), the two respective Heian founders of the Shingon 真言 and Tendai 天台 sects, came closer to realizing true Buddhism than the Nara court, Sakaino maintained that authentic Buddhism did not fully appear until the Kamakura period (1185-1333). It is unclear if his own sectarian affiliations—he was from a Shin Buddhist background but embraced transsectarian projects with the New Buddhism movement—played a role in his idealization of the Kamakura period. But at the very least, his historical narrative asserted the emergence of an authentic form of Buddhism precisely at the moment when the sects that held the most amount of power in the Meiji

[19] Jolyon Thomas discusses these later writings in his forthcoming dissertation.
[20] Shin Bukkyō 1:1 in Akamatsu and Fukushima 1978, 1: 6.

period were founded. Finally, as a critic of the inadequacies of contemporary Japanese Buddhism, Sakaino aimed to purge the religion of its perceived corruption and initiate a new and purified tradition (Josephson 2006, 193). Part of this project involved turning to the past to understand the origins of Buddhism and where it went astray. For Sakaino, the Nara period represented one such moment. Sectarian, reformist, and political interests aside, his succinct thesis from this 1897 essay, which argued that the conflation of religion and the state corrupted Buddhism in the latter half of the eighth century and that authentic Buddhism only emerged in the Kamakura period, would be repeated again and again over the next several decades.

State Buddhism Models II: Writing State Buddhism into National History (1908-1944)

Kuriyama, Katō, Murakami, and Sakaino were all writing from inside the Buddhist tradition as reformers who sought to carve out a new space for their religion within the Meiji state. But these reformers did not monopolize the scholarly discourse on Buddhist history in modern Japan. Buddhism also played a central role in the works of scholars writing in the field of national history (*kokushi* 國史).[21] In fact, it was a national historian, not a Buddhist reformer,

[21] My turn to national history here does not imply that voices internal to the Buddhist tradition stopped writing history. As in the Meiji period, Shin Buddhist priests and others continued to focus on the relationship between Buddhism and the state as a unique feature of

who first coined the term "state Buddhism [*kokka Bukkyō* 國家佛教]." As we will see, the state Buddhism model advanced by the national historians differed significantly in tone from that used by Inoue Mitsusada in the post-war period and from the writings of Buddhist reformers.

The compilation of a national history became a chief concern for government officials almost immediately after the Meiji restoration; these efforts culminated in a seven-volume account entitled *Vision of National History* (*Kokushi gan* 國史眼) published in 1890.[22] The narrative functioned to assert the authority of the present Meiji ruler. It celebrated some examples of official patronage of Buddhism, such as the construction of Tōdai-ji but generally depicted Buddhism with a degree of discomfort. As James Ketelaar (1990, 194) has succinctly summarized: "Buddhism [from the perspective of national history] figured as an unpleasant yet inescapable guest." Numerous books and articles written by national historians would struggle with the issue of how to deal with the historical presence of a foreign religion in Japan for the next sixty years.

Despite these potential clashes of interest, national historians emerged as some of the most influential voices writing about Nara Buddhism for the first half of the twentieth century.

Japanese Buddhism characteristic to the Nara period. For some representative examples, see Sonoda 1919, Shimaji 1933, and Hanayama 1936. Their contributions warrant further study.

[22] For the period leading up to the publication of *Visions of National History*, see Yoshikawa 2010, 40-66 and Mehl 1998.

Kuroita Katsumi 黒板勝美 (1874-1946), a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, was one of the chief architects of the field of national history and the first scholar to use the term "state Buddhism." His perspectives on Nara Buddhism first appeared in a 1908 monograph, *Research on National History* (*Kokushi no kenkyū* 國史の研究), a project he would continue to revise in three editions published over thirty years. *Research on National History* provided a sweeping historical overview that centered on what Lisa Yoshikawa has called "the state sanctioned imperial myth" (Yoshikawa 2007, 75). Like some of the Buddhist reformers writing before him, Kuroita (1908, 331-334) highlighted Buddhism's flourishing (*ryūsei* 隆盛) during the Nara period and emphasized the court's role in promoting Buddhism and commissioning artistic masterpieces. At the same time, he took a cautious position with regard to what he called "state Buddhist governance" (*kokkateki Bukkyō seiji* 國家的佛教政治), a particular form of Buddhism and politics that peaked in the eighth century. Kuroita (1908, 334-335) argued that this lavish imperially sponsored Buddhism impoverished the state. His criticisms of Buddhism fit within his larger intellectual project; in general, Kuroita acknowledged Japan's debts to foreign institutions and ideas but only to the extent that they served to strengthen the imperial throne and were sufficiently harmonized with indigenous Japanese culture (Yoshikawa 2007, 106-109).

The second edition, published in 1913, provides a nearly identical narrative of Nara Buddhism to the first edition. The most important difference for the purpose of this dissertation is that the second edition contains the phrase "state Buddhism" (*kokka Bukkyō* 國家佛教) ([1913] 1918, 131). This is the first usage of the term *kokka Bukkyō* that I have uncovered. Considering the fact that the term would go on to become the standard four-character definition of the period, its initial appearance is surprisingly casual. Kuroita does not offer a definition of the term in this edition and simply appends it to the end of a sentence from the first edition. The sentence in question describes Buddhism becoming more Japanese (*Nihonteki* 日本的) over the course of the Nara period in the context of stylistic developments in officially commissioned sculpture. The implication is that state Buddhism is connected to a uniquely Japanese cultural configuration and could positively contribute to aesthetic developments on the archipelago. The introduction of this new term, however, does little to change the narrative. The overall tone and analysis is relatively consistent from the first to second edition.

The third edition, which was published between 1931-1936 during a time of increased militarism, made the term "state Buddhism" central to Kuroita's interpretive framework. Here, Kuroita began to distinguish "state Buddhism [*kokka Bukkyō* 國家佛教]" from a "Buddhist state [*Bukkyō kokka* 佛教國家]." The former term is used with a positive connotation in Kuroita's

writings while the latter is decisively negative. Kuroita accepted court sponsorship of Buddhism in the Nara period to the extent that it served as a means of solidifying imperial rule and fostering aesthetic advances, but he criticized the meddling of monks in state affairs as a potential threat to the throne. He claimed that state Buddhism was completed in the 740s and 750s with the construction of the Great Buddha Hall at Tōdai-ji, which served as the centerpiece for the provincial temple network (*kokubun-ji* 國分寺 and *kokubunni-ji* 國分寺尼寺) (1932, 182-183). In discussing these projects, Kuroita likened the construction of provincial temples to a nationwide version of Shitennō-ji 四天王寺, a temple said to have been built out of gratitude for the protection that guardian deities provided Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 in a battle with the Mononobe 物部 clan. In other words, he saw the project as the expansion and completion of the ideal model for state Buddhist relations supposedly envisioned by Prince Shōtoku in the sixth century.[23] Kuroita (1932, 183) noted how the construction of the great Buddha at Tōdai-ji was made possible by "uniting all of the people of the nation [*kokumin* 國民] together into a fellowship [*chishiki* 知識] composed of comrades [*dōshi* 同志] giving alms out of faith." For Kuroita, "state Buddhism" was an essentially positive endeavor: it provided a model

[23] Prince Shōtoku was a favorite talking point for Kuroita, who viewed him as the exemplar for assimilating foreign culture through a process of Japanization. In fact, Kuroita had even likened Prince Shōtoku to Emperor Meiji, as he saw both figures successfully looking abroad while also retaining essential Japanese values. For Kuroita's use of Prince Shōtoku, see Yoshikawa 2007, 153-159, 169-174 and 180-181.

of how the people of the nation could selflessly join together around the emperor to achieve greatness. This message would have surely resonated with readers during the rising militarism and nationalism of the 1930s.

Kuroita contrasted this idealized "state Buddhism" with the rise of a "Buddhist state" under the reign of Empress Shōtoku. According to Kuroita (1932, 192), the "monastic governance [*sōryo seiji* 僧侶政治]" that emerged with the ascendance of the monk Dōkyō 道教 (?-772) marked a transition from "state Buddhism" to a "Buddhist state." He viewed this development in exceedingly pessimistic terms: "This was a perverse form of governance [*hentai seiji* 變態政治] that was nearly unprecedented in our nation's history...the emergence of a Buddhist state was a crisis for the national polity" (1932, 193). When the Buddhist reformer Sakaino wrote of a conflation of state and religion in the late Nara period, he saw it as representative of decay amongst the clergy. For Kuroita, a national historian, the rise in status of a foreign religion represented a threat to the state itself. In Kuroita's state Buddhism model, Buddhism should be subservient to imperial interests.

Buddhism was a secondary concern within Kuroita's narrative, which focused on political history, but it took center stage in the voluminous writings of another national historian, Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助 (1877-1955), who was a key figure in asserting a wartime vision of the state Buddhism model. Tsuji, a colleague of Kuroita's at the Tokyo Imperial

University and a leading figure in the early days of the Historiographical Institute, is often considered to have been one of the most influential figures in establishing a secularized and empirical academic field of Japanese Buddhist history.[24] His magnum opus was a ten-volume survey of the history of Japanese Buddhism published between 1944 and 1955. While Buddhism was central to his historical project, he, like Kuroita, wrote from the perspective of a national historian rather than as an active reformer from within the Buddhist tradition.[25]

The emergence of state Buddhism was an essentially positive development for Tsuji. He identified the relationship between religion and the state as a chief concern of his historical narrative on the first page of the preface to his ten-volume study. Here, he argued that Japanese Buddhism had a certain state quality (*kokkateki* 國家的) that served as a distinguishing feature (*tokushoku* 特色 and *tokushitsu* 特質) marking it as Japanese. [26] For Tsuji, Japanese Buddhism was unique precisely because it developed through imperial patronage.[27]

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[24] For an overview of Tsuji's career, see Brownlee 1997, 155-168.

[25] That is not to say that Tsuji was indifferent to the fate of modern Japanese Buddhism, only that he better masked his interests under the cloak of empiricism than the earlier reformers. As Orion Klautau has argued, Tsuji maintained his own idealized version of the Buddhism that informed his historical scholarship. See Klautau 2008, 288-295

[26] See Tsuji 1944, 1-5. The following discussion draws largely on this section of the preface.

[27] Of course from a historical perspective, the notion that imperial patronage made Japan unique is dubious. This is a common feature of Buddhism in diverse geographic regions and historical periods.

State Buddhism was Japanese Buddhism.[28] For our purposes, it is significant that he claimed this particular form of Buddhism was systematized and expanded during the Nara period.

While Tsuji viewed the eighth century as the defining moment in the formation of state Buddhism, he did not depict the entire age in a positive light. He heuristically divided the Nara period into an early era and a later one.[29] The earlier period was characterized by appropriate levels of state sponsorship and regulation of Buddhism. Tsuji contended (1944, 214) that the clergy in the later period became corrupt (*akuhei* 悪弊), declined (*tsuiraku* 墜落), and decayed (*fuhai* 腐敗), echoing language that had been used by Sakaino nearly fifty years before. Somewhat surprisingly, however, Tsuji attributed this slide to the gradual "loosening" (*yurumu* 弛む) of state control (*tōsei* 統制).[30] He suggested that the proper order, in which Buddhism

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[28] Central to this claim is another point by Tsuji about the Japanization of Buddhism. Tsuji asserted that just as Japanese culture was indebted to Buddhism, Buddhism itself benefited by Japanizing (*Nihonka* 日本化) and fusing with the national spirit (*kokumin seishin* 國民精神). While Buddhist reformers were also concerned with asserting the "Japaneseness" of Buddhism in Japan, national history as a field necessitated a skillful interpretation regarding Japan's indebtedness to a foreign religion. The only way that Buddhism could be featured in an extended work by a national historian was to first make it Japanese. The assertion of imperial patronage was part of the way that Tsuji achieved this goal.

[29] The earlier period runs from Genmei 元明 (r. 707-715) to Genshō 元正 (r. 715-724). The later period begins with the reign of Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (r. 724-749) and continues through Shōtoku 称徳 (r. 764-770). Under Tsuji's idiosyncratic chronology, the early period, which he viewed in a positive light, lasted only seventeen years. The latter period, which he characterized as one of decline for the clergy, spanned a period of forty-six years.

[30] This language of decay and decline is similar to that used by Tsuji in his more famous thesis of the decline of Buddhism in the Tokugawa period. The reasoning behind his critique,

was subservient to the state, broke down in late Nara: "It was forgotten that Buddhism is supposed to protect the state; instead the state was offered as a sacrifice to Buddhism. In terms of the evils (*heigai* 弊害) of Buddhist politics (*Bukkyō seiji* 佛教政治), this must be considered the pinnacle" (Tsuji 1944, 230).

The decay of Buddhism, therefore, did not result from the fact that Buddhism and the state were too close, as Sakaino had suggested; rather, decline emerged because the state did not retain its control over the clergy. At least for the Tsuji writing in 1944, regulation of Buddhism by the state was viewed as an ideal. State Buddhism for these national historians was effective to the extent that the state was able to regulate Buddhism so that it did not threaten the political order. Post-war visions of state Buddhism, on the other hand, operated under radically different assumptions.

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however, is almost the opposite of that used in his assessment of Tokugawa Buddhism. For the Tokugawa period, he claimed that the parishioner system endorsed by the state contributed to a laxity amongst the clergy. For the Nara period, the loosening of state control resulted in a decline. It is possible that the timing of the two volumes influenced Tsuji's argument to some degree; the volume on the Nara period was published in 1944 during times of militarism and nationalism, while the later volumes were published in a post-war environment when there was significant suspicion regarding state control of religion.

State Buddhism Models III: The War on State Buddhism in Post-war Japan (1955-1971)

In the period between the 1880s through Japan's military defeat in 1945, it was possible to view the state regulation and promotion of Buddhism in a positive light. This stands in marked contrast to the post-war period, when the phrase state Buddhism took on an exclusively pejorative meaning. In academic discourse, resistance to state control became the new ideal by which Buddhist institutions and individuals were judged. This position emerged in a post-war climate where a now defeated Japan reflected upon the previous decades of zealous state control over religious institutions and lamented Buddhist sects' support of militaristic imperialism.[31] For post-war scholars, the use and regulation of Buddhism by state institutions inevitably tainted the religion.

Some of the earliest expressions of this resistance narrative emerged in Shin Buddhist (*Jōdo Shinshū* 浄土真宗) scholarship affiliated with Ryūkoku University. The work of these scholars would shape the most influential expressions of the state Buddhism model in the post-war period. The sectarian nature of this scholarship cannot be overemphasized. Much like the Meiji reformers, scholars working at sectarian universities in post-1945 Japan aimed to exorcise the ghosts of the past and reform their respective traditions to meet a new age. At

[31] This shift is also a symptom of historiographical developments in the Japanese academy outside the field of Buddhist studies. Social historians have similarly come to valorize resistance in post-war scholarship.

Ryūkoku, many of these scholarly efforts centered on a scheme characterizing two distinct forms of Buddhism: *ritsuryō* Buddhism (*ritsuryō Bukkyō* 律令仏教) and anti-*ritsuryō* Buddhism (*han ritsuryō Bukkyō* 反律令仏教); the Japanese term *ritsuryō* refers to the system of administrative and legal codes promulgated by the state in early Japan. In an article first published in 1955, Miyazaki Enjun 宮崎円遵 (1906-1983), possibly the earliest proponent of this model, described *ritsuryō* Buddhism as "subordinate to the state and controlled by the *Regulations for Monks and Nuns* [*Sōniryō* 僧尼令; the section of the eighth-century legal code dealing with the clergy]." Anti-*ritsuryō* Buddhism, on the other hand, was defined as "independent [*shutaiteki* 主體的] Buddhism that denies and criticizes *ritsuryō* Buddhism and stands in opposition to it."[32] Miyazaki admitted that some people practiced anti-*ritsuryō* Buddhism throughout Japanese history, but he saw Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1262), who was the founder of his own sect, as its exemplar. Since the scholars who advanced the *ritsuryō* and anti-*ritsuryō* model all came out of Ryūkoku University, one of the leading Shin Buddhist training centers in Japan, these efforts should be viewed as part of a broader project by sectarian scholars to reclaim Shinran in the post-war years.

[32] Miyazaki 1955. James Dobbins pointed this reference out to me and suggested that Miyazaki may have been the first person to employ this framework. See Dobbins 1989, 192, n. 21 (Dobbins cites the 1956 republication of this 1955 article).

The *ritsuryō*/anti-*ritsuryō* model was most fully developed by Futaba Kenkō 二葉憲香 (1916-1995), one of the leading postwar scholars of Nara Buddhism and a central figure in the creation of the category "state Buddhism." Futaba would serve as the president of Ryūkoku University and Kyoto Women's University. According to his obituary, his central scholastic ambition was to criticize attempts to analyze Japanese Buddhism through the lens of imperial history (*kōkokushi* 皇国史) (Hino 1996, 1). In the preface to *Research on the Intellectual History of Early Buddhism* (*Kodai Bukkyō shisōshi kenkyū* 古代佛教思想史研究), his most detailed discussion of the *ritsuryō*/anti-*ritsuryō* model, Futaba (1962, 4-10) positioned his own work against the backdrop of pre-1945 scholarship, which he claimed was nationalistic (*kokka shugi* 國家主義) and focused on state protection (*gokoku shugi* 護國主義). For Futaba, postwar scholars of Buddhism needed to transcend this past and pay closer attention to the doctrinal and "religious" aspects of the tradition.

Futaba built upon Miyazaki's scholarship by tracing the origins of the anti-*ritsuryō* movement to the Nara period. It is perhaps unsurprising that Miyazaki wrote the preface to *Research on the Intellectual History of Early Buddhism* or that Futaba (1962, 1-3) cited Miyazaki's support in publishing the book. The two scholars were involved in the same intellectual endeavor—constructing a history of a form of Shin Buddhism that they had only recently created. This process involved first transforming Shin Buddhism into a humanistic, anti-

authoritarian, and anti-establishment tradition. Next, these Ryūkoku scholars needed an antagonist. This role was filled by *ritsuryō* Buddhism, which, as Futaba would have it, ignored the importance of renunciation and overvalued Buddhism's role in protecting the realm. According to Futaba, this was an inauthentic form of Buddhism. The origins of this politicized *ritsuryō* Buddhism began with Soga no Umako 蘇我馬子 (?-626) and culminated in the *Regulations of Monks and Nuns* (Futaba 1962, 21-300).[33]

The heroes of Futaba's narrative were undoubtedly the anti-*ritsuryō* Buddhists. Anti-*ritsuryō* Buddhism, which focused on the doctrine of no-self and emphasized the importance of renunciation, began with Prince Shōtoku—a central figure in Shin Buddhist mythology—and continued with other early monks such as Dōji 道慈 (?-744) and Gyōki 行基 (668-749) (Futaba 1962, 305-540). By asserting the authenticity of anti-*ritsuryō* Buddhism and dismissing *ritsuryō* Buddhism as a corruption of true teachings, Futaba closed off the possibility that state Buddhism could be viewed in a positive light. The category of state Buddhism in the post-war period was defined against a normative ideal of authentic Buddhism.

Inoue Mitsusada (2004, 255), who authored the most influential treatise on state Buddhism, developed his model after reading Futaba's monograph. It is likely that he was most

[33] Futaba's 1962 monograph represents his most sustained treatment, of *ritsuryō*/anti-*ritsuryō* Buddhism, but he began using these terms slightly earlier. See Futaba 1960 and 1961.

impressed by Futaba's attention to legal codes, which was a central aspect of Inoue's own research throughout his career. Inoue was arguably the most respected historian of early Japan in the postwar period. He taught history at Tokyo University and served as the first director of the National Museum of Japanese History. He also spent one year as a visiting lecturer at Harvard University and visited most of the major programs in the United States for training graduate students in Japanese studies.[34] From these positions of authority, Inoue was able to shape the historical narrative in a way that still resonates today. According to Kamikawa Michio 上川通夫 (b. 1960), Inoue's particular articulation of the state Buddhism model has become the standard explanation (*tsūsetsu* 通説) for understanding the Nara period (2007, 20-22). Inoue's influence is apparent in the confidence of Tamura Enchō's 田村圓澄 (b. 1917) 1982 assessment of eighth-century religiosity: "It is unlikely that there could be any objection to calling the Buddhism of the Nara period state Buddhism."[35] Although we have seen that numerous scholars highlighted the centrality of the state to the development of Japanese Buddhism from as early as mid-Meiji, Inoue remains the most identifiable proponent of the

[34] For his time in the United States, see Inoue 2004, 193-218.

[35] Tamura 1982, 208. It should be noted that while Tamura and Inoue are both key proponents of the state Buddhism model, they differ on the details. Tamura focused primarily on the reception of Buddhism by the sovereigns. While Inoue also considers reception, his main interest was the establishment of administrative structures and regulatory codes that were part of the emerging *ritsuryō* state.

state Buddhism model to the present day, and his negative assessment of the category continues to serve as the dominant interpretation in the academy.[36]

Inoue's definition of state Buddhism appeared in the second chapter of his widely read *Buddhism and the Early Japanese State* (*Nihon kodai no kokka to Bukkyō* 日本古代の国家と仏教), first published in 1971. In this chapter, entitled "The Formation of *Ritsuryō* State Buddhism (*Ritsuryō teki kokka Bukkyō no keisei* 律令的国家仏教の形成), he outlined three features of Buddhism during the *ritsuryō* period. First, he pointed out that the state controlled temples and the clergy. Second, he highlighted the protection and promotion of Buddhism by the state. Finally, he argued that Buddhism was valued more for its magical powers (*juryoku* 呪力) in bringing prosperity to the realm than for its philosophical insights (Inoue 1971, 3).

Inoue's narrative has a teleology similar to that of Sakaino and the Ryūkoku scholars, who all argued that the emergence of authentic Buddhism in Japan culminated in the Kamakura period. For Inoue, the founders of the new Kamakura schools were the heroes who finally overcame state Buddhism. He argued that figures such as Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212) and Shinran advocated exclusive *nenbutsu* 念仏 practice as a way to gain independence from state protection Buddhism (*chingo kokka Bukkyō* 鎮護国家仏教), a form of state Buddhism that,

[36] For the remainder of the dissertation, I will use the term "state Buddhism model" to refer to Inoue's theory, unless otherwise noted.

according to Inoue (1971, 84-125), emerged in the Heian period.[37] And while Inoue recognized that others such as Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-1282) and Ippen 一遍 (1239-1289) maintained an interest in the state, he claimed that these thinkers focused their attention more on creating an ideal Buddhist realm (*kokudo* 国土) than on forging an actual nation (*kokka* 国家) (Inoue 1971, esp. 396-397; Inoue 2004, 264). Inoue's broader narrative of Japanese Buddhist history, therefore, describes a gradual development from state Buddhism in the Nara period to a reform movement in the Kamakura period.[38] State Buddhism plays the necessary role of a foil in Inoue's narrative; it represents the corruption against which the Kamakura Buddhists reacted.

Inoue's experience in the war years—he was an undergraduate and graduate student in the 1940s—influenced his opinions about the state. In his memoir, he reflected upon the hardships his family underwent during the war and the satisfaction he felt at Japan's surrender: "The feeling of liberation from militarism was far stronger than any deep sorrow of

[37] Inoue argues that Saichō and Kūkai, whom he credits with developing state protection Buddhism, were reformers working within the boundaries of state Buddhism. See Inoue 1971, 123-124.

[38] We have already seen that this type of thinking dates at least as far back as Sakaino's 1897 essay, if not earlier. The depiction of a new Kamakura Buddhism that broke radically from the older sects has come under attack in the last few decades. For some representative works, see Dobbins (ed.) 1996; Dobbins 1998; Stone 1999, esp. 55-94 and 190-236 and 2006, 39-47; and Sueki 1998.

defeat" (Inoue 2004, 65). These suspicions of nationalism dated back even earlier. When it was time for him to choose an academic advisor for his graduate work in medieval history during the war years, he decided to work with Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889-1960), who taught ethics, rather than the historian Hiraizumi Kiyoshi 平泉澄 (1895-1984), who was known as a zealous supporter of the imperial project (Inoue 2004, 38). We have seen how the national historians from earlier generations had been influenced by the patriotism and nationalism of their day, but Inoue wrote in a climate where he had witnessed suffering on account of militarism and displayed a consistent distrust of state institutions beginning in his student days.

The relationship between Buddhism and the state has been at the center of scholarly narratives since the 1880s through the postwar years. The purpose of this historiographical overview has not been to suggest that past generations of scholars invented the state Buddhism model out of thin air—it would be impossible to deny that eighth-century legal codes were established to regulate the conduct of monks and nuns or that the state promoted Buddhism partially from a desire for apotropaic protection and ideological justification. These facts are indisputable. But the tone of the debate and the interpretation of the evidence have been shaped by the political and religious challenges posed to each successive generation of scholars and reformers. The narrow focus on the state and the implicit critique of imperial

institutions in post-war scholarship only tell part of the story. Alternative narratives are possible.

Recent Japanese Scholarship on Nara Buddhism

Inoue's version of the state Buddhism model has received both heated criticism and renewed support in recent years. One of the most vocal critics is Yoshida Kazuhiko 吉田一彦 (b. 1955), a scholar whose work has been translated into English in a widely read collection of essays (Yoshida 2006c). Beginning in the 1990s, Yoshida launched a multi-pronged attack on Inoue. For one, he claimed that the state failed to implement or enforce many of the rules contained in the *Regulations for Monks and Nuns*. Even in the rare case when the state was successful in punishing the clergy, Yoshida emphasized that it never aimed to regulate Buddhist practice per se; rather it simply tried to control the activities of monks and nuns (Yoshida 1995, 1-64). Since regulation was little more than a fantasy, it cannot be considered a defining feature of the Buddhism of the period.

Perhaps even more importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, Yoshida has maintained that Buddhist practice was far more diverse in the Nara period than Inoue's model allows. Patronage of Buddhism was not limited to the state but also extended to the court, powerful local families, and the populace at large. Yoshida distinguished the Buddhism of the

state (*kokka no Bukkyō* 国家の仏教) from state Buddhism (*kokka Bukkyō* 国家仏教). The Buddhism of the state was just one form of Buddhism amongst many others that existed in the eighth century. This stands in opposition to the state Buddhism model, which views state Buddhism as a monolithic entity that defined the entire period. In addition to the Buddhism of the state, Yoshida identified several other distinct forms of Nara Buddhism including the Buddhism of aristocrats (*kizoku no Bukkyō* 貴族の仏教), the Buddhism of provincial magnates (*chihō gōzoku no Bukkyō* 地方豪族の仏教), and the Buddhism of the masses (*minshū no Bukkyō* 民衆の仏教). Accordingly, it is necessary to speak of "diverse Buddhisms" (*tayōna Bukkyō* 多様な仏教) existing simultaneously, rather than focusing on a singular hegemonic entity known as state Buddhism.[39]

Yoshida himself has been particularly interested in highlighting the activities of the Buddhism of the masses in the eighth century. He has argued repeatedly that this (vaguely defined) social group was vital to the spread of Buddhism in early Japan. He is by no means alone in his focus on the folk.[40] In a compact 1973 monograph, Nakai Shinkō 中井真孝 (b. 1943)

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[39] See Yoshida 2006a, b, and c. Yoshida never fully defines the term *minshū no Bukkyō*, which can be translated as the Buddhism of the masses, popular Buddhism, or folk Buddhism. It is unclear exactly whom Yoshida places into this category.

[40] This trend fits with broader post-war historiographical developments in the Japanese academy to turn attention from the state and its institutions to "the people." See Gluck 1993, 85-86.

crafted one the most thoughtful defenses of the category of "popular Buddhism" (*minshū Bukkyō* 民衆仏教) to appear in Japanese scholarship to date. He argued that popular Buddhism in early Japan represented a "dissident [*itan* 異端]" position and state Buddhism served as the "orthodox [*seitō* 正統]" form of the religion.[41] While distinguishing between the two, he resisted defining the popular tradition as a category completely divorced from orthodox Buddhism. For him, the two categories were interrelated concepts (*sōkan gainen* 相関概念) that emerged dialectically and fluidly through historical processes (Nakai 1973, 95-97). What this seems to suggest is that popular Buddhism only exists as a category relative to state Buddhism, much as evil is defined in relation to conceptions of goodness. While Nakai explicitly distinguished his own stance from that of Futaba and provided a highly nuanced analysis of the terms dissident and orthodoxy, his writings suggest that the popular must be defined in contrast to the state. He also assumed that there is a meaningful group of people we can identify as "the masses," who practiced "popular Buddhism." This dissertation will question both of these assumptions.

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[41] In polemical writings, *itan* is often translated as "heterodox." I have chosen "dissident" as an appropriate translation for Nakai's usage for two reasons. First, heterodox has a somewhat pejorative connotation, but Nakai clearly views this form of Buddhism in positive terms. Second, there is an active and dynamic quality to Nakai's use of *itan*. Dissident implies greater agency on the part of the *itan* than the term heterodox. The latter is generally defined by members of the orthodox camp. Nakai appears to view the dissidents as actively responding to orthodox positions.

Although Yoshida's critiques of Inoue and the general attention given to popular Buddhism in post-war years have been influential, other more recent scholarship has tried to reintroduce the notion of state Buddhism as a meaningful category. For example, Hongō Masatsugu 本郷真紹 (b. 1957) has insisted that the term "state Buddhism" can still be used when properly defined and has offered his own definition: "Buddhism that is subordinate to the state and placed under its supervision and carries the duty of serving the state" (Hongō 2005, 266). Like Yoshida, however, Hongō (2002; 2005, 55-73) recognized that other forms of Buddhism existed alongside state Buddhism in the Nara period. His writings reveal how the lines were often blurred between the various social categories. In another recent work, Nakabayashi Takayuki 中林隆之 (b. 1963) has criticized Inoue's theory as inadequate but remains focused on the imperial family as the primary agents for creating Nara Buddhism. Nakabayashi (2007) has further contributed to scholarship on state Buddhism by examining the precise rituals employed by the state and paying close attention to the doctrinal issues exploited by rulers for ideological justification.

The most detailed and recent defense of the concept of state Buddhism has been advanced by Sone Masato 曽根正人 (b. 1955), who has argued that there was a phenomenon in the Nara period that can be called "state Buddhism." Following Yoshida, Sone has admitted that state Buddhism was just one of many forms of Buddhisms. For Sone, however, the

Buddhism of the state was the most essential component of eighth-century Japanese Buddhism. Sone (2010, 93) has defined state Buddhism as "the phenomenon of Buddhist policy, Buddhist ritual, and maintenance and supervision of the Buddhist affairs (*Bukkyō kai* 仏教界) and temples that frequently appear in historical sources, which together were undertaken by the state (the court of the emperor and the overlapping parts of the state as public government organs)." According to Sone, since official institutions did indeed oversee the temples and the clergy, regulate their activities through legal codes, and focus on state protection, it is impossible to ignore the state's role in an accurate conceptualization of Nara Buddhism. While other forms of Buddhism may have existed in early Japan, the Buddhism of the state appears as the most important subject of study in Sone's work.

This dissertation offers a new approach that falls somewhere between the state Buddhism model of Inoue and his successors and Yoshida's revisionist history. This study rejects the narrowly defined lens employed by proponents of the state Buddhism model, which focuses on the imperial family independent of the religious and cultural context in which they lived. It also questions Yoshida's approach, which begins by dividing society into various camps each with their own form of Buddhism and assumes that these social groups are meaningful and stable entities. In contrast to past scholarship, my dissertation takes a single

practice as its starting point and assesses the way it functioned to delineate communities and instill identities in the social and religious spheres.[42]

The findings of this dissertation suggest that sutra copying was widespread in the Nara period, but it cannot simply be defined as "popular," particularly when the term is used to mean either "common across classes" or "non-elite." Sutra copying could simultaneously join people together and divide them apart. On the one hand, people across geographic regions and social strata engaged in similar ritualized acts, employed nearly identical techniques with regard to manuscript production, and sponsored transcription based on shared beliefs and worldviews. On the other hand, sutra transcription functioned to demonstrate and reinforce differences in material resources, literary abilities, and social status.[43] Sutra copying inscribed social relations as much as it reflected them.

Neither an approach that relies on simplistic class-based divisions nor one focused solely on the state can provide an accurate representation of religion in the Nara period. It is

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[42] Yoshida occasionally mentions "interactions" amongst the different forms of Buddhism but is rather reticent on this point. Moreover, he never questions his own basic model that neatly divides Buddhism in early Japan into easily definable groups based largely on class.

[43] Here my thinking about popular religion is influenced by an insightful article by Catherine Bell on the subject. See Belll 1989. Within Buddhist studies, my approach of studying a single practice across a wide spectrum of society is very much inspired—both consciously and sometimes perhaps subconsciously—by Stephen F. Teiser's classic study on the ghost festival in medieval China. See Teiser 1988.

necessary to look at a broad segment of the population but also to consider the way state structures and other power relations circumscribed religious practice and community formation. By using this method, which has not yet been applied to the problem of characterizing eighth-century Japanese religion, I hope to provide an original account of Nara Buddhism that moves beyond exclusive focus on elites in the capital but, at the same time, avoids the pitfalls of interpretive frameworks that assume religious cultures follow social and economic divisions.

English Language Scholarship on Nara Buddhism

I have suggested that the Nara period was a watershed moment in the development of early Japanese Buddhism, but the period has received very little attention in English language scholarship. In 1935, Marinus Willem de Visser published what could be called the most detailed study of Nara Buddhism to date. His two-volume set, entitled *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, is organized around sutras and rites that were extant in the seventh and eighth centuries. In an encyclopedic fashion, de Visser uses historical citations and sometimes incorporates ethnographic data from the present day to describe the various rituals and texts that were a part of seventh- and eighth-century Japanese Buddhism. While the book is impressive in its scope, it lacks any coherent narrative about how to relate the various texts and rituals

together into a framework for understanding the period as a whole. In addition, de Visser's discussion is greatly weakened by the fact that he did not take advantage of the more than ten thousand documents related to the state scriptorium that would have provided him with far more data about textual circulation.[44] Still, writing in 1935, de Visser's work represents a foundational piece of scholarship that is truly impressive when considering the limited amount of knowledge of Japan at that time. While de Visser's book has limits, it remains one of the most sustained treatments of the Nara period to date.

The next scholar working in English to turn her eye to the Buddhism of the Nara period was Joan Piggott. Piggott, in her 1987 dissertation, "Tōdai-ji and the Nara Imperium," provided an innovative assessment of state protection ritual and a richly documented portrayal of the monastic community at Tōdai-ji. Many of the themes of her dissertation, particularly with regard to ritual, are further developed in her 1997 monograph, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship*. The primary goal of this book was to trace the development of kingship in early Japan. Within this discussion, Piggott justifiably focuses on the way kings in the seventh and eighth centuries used Buddhism as a means to authenticate their rule. The crowning achievement of

[44] Many of the documents had been published in *Dai Nihon komonjo* by the time de Visser was writing. The first six volumes appeared between 1901 and 1904 and seventeen more were published between 1907 and 1937. See Sakaehara 2011, 54. De Visser also would have been able to draw upon groundbreaking scholarship of Ishida Mosaku, who published a detailed study of sutra copying and Shōsōin documents in 1930.

this symbolic and performative method of kingship can be found, according to Piggott (1997, 269-279), in the construction of the Great Buddha at Tōdai-ji. Both the dissertation and the monograph draw heavily upon the social theory of anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and sociologists such as Peter Berger. Her analysis is helpful in adding a more self-conscious theoretical framework to the state Buddhism model.[45] As valuable a contribution as this scholarship is, the research agenda, which centers upon kingship rather than Buddhism, replicates many of the methodological problems of viewing religion solely through the eyes of the ruler that were inherent in the various incarnations of the state Buddhism model dating back to the 1880s.

Ryūichi Abé's *Weaving of Mantra* focuses on the early Heian monk Kūkai but provides one of the more detailed and systematic overviews of Nara Buddhism to appear in the English language. For the most part, Abé (1999, esp. 24-41) writes within the state Buddhism model; much of his discussion of Nara Buddhism focuses on the *Regulation of Monks and Nuns* and the *Office of Monastic Affairs* (*sōgō* 僧綱). He refers to this mainstream tradition as "*ritsuryō* Buddhism" but also discusses what he terms "popular Buddhism," a form of the religion composed of self-ordained monks and mountain ascetics, who worked outside the system and were subject to persecution by the state (Abé 1999, 76-83). As noted above, this dissertation

[45] I will discuss some of the blind spots that result from her use of Geertz in chapter four.

aims to move beyond this type of bifurcated analysis. Abé's book remains a useful source for summarizing much of the relevant Japanese scholarship on state and popular in early Japan, but it is clearly and explicitly focused on Kūkai, for whom Nara Buddhism serves as a mere backdrop.[46]

Michael Como (2008 and 2009) has published two recent monographs and several articles on seventh- and eighth-century Japanese religion. Como's primary interest lies in uncovering the cultic practices brought over by Korean immigrant groups, who serve as the protagonists to his narrative. Como's work has helped reconfigure the way scholars conceive of categories such as "native" and has made major contributions to the study of early Japanese religions. His work has also highlighted new perspectives on early Buddhism, particularly toward the way Japanese Buddhist rituals and myths were partially shaped by continental cultic practices. Como, however, is less interested in Buddhism than in the practices and ideas that fall outside of Buddhist institutions and canonical texts. This has been a most welcome contribution. His research complements the findings of this dissertation but there is little overlap between our sources or stated objectives. I hope that my dissertation will illuminate some of the aspects of Nara religion that fall outside of the scope of Como's publications.

[46] An additional problem in Abé's treatment of the Nara period is his insistence that the dominant state ideology was Confucian until the time of Kūkai. I will take up this problem in chapter three.

John Augustine's (2005) compact monograph on Gyōki is perhaps the most focused English language treatment of Nara Buddhism to appear in recent years. His study is limited to one monk, who was both the object of popular veneration and an active supporter of state sponsored initiatives. The complexity of Gyōki's relationship with the state and his active proselytizing and charitable work outside of official institutions makes him an ideal subject for the type of analysis taken up in this dissertation. Augustine (2005, 13) hints at many of these debates and cites the various academic camps that have tried to pigeonhole Gyōki as either an elite or popular figure. Since there are few reliable historical records on Gyōki's activities in the Nara period, Augustine (2005, esp. 80-83) is appropriately cautious about coming down on one side or the other. But his research paints a picture of Gyōki as a monk who worked independently of official support to alleviate the sufferings caused by the state and only cooperated with officials on his own terms. For the most part, his depiction leans toward portraying Gyōki as closely aligned with what Japanese scholars refer to as "popular Buddhism." Augustine resists expanding his discussion beyond the figure of Gyōki; in the end, he leaves the task of assessing the accuracy of the state Buddhism model to other scholars: "Future studies might also focus on the disjunction between prescriptive labels, such as "state Buddhism" (*kokka Bukkyō*) and the actual diversity of activities that the Buddhist clergy engaged in during the Nara period" (Augustine 2005, 124). While the present study does not

limit itself to the Buddhism of the clergy, it intends to respond to this question raised by Augustine in his conclusion.[47]

Sources

Sutra copying is better documented in the Nara period than in just about any other historical context or geographic setting. One of the primary sources I will rely on in this dissertation is a collection of over ten thousand handwritten documents housed in the Shōsōin 正倉院 treasurehouse.[48] These sources document the day to day operations of a state-sponsored scriptorium active for much of the eighth century. They allow scholars to trace and

[47] I have omitted two recent studies on Nara religion and politics by Herman Ooms and David Bialock. See Bialock 2007 and Ooms 2009. These studies, while groundbreaking in their own right, have little to say about the development of Buddhism in Japan. I will discuss their work and some of the problems with the categories they employ throughout this dissertation but especially in chapter three. In addition, Dorothy Wong has edited a useful collection of essays on Hōryū-ji that addresses the temple from the perspectives of art history and religious studies. See Wong 2008. The individual essays cover a wide temporal range from Buddhism's introduction to Japan in the sixth century through the Kamakura period and do not present any discernible vision of Nara Buddhism as a whole. Donald McCallum has recently authored two monographs on architecture and sculpture that primarily focus on the seventh centuries but do have some temporal overlap with this dissertation. See McCallum 2009 and 2012.

[48] More precisely, they are kept in a modern structure next to the original eighth-century Shōsōin, where they had been for over a thousand years. The documents have a complicated history, but they have been cut apart and reassembled in the modern period. I will make reference to this process throughout the dissertation, but space and complexity prohibit a full discussion of the recent history of this archive. For the best overview of the collection, see Sakaehara 2011. In English, see Farris 2007.

date the circulation of texts, speak volumes to Buddhist manuscript cultures, and illuminate the economics of textual production. The primary limitation of these documents, outside of the degree of specialization required to responsibly use them, is that they deal mainly with an official scriptorium and, therefore, offer a narrow window on Nara Buddhism. Close readings of these sources, however, provide rich data about the religious lives of low-ranking scriptorium employees and about a range of other scriptoria in the capital that exchanged texts and materials with the imperially sanctioned institution.

I will also frequently refer to sutra manuscripts themselves. Extant manuscripts exist from assorted geographic regions and can be traced to individuals and fellowship groups from diverse social backgrounds. Colophons are particularly useful, as they record the names and locations of patrons and often contain dedicatory prayers, which describe the sponsor's stated intentions in copying the sutra in question. The material qualities of manuscripts also shed light on the social and institutional climate in which they were copied. These sources have received very little attention in any language but provide one of the few sources outside of the archaeological record for insight into the Buddhist practice of provincial patrons.

I also incorporate several other types of materials that complement these two sources. I frequently make use of narrative tales from China and Japan, which show the way sutra copying was understood and idealized by monastic authors. Second, I use wooden tally slips

known as *mokkan* 木簡 from the seventh and eighth centuries that have been unearthed over the last century; some of these *mokkan* appear to be related to a scriptorium and others provide insight into scribal cultures. A third source is Buddhist scripture itself. While some scholars have described sutra copying as a "non-hermeneutic" textual practice—a term used to mean those acts related to a text that do not pertain to understanding its semantic value—I show that, in many cases, the content of the text can be used as a source for interpreting its transcription.[49] Finally, I supplement the above materials with frequent references to eighth-century legal codes, official histories, literary anthologies, and Buddhist sculpture.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one focuses on scriptoria in the late seventh and eighth centuries. This chapter shows that individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds sponsored sutra transcription in the Nara period. It questions the utility of employing clear-cut divisions between state and popular by arguing that what appear to be "state" institutions often served "private" interests and by highlighting how groups often glossed as "popular" were intimately intertwined with state structures. I also demonstrate that basic techniques of manuscript production and divisions of labor in sutra copying were widely shared across social and geographic boundaries

[49] For the non-hermeneutic position, see Rambelli 2007, 88-128. Also see Lowe 2011.

but recognize that officially sanctioned institutions had access to material resources that enabled them to engage in large scale projects that more humble individuals would have had difficulty matching.

Chapter two provides an insider's account of scriptoria. Much of the chapter focuses on Karakuni no Hitonari 韓国人成, who worked as a scribe, proofreader, and administrators at the state-sanctioned Office of Sutra Transcription. This chapter suggests that the various regulations that Hitonari and other employees would have been subjected to cannot be understood solely in terms of state control. Rather, I show how regulatory policies employed at the scriptorium could have benefited both the state and pious scribes interested in Buddhist practice. I assert scribal agency by showing how some sutra copyists aspired to monastic ordination and used their time at the scriptorium to train to become monks. Workers could also cultivate themselves through literary and calligraphic practice. The chapter also uses colophons to examine sutra copyists in the provinces. I show how many scribes throughout the Japanese archipelago shared similar ritual practices and religious aspirations.

Chapter three focuses on dedicatory prayers inscribed in colophons to sutra manuscripts. This chapter highlights the way patrons imagined the cosmos in highly idiosyncratic ways that were not limited to canonical forms of Buddhism. Buddhism was not the only ideological force employed in Nara Japan; prayers, which were performed in a

Buddhist ritual setting based on the logic of merit-making, frequently draw upon literary tropes from the continent to advance Chinese models of kingship. I also suggest that patrons across a broad social and geographic range performed their prayers in similar ritual contexts, structured them in ways that had continental precedents, and held nearly identical spiritual motivations with one another. At the same time, I highlight the literary qualities of these prayers and argue that poetic ability would have demonstrated social differences related to, but not bound by, class and literacy. Finally, the chapter shows that state protection was only one aspect of Nara Buddhism and that this particular element was not exclusively connected to the court.

Chapter four turns to a single project to transcribe one hundred copies of an apocryphal text entitled the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* in 748. The chapter uses Shōsōin documents to identify the patron of the project and date the precise moment in which the text was copied. It then offers a reading of this scripture by placing it within the political climate of 748 and interpreting it against other texts copied at the same time. This chapter contends that previous attention to state protection has unevenly focused on the performative aspects of ritual and assumed that the state used Buddhism from a position of strength. It argues that in transcribing the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, the rulers highlighted their own vulnerabilities and placed themselves within a cosmological

framework in which a lack of Buddhist piety risked divine punishment and threatened the occupier of the throne.

A brief conclusion summarizes my findings, outlines some features of Nara Buddhism, and presents directions for future research. The first appendix catalogs manuscripts referred to in the dissertation. The second appendix contains the first English translation of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. This translation is based on a manuscript discovered at Nanatsu-dera in Nagoya.

Chapter One: Institutions of Transcription

> *[The monk Zhiyan] wanted to copy the Lotus [Sutra], but being poor he could not afford paper. In a dream, a phoenix came carrying paper in its beak. When [Zhiyan] awoke, he saw there was paper upon his desk, so he wrote one copy [of the Lotus Sutra] and enshrined it within a pagoda...In response to the power of his vow, rain and frost never dampened the top of the pagoda.*
>
> *-Records of Lotus Lore*[1]

This Chinese tale provides an elegant solution to a problem that many Buddhists surely faced in eighth-century Japan: how could one transform a pious vow to transcribe a text into a manuscript composed of paper and ink? In the story from *Records of Lotus Lore* (Ch. *Fahua zhuanji* 法華傳記), a phoenix brings the necessary materials in a dream and the problem is easily averted. Most potential patrons outside the realm of hagiography were probably not so lucky. In fact, even if a patron were fortunate enough to find a feathered friend with a ream of paper, he would still need the technical skills to assemble the individual sheets into a scroll, reliable exemplars from which he could copy, and, in most cases, scribes and proofreaders trained in quickly and accurately reproducing texts. In short, the story glosses over the social, technological, and institutional aspects of sutra copying—a scripture copied independent of a

[1] *Fahua zhuanji*; T 2068.51.81c.

social network would truly be miraculous. To understand sutra copying in early Japan, it will first be necessary to consider the institutional and social organizations that enabled the production of Buddhist texts to emerge in the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

This chapter will focus on scriptoria in early Japan. I will trace the origins of these institutions to the late seventh century and show how they became relatively common throughout much of the Japanese archipelago by the eighth century. Scriptoria emerged at this particular time as a result of the spread of literacy and technologies of writing, the remarkable piety of devout patrons, and emerging social and political structures. In place of dualistic models that divide Nara religiosity into a binary of "state" versus "popular" Buddhism, this chapter will highlight the existence of a wide range of institutions including aristocratic household scriptoria, imperially sanctioned canon copying bureaus, and loosely organized Buddhist fellowships. I will argue that many of the technological and organizational characteristics of these institutions were common across various segments of society. At the same time, differences in human and material resources enabled certain groups to carry out projects that would have been beyond the means of others.

The choice to begin with scriptoria in the first chapter arises from my assumption that textual production is inseparable from social and institutional structures. This approach has been shaped by the methodology of scholars working in the field often described as the history

of the book.[2] D.F. McKenzie (1999, 14 and 62), who was perhaps the greatest bibliographer of his day, called texts "social products" and argued that they emerge as a direct result of human interactions and institutional configurations. Similarly, Robert Darnton (1990, 107-135) has emphasized the need to pay attention to the "communication circuit" that all printed books pass through. Although these scholars focus primarily on books in the time of printing, Andrew Taylor (1999, 358) has claimed that manuscript cultures were inherently social as well: "a handwritten book...was even more a 'carrier of relationships' than a printed one, and circulated along lines of patronage, friendship, or kinship that it in turn reinforced. In this way, the production of a manuscript is an inherently social endeavor." Just as printed books relied on a network of authors, publishers, and printers, manuscript production in early Japan required the cooperation of patrons, scriptorium administrators, scribes, assemblers, and proofreaders. These individuals were joined together through diverse social organizations including the state bureaucracy, kinship groups, and even, as Taylor suggests, friendship. Without such organizations in place, sutra transcription would have never occurred to the extent that it did in eighth-century Japan.

[2] For an excellent introduction to the field of the history of the book, see Finkelstein and McCleery, 2005.

In many ways, the production of texts was enabled by underlying social organizations. Sutra transcription, however, was not merely the product of such structures. Copying scripture strengthened existing bonds and created new types of communities. Piety played a role in configuring Nara-period society. This chapter will explore the institutions active in eighth-century Japan and assess their function across a broad spectrum of early Japanese patrons.

Scriptoria in the Seventh Century

The earliest evidence of sutra copying in Japan dates to the late seventh century, a period when writing was first becoming widespread across the archipelago.[3] The first record of sutra copying appears in the *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki* 日本書紀). The relevant passage describes how Emperor Tenmu 天武 (reigned 673-686) ordered the Buddhist canon (*issaikyō* 一切經) to be copied at Kawara-dera 川原寺 in 673.[4] Leaving aside for a moment the authenticity of this account and the question of what the term canon actually meant in 673, the records in the *Chronicles of Japan* provide very little information about the institutions through which

[3] For the spread of writing and literacy beginning in the mid-seventh century, see Lurie 2011, 115-166.

[4] *Nihon shoki* 3/673, *NKBT* 68:410-411; Aston [1896] 1972, 2:322. I refer to historical rulers as "emperor," even though the term is historically inaccurate, since Japan can hardly be considered an empire in the eighth century. It remains a widely understood gloss for the Japanese ruler and still has utility as a more elegant translation than other alternatives.

transcription took place. The key clue recorded in the *Chronicles of Japan* is that Tenmu "gathered scribes [聚書生 *tegaki/shoshō wo tsudofu*]." The fact that it was necessary to seek out sutra copyists suggests that the scriptorium that handled the canon project lacked a large scribal staff or perhaps was only established as an institution in response to this particular project. At the same time, it also implies that Tenmu sought individuals with calligraphic expertise and experience transcribing texts. Altogether, the project took around four years—its completion was marked with an abstinential rite and recitation of the canon on 8/15/677.[5] No extant manuscripts remain from this project, so little can be said about the manuscript cultures and institutional configurations that emerged at this particular historical moment.

Japan's earliest extant sutra manuscript, a copy of the *Dhāraṇī of the Diamond Place* (Ch. *Jingang chang tuoluoni jing* 金剛場陀羅尼經), dates to 686. As with the 673 canon-copying project, little can be known about the institutional setting in which it was transcribed.[6] The colophon states that a fellowship (*chishiki* 知識), based in the Shiki district (*Shiki no kōri* 志貴評) of Kawachi province 川内國 (more commonly transcribed as 河内) and led by a monk

[5] *Nihon shoki* 8/15/677, *NKBT* 68:428-429; Aston [1896] 1972, 2:337. For studies on this canon, see Maki 2004, 52-53 and Kamikawa 2008, 105-107.

[6] The manuscript, currently owned by the Agency of Cultural Affairs, only records the cyclical year, so the 686 dating is not definitive. Scholarly consensus suggests this manuscript does date to 686. For the colophon, see *NCS*, plate 1. For a complete English translation of the dedication, see Lurie 2011, 135.

named Hōrin 寶林 (n.d.), sponsored the transcription. The hand reflects an early Tang style, which is more in line with contemporaneous continental trends than other early eighth-century Japanese manuscripts. This suggests that the scribe was skilled and up to date in the latest continental modes of writing.[7] The word "fellowship" in the colophon implies it was done by a group that pooled their resources to sponsor the transcription. We will return to this term later in the chapter. Since the Shiki district had a large population of immigrants from the Korean peninsula and the hand is unusually skilled, it is possible that immigrant communities composed a portion or perhaps the majority of members of the fellowship. As is well known, immigrant communities played a vital role in promoting Buddhism and technologies of writing in early Japan. Moreover, archaeological evidence suggests that Kawachi province was an active locale for Buddhist patronage and contained many temples (Nakai 1973, 164-171). It is highly likely that the members of the fellowship group would have sponsored other pious projects as well.

From these two seventh-century examples, we can see that sutra copying in this period was carried out both as official projects initiated by the emperor and by fellowship groups in the provinces. We will see that the court and local fellowship groups continued to play a large role in sponsoring sutra transcription throughout the eighth century. We have little concrete

[7] For an assessment of the calligraphy, see *NCS*, *kaisetsu* 19-20.

information, however, about the individuals who prepared and copied these seventh-century sutras or the institutions through which they were organized.[8] The picture is fragmentary, and there is little evidence in terms of official records or extant manuscripts to suggest that sutra copying played a large role in seventh-century Japanese society.

A Prince's Scriptorium

While evidence of sutra copying in the seventh century is sparse, a wealth of sources regarding eighth-century scriptoria remains. There are around two thousand extant scrolls, records of the transcription of over one hundred thousand more, ten thousand hand-written documents from a scriptorium, and other references to sutra copying in official chronicles and

[8] Other scholars are less cautious in their conclusions on the significance of the 686 manuscript, but the diversity of opinions reflects how speculative their claims are. For example, Yoshida Kazuhiko (2006b, 184-187 and 2010, 79-81) has argued it represents early evidence of the spread of Buddhism to the populace in the seventh century. In this way, he sees it as an early example of "the Buddhism of the masses." On the other hand, Kamikawa Michio (2008, 106-107) has speculated that the monk who led the fellowship may have actually been a state official from a local powerful family. He views the project as closely connected to the state. Both positions are in line with these scholars' more general methodological approaches; Yoshida tends to seek out examples of "popular" Buddhism and Kamikawa views much of Japanese Buddhist thought and practice through the lens of politics and ideology. At the very least, this manuscript shows that Buddhist practitioners in the provinces had interests that transcended state ideology; the prayer attached to the sutra is on behalf of ancestors and all sentient beings and does not seem to have any obvious connection to "state Buddhism." I will return to the 686 prayer briefly in chapter three and explore the relationship between fellowship groups and the state later in this chapter.

narrative tales. The colophons of manuscripts sponsored by Prince Nagaya 長屋王 (684-729) along with archaeological evidence from his estate are the earliest available sources that provide details into the organization of an eighth-century Japanese scriptorium.[9] From extant manuscripts, we know that Nagaya had the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* (Ch. *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經) in six hundred scrolls transcribed on two separate occasions. Over two hundred manuscripts are extant from the first project, which dates to 712 and is known as the *Wadōkyō* 和銅經 after the reign name Wadō (708-715) in which it was copied.[10] The

[9] There are two other extant eighth-century manuscripts that pre-date the earliest Nagaya scrolls. The first, a 706 copy of Jizang's 吉藏 (549-623) commentary on the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* entitled *Treatise on the Profundity of the Pure Name [Sutra]* (*Jingming xuan lun* 淨名玄論), is presently held in the Kyoto National Museum. It is copied in a somewhat clumsy hand that follows irregular line lengths. This suggests that a monk transcribed it for his own study, but the colophon only provides the date. The second manuscript, currently in the Nezu Museum, dates to 710 and was part of a canon, here defined as *sūtra*, *abhidharma*, and *vinaya* (*kyō ron oyobi ritsu* 經綸及律) that was sponsored by the renunciant or *śramaṇa* (*shamon* 沙門) Chihō 知法. We have no other records of Chihō, but the dedicatory prayer notes that the project was done on behalf of the sovereign. There are some problems with this manuscript that suggest some portions may be later than others, but scholars believe that it likely dates to the Wadō 和銅 period (708-715), which is the date recorded in the colophon. Neither of these manuscripts provides any evidence related to the institutional organizations of the scriptoria in which they were copied and thus offer few contributions to the argument of this chapter. They are noteworthy for their antiquity and warrant further codicological study; see *NCS*, plates 2-3.

[10] For an overview of the manuscripts, see Kawase 1943, 100-110 and Tanaka 1953, 158-162. I have relied on digital editions and photographic reprints of the manuscripts of scroll 213 in the Nezu museum (the Cultural Heritage Online web page managed by the Agency for Cultural Affairs: http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/Index.do, accessed 3/5/2012), scroll 214 at Jōmyōji (pictured in *NCS,* plate 4), and scroll 250 in the Kyoto National Museum (emuseum:

colophon states that this 712 project was transcribed through the Northern Palace. Recent scholarship has shown that this refers to the household organization that Nagaya inherited from his father, Prince Takechi 高市皇子.[11] The scribal hand in extant manuscripts suggests that roughly six or seven scribes worked on the project (Tanaka 1953, 161).[12] With this number of scribes, it would have taken roughly a year to complete, so it is clear that Nagaya could employ laborers for sutra transcription for extended periods of time.

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http://www.emuseum.jp/, accessed 3/5/2012). For a general overview of Nagaya's life, see Terasaki 1999.

[11] For the most recent scholarship on the Northern Palace, see Mori 2009, esp. 51-82. I follow his account. The name Northern Palace likely derives from its origins at Kaguyama 香具山, north of the former Kiyomihara 淨御原 capital. Wooden tally slips known as *mokkan* suggest that parts of the palace organization remained at Kaguyama, but much of the staff moved to Nagaya's estate. Earlier scholarship had argued that the Northern Palace referred to the residence of Princess Kibi 吉備内親王, Princess Hidaka 永高内親王 (who would later rule as Genshō), and Princess Minabe 御名部内親王. Katsuura Noriko, who in 1991 wrote the most detailed study of the *mokkan* related to sutra copying at the Nagaya site to date, bases her work on some of these older positions; as a result, her findings must be reassessed to reflect this more recent scholarship. See Katsuura 1991, 34-36. In English, much of the earlier scholarship is summarized by Wayne Farris and Joan Piggott. See Piggott 1990, 451-462 and Farris 1998, 226-227. The Japanese scholarship is too numerous to mention in full, but some of the key articles that advance the relevant positions include Ōyama [1989] 1998, 2-30; [1992] 1998, 31-54; and 1993, esp. 17-21; Mori 2000, 46-66; Morita 1994, 37-67; Terasaki 1999, 136-147; and Yagi 2009, 151-156. Although Prince Nagaya was the sponsor and relied on resources from the Northern Palace, it is also likely that his wife Princess Kibi was involved in sponsoring the project, particularly since it memorialized her brother Emperor Monmu. For Princess Kibi's role, see Mori 2009, 131. Also see Katsuura 1991, 29-30 and 35-36.

[12] There are only two hands apparent in the prayers, so the colophons were likely copied all at once at the end of the project.

Wooden tally slips or *mokkan* excavated from the site of Nagaya's former mansion provide a fairly detailed glimpse into the operation of the scriptorium at his estate.[13] Several *mokkan* mention an Office of Writing (*shohōsho* 書法所), a bureau within Nagaya's compound that likely managed sutra transcription and image production (*HM* 1:326; 2:1969-1971). According to eighth-century law codes, high-ranking aristocrats (third rank and above) were granted estates with large gardens and ponds and even a small staff of administrators to manage household affairs.[14] Nagaya's estate was no exception, as it contained numerous offices ranging from saddle makers to doctors.[15]

With regard to divisions of labor and processes of production, it appears that Nagaya's Office of Writing shared much in common with the large imperially sanctioned institutions responsible for repeatedly transcribing the canon that we will explore in detail later in this chapter. For one, it was staffed with workers such as scribes (*kyōshi* 經師), assemblers (*sō'ō* or *sōkō* 装潢), and proofreaders (*kōsei* 校生 or *monkō* 文校)—the same types of workers

[13] For key studies that have helped me frame this section, see Katsuura 1991; Terasaki 1999, 227-230; and Kaneko 2001, 51-54.

[14] The size of this administrative staff depended upon rank. Aristocrats of junior third rank were granted two officials to manage their estates; first rank aristocrats received six staff members. For a helpful chart, see Abe 2007, 349.

[15] For an outline of the offices on his estate, see Nara kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyūsho 1991, 100. In English, see Farris 1998, 225-226.

responsible for producing the official canons of the Nara period.[16] In addition, the manuscripts produced at Nagaya's estate as well as those at the imperially sanctioned scriptoria were proofread multiple times (*HM* 1:25).[17] Finally, *mokkan* also refer to scriptorium monks (*shohōsho no sō* 書法所曾 and *shohō no sō* 書法僧) (*HM* 1:326; *HMG* 28:8). Their precise role is unclear, but they may have helped collate manuscripts, as we know monks occasionally performed this role at other scriptoria in eighth-century Japan.

Although Nagaya's scriptorium held much in common with other Nara-period institutions, there are several differences apparent in the manuscript cultures that reflect unique labor arrangements and technologies. One distinguishing feature of Nagaya's

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[16] For sutra copyists, see *HM* 1:159 and *HMG* 21:19. The first example mentions scribes being issued earthenware ritual jars (*yuga* 由加) and the second records rations. In addition, *HM* 1:329 and 783 and *HMG* 28:8 all mentions scribes but are damaged and provide little additional information outside of the word "sutra copyist." *HMG* 25:13 contains information about rations being issued to two scribes and one assembler (here transcribed as 装黄). *HMG* 25:13 and *HMG* 21:26 are also ration records and appear to be connected to proofreading. My research on *mokkan* has been facilitated largely through the online database created by the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, although I have cited the print publications that I consulted. For the database, see http://www.nabunken.go.jp/japanese/database.html. In citing *mokkan* published in *Heijōkyō mokkan* (*HM*), I provide the volume number followed by the *mokkan* number. For those in *Heijōkyū hakkutsu chōsa shutsudo mokkan gaihō* (*HMG*), I give the volume number and page number of the published source. For an English language overview of the roles of assemblers, scribes, and proofreaders in sutra copying in general, see Lowe 2011, 26-30.

[17] For a discussion of this *mokkan*, see Terasaki 1999, 227. It likely dates to the Wadō period and records 542 [scrolls] having been proofread once. The fact that it explicitly cites the first proofreading implies that additional corrections would occur.

manuscripts is that they are unlined—this may reflect an in-house style, as unlined manuscripts are extremely rare in the Nara period.[18] Assemblers usually lined manuscripts after gluing individual sheets of paper together, so the responsibilities and skills of the workers at Nagaya's scriptorium would have differed from those of other eighth-century institutions. Moreover, some labor that was often outsourced elsewhere was likely performed on-site at Nagaya's estate. For example, excavated *mokkan* mention paper masters (*shishi* 紙師) and wrapper masters (*chitsushi* 帙師).[19] If these terms refer to individuals who made paper and wrappers, this would be a unique feature—the imperially sanctioned scriptoria did not contain these classes of workers.[20] The presence of wrapper masters suggests that Nagaya's scriptorium was fairly active. A single wrapper could hold ten or more scrolls; it would be unnecessary to have a designated wrapper maker unless the scriptorium was producing a significant number of manuscripts (Sekine 2001, 176).

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[18] A copy of a manuscript produced by a fellowship group of the southern Fujiwara house appears to be unlined. This scroll is kept in the National Museum of Japanese History (H-194) and a partial reproduction appears in *NCS*, plate 86. As we will see, other manuscripts produced by Nagaya were also unlined. There is one scroll in the Shōgozō collection likely imported from Silla that is also unlined. See Yamamoto 2006.

[19] For the paper makers, see *HMG* 21:6 and *HM* 2:1708; for the wrapper makers, see *HMG* 21:26, 27:11, and 28:8.

[20] For more on this problem, see Katsuura 1991, 29-30. In addition, workers known as *shohō sakunin* 書法作人 and *shohō monin*書法模人 appear frequently in *mokkan* from the Nagaya estate, but the meanings of these terms are unclear. For some different interpretations see Katsuura 1991, 24; Horiike 2001, 206-207; Tōno 1994, 94-95; and Sekine 2001, 175.

In addition to the Wadō scrolls discussed above, there are also five extant manuscripts from another project sponsored by Prince Nagaya in 728 (*NCS*, plate 5; Tanaka 1973, 28-29).[21] These manuscripts are unusual in that they use extremely long sheets of unlined paper measuring 176 centimeters per sheet, more than three times longer than the average sheet of paper found in other Nara scrolls.[22] These features would have visually distinguished the manuscripts and demonstrated his ability to acquire special materials.[23]

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[21] For an overview of the manuscripts, see Kawase 1943, 110-116 and Tanaka 1953, 164-166. The most well-known manuscript, scroll 267, is currently in the Nezu museum. I have examined the photographs of this manuscript in *NCS* and also the digital images available at the Cultural Heritage Online database. In addition, I have consulted Tanaka Kaidō 1973, who transcribes the colophon to scroll 513, currently in a private collection. This colophon contains some different names of the scribes and proofreaders than the Nezu manuscript. The colophon also includes a long prayer that we will turn to in chapter four.

[22] Nara-period manuscripts contain a wide range of paper sizes. In the 5/1 canon, which will be assessed below, most sheets measure between 45 and 47 centimeters, although I have found some scrolls where individual sheets are as long as 54 centimeters. Other non-5/1 Nara-period manuscripts are often slightly longer with most sheets of paper measuring between 54 and 57 cm. These numbers are based on data from my research of the codicology for thirty-eight scrolls. For Shōgozō scrolls, I used a random number generator and the measuring software that is part of the Maruzen digital editions. For other scrolls, I measured the paper sizes in person. A list of manuscripts consulted in this dissertation can be found in appendix one. All of the manuscripts that I viewed and measured by hand are marked with an asterisk. In eighth-century sutra manuscripts from Dunhuang, paper generally ranges between 42-52 cm. See Drege 2002, esp. 124-126. Also see Akao 2002.

[23] Long paper (*chōshi* 長紙) occasionally appears in Shōsōin records as well. It is unclear what the precise length of these sheets would be. To my knowledge, there are no extant eighth-century Japanese manuscripts composed of long sheets of paper outside of the 728 project sponsored by Prince Nagaya.

The colophons of these 728 manuscripts record the involvement of laborers including an assembler, two proofreaders, and a scribe. We saw similar workers in the Wadō *mokkan*, but in the case of the 728 scrolls it is clear that most of the staff came from official state offices. One scribe and both proofreaders were employees of the Ministry of Ceremonials (*Shikibushō* 式部省). The assembler was based at the Bureau of Books and Drawings (*Zushoryō* 図書寮) and would later go on to work at the scriptorium that grew out of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency (*Kōgō gūshiki* 皇后宮職), an institution that we will study in depth later in this chapter. The colophon then lists names of two laypersons identified with a term that can be translated as "acting commissioner," "supervising commissioner," or "inspector commissioner" (*kengyōshi* 検校使).[24] Next, two monks appear, who are again either "inspectors," "supervisors," or "acting monks [from their respective temples]." It is possible that these were administrators, but Yamashita Yumi (2001, 80) suggests they may have been involved with collating the manuscripts (*kangyō* 勘經). Regardless of their exact role, their base institutions shed further light on the character of Nagaya's scriptorium. One of the lay inspectors is listed as the Secretary (*jō* or *hōgan* 判官) of the Saho Palace, which refers to a private residence Nagaya kept near the Saho river northeast of the capital (Jōdai bunken wo yomu kai 2010b, 49). The other lay inspector was the senior clerk (*daizoku* 大屬) from the Yin-yang Bureau

[24] For usage of this term in medieval Chinese sources, see Hucker 1985, 146.

(*Onmyōryō* 陰陽寮), an official state institution. The two monks include Kiben 基弁, who is otherwise unknown but came from Yakushi-ji, and the eminent monk Dōji 道慈 (?-744), who was based at Kōfuku-ji (here called Fujiwara-dera).[25] Both of these temples were important monastic centers closely connected to the state. The transcription, however, was not a purely "public" endeavor; the dedicatory prayer appended to the 728 manuscript shows that Prince Nagaya sponsored it on behalf of his parents and the emperor.[26] State officials worked in part to help Nagaya mourn the loss of his loved ones. As we will see, the use of state employees in ostensibly "private" copying was a common occurrence in the Nara period.[27]

Scriptoria of Nara Officials and Provincial Elites

Prince Nagaya was not alone in copying scripture through household scriptoria. We have numerous records, both in the form of old documents (*komonjo* 古文書) and colophons

[25] A great deal of ink has been spilled about Dōji's connection to Prince Nagaya, but the evidence is limited at best. In addition to this colophon, which simply states he worked alongside numerous other officials, we have a poem written by Dōji politely declining an invitation to a banquet at Nagaya's estate. The evidence gives little proof to the wild speculations about Dōji's relationship to those in power. For an overview, see Lowe 2007 (unpublished presentation).

[26] We will return to the prayer in chapter three.

[27] In addition to these changes in human resources, the 728 sutras are also different calligraphically from the Wadō project. Namely, we see a shift from the Six Dynasties style of the Wadō project to the Tang style of the Jinki project. See Tōno 1994, 98-99.

that help provide a more complete picture of these institutions. Their ubiquity suggests that it was common for aristocrats in the Nara period to maintain a scriptorium on their estates, even for those of lesser rank than Prince Nagaya. Ishikawa no Ason Toshitari 石川朝臣年足 (688-762) was one of the more productive eighth-century aristocratic patrons. He was a leading political figure in the Nara period who eventually reached third rank and held the title *gyoshi daibu* 御史大夫, the equivalent of Major Counselor (*dainagon* 大納言).[28] In addition to being a great politician, legal scholar, and student of literature, Toshitari also actively promoted Buddhism.[29] Altogether, there are four extant manuscripts that Toshitari sponsored: the *Scripture on Maitreya's Ascension* (Ch. *Mile shangsheng jing* 彌勒上生經); the *Scripture on Maitreya Achieving Buddhahood* (Ch. M*ile da cheng fo jing* 彌勒大成佛經); a chapter of the *Consecration Sutra*, entitled the *Scripture on the Consecration of Birth [in a Pure Land] in Accord with Prayer* (Ch. *Guanding sui yuan wangsheng jing* 灌頂隨願往生經); and the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* in six hundred scrolls. The colophons all contain distinct dedicatory prayers with unique dates but provide no information about the institutional context in which they were copied.

[28] During Junnin's reign, official posts were given Chinese names under the influence of Fujiwara no Nakamaro. In China, this title refers to the Censor-in-Chief; see Hucker 1985, 593.
[29] For an overview of his faith in Buddhism, see Yonezawa 1992, 264-278. For a recent overview of his life and politics, see Kimoto 2004, 25-62.

Records from the Shōsōin collection related to other projects sponsored by Toshitari, however, show that he operated a household scriptorium. It is likely that he copied these extant manuscripts through such an institution.[30] The relevant Shōsōin documents record the removal of sutras from storage chests at the Office of Sutra Transcription. According to these sources, the Mansion of Ishikawa no Ason borrowed a series of short texts translated by Xuanzang on 10/7/748 (*DNK* 10:381-383 [*ZZS* 15:1]; 24:168-168 [*ZZS* 15:2]).[31] The texts were to be used as exemplars (*hon* 本), a term that refers to the source text from which one copies. Although we have cases of other patrons requesting to borrow laborers and supplies, the fact that no such records exist for Toshitari and the frequency with which he seems to have copied scripture implies that he may have had some sort of permanent staff and access to the requisite materials. At this time, he would have been Junior Fourth Rank Lower, and still would not have been eligible for a state-sanctioned household staff. His scriptorium, therefore, likely functioned as a household institution largely independent from state structures.

[30] Many of the extant manuscripts were copied when Toshitari was posted as governor of Izumo. It is unclear, however, if these would have been copied locally through a household institution he brought with him or through his scriptorium in the capital. Notably, he was only Junior Fifth Rank at this time and would not have qualified for an official staff for his household. For the colophons, see *NCS*, plates 18-20.

[31] For more on this, see Kuranaka 2001.

Several prominent members of the Fujiwara clan also actively sponsored sutra transcription through household scriptoria. Fujiwara no Bunin 藤原夫人, a consort of Emperor Shōmu and daughter of Fujiwara no Fusasaki 藤原房前 (681-737), commissioned a canon through the northern Fujiwara household scriptorium (Nakai 1981; Sakaehara 2000, 281-316). Only a well-staffed and well-funded institution would have been able to handle such a project. The Southern Fujiwara household also operated a scriptorium (*NCS*, plates 85-86).[32] Moreover, Fujiwara no Nakamaro, who was from the lineage of the southern house, copied a canon through two household scriptoria. The first was at Maeyama-dera 前山寺, a temple located on Fujiwara no Nakamaro's Tamura estate田村家. This office handled the commentaries (*sho* 疏) and treatises (*ron* 論). A separate institution supervised transcription of sutras (*kyō* 經). This scriptorium was located at his son Kuzumaro's 久須麻呂 (?-764) residence and was known as the Scriptorium at the Estate of the Chief of the Capital Offices *(Kyōshiki no In no Taku no Shakyōjo* 京職尹宅寫經所), a reference to his official title (Sakaehara 2000, 355-397). In this way, along with Ishikawa no Toshitari and Prince Nagaya, elite men and women of the

[32] A copy of the *Yogâcārabhūmi-śāstra*, one of two extant manuscripts from the southern house's scriptorium, was transcribed by a fellowship (*chishiki* 知識). The precise identities of the fellowship group members are unknown, but we can imagine they likely had some connection to the Fujiwara clan. A Shōsōin document also records the request of a scribe for a "private" project sponsored by the Southern Fujiwara house. See *DNK* 2:662 (*ZS* 31:15). We will return to the term private later in this chapter.

Fujiwara clan sponsored numerous large-scale sutra copying projects through their household institutions.

Manda no Sukune Hiramaro 茨田宿祢枚方, a figure from a slightly less exalted background than those we have examined so far similarly kept a household scriptorium at his estate near the Saho River 佐保川 in the northeastern part of the capital.[33] Early in his career, Hiramaro worked at the Queen Consort's Palace Agency, which managed what was perhaps the most important scriptorium in the early Nara period. Here, he would have gained knowledge of sutra copying practices and access to networks that would have helped him acquire the material resources necessary for copying texts. His title Counselor (*daibu*大夫) suggests that he was male and of fifth rank or above but unlikely to have ranked high enough to have his own state-sanctioned household staff like Prince Nagaya. We can only view the activities of the Saho scriptorium through the documents preserved in the Shōsōin; no extant manuscripts or internal documents remain. From these limited sources, however, we can see that the scriptorium borrowed manuscripts for copying sutras such as the *Scripture on the Eleven-faced* [*Bodhisattva*] (Ch. *Shiyi mian jing*十一面經) and the *Maricī-deva Sutra* (Ch. *Molizhi tian jing* 摩利支

[33] Sakaehara Towao has studied this scriptorium in depth; see Sakaehara 2005a. I have largely followed his groundbreaking study in my discussion of the Saho scriptorium.

天經); both texts center on *dhāraṇī* that promise protection by powerful deities.[34] The scriptorium employed a novice monk known as a *śrāmaṇera* (*shami* 沙弥) who served as a messenger and also staffed an administrator named Hida no Kunikatsu 斐太国勝. It was similar to other households we have examined such as Nagaya's, in that it had capabilities to copy texts, employed an administrative staff, and included resident novice monks.

For the most part, however, Hiramaro's household scriptorium seems to have been a relatively small institution compared to the scriptoria managed by Prince Nagaya, the Fujiwaras, and Ishikawa no Toshitari. Large projects such as a thousand copies of the *Heart Sutra,* twelve copies of the *Scripture on the Medicine Master* (Ch. *Yaoshi jing* 藥師經), and a hundred copies of the *Lotus Sutra*, initiated by the Saho scriptorium, relied on scribes employed at the Office of Sutra Transcription, the imperially sanctioned canon copying bureau that we

[34] For the *Scripture on the Eleven-faced* [*Bodhisattva*], see *DNK* 9:339-340 (*ZZS* 32:5 verso); for the *Maricī-deva Sutra*, see *DNK* 10:629-630 (*ZZS* 16:6), 11:13 (*ZZS* 44:1), 11:225 (*ZSKS* 25), 11:357 (*ZZS* 2:11). Sakaehara argues that the other dozen texts listed above the *Maricī Sutra* in *ZZS* 15:2 were also likely borrowed by the Saho scriptorium as well. See Sakaehara 2005a, 41. There are several versions of *dhāraṇī* related to the eleven-faced form of *Avalokiteśvara*; popular versions that were extant in the Nara period include the fourth scroll of the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutra* and the versions translated by Yaśogupta and Xuanzang. See T 901.18.812b-817a, T 1070.20.149a-152a, and T 1071.20.152a-154c. The *Maricī Sutra* likely refers to the version of this text translated by Atikūṭa as part of the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutra* (Ch. *Tuoluoni ji jing* 陀羅尼集經), T 901.18.869b-874b.

will turn to below.[35] This suggests the Saho scriptorium had limited human resources. These projects employed twelve scribes at a time, so the Saho scriptorium likely had far fewer employees, assuming it had a permanent scribal staff at all.[36]

In other cases, aristocrats created temporary scriptoria to respond to specific needs. For example, the household of the recently deceased Bunya no Mahito Kiyomi (文屋真人浄三, also known as Prince Chinu 智努王; 693-10/9/770), a grandson of Emperor Tenmu, requested the services of a scribe named Nakatomi no Takatori 中臣鷹取 for ten days (*DNK* 6:109 [*ZS* 31]).[37] The timing of the project, which was shortly after the death of Kiyomi, implies that the family established a temporary scriptorium to complete a memorial project for the deceased patriarch. Houses that lacked permanent scriptoria could still carry out sutra copying at times of need such as after the death of a family member.

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[35] For the *Heart Sutra* and the *Sutra of the Medicine Master,* see *DNK* 25:9-11 (*ZZS* 38:1 verso). For the *Lotus Sutra*, see *DNK* 12:172-173 (*ZZS* 27:3) and the memo scribbled on the bottom of *DNK* 25:16-17 (*ZZS* 27:4). For more on these projects, see Sakaehara 2005a, 47-52.

[36] It is impossible to know how quickly they copied the *Maricī Sutra*, but the *Scripture on the Eleven-Faced* [*Bodhisattva*] was copied in a day, which implies they had a scribe ready to copy the text immediately. Since it is a short text, it could probably have been completed by a single scribe—unfortunately, we have no way of knowing if other scribes were actively employed.

[37] This document is from the Household of the Former [Deceased] Great Commander (*Ko Dachin no Ke* 故大鎮家). Although this institution may have been related to memorial rites for Kiyomi, one other document dating eighteen years earlier suggests that Prince Chinu (Kiyomi) may have been involved in sutra copying; see *DNK* 12:288 (*ZZS* 15:8). For the identification of this household with that of Bunya no Kiyomi, see *Shoku Nihongi*, *SNKBT* 15:53, n. 22.

Hiramaro was by no means the lowest ranked official to engage in sutra copying. Nishikori no Kimi Maro 錦織君麻呂, who worked as a scribe at the Office of Sutra Transcription, sponsored one scroll of the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* on behalf of his mother and father (*NCS*, plate 49; *NI*, 623).[38] The colophon of an extant manuscript that he sponsored notes that the sutra was proofread twice, much like the texts produced at Prince Nagaya's mansion. It is unlikely that Maro would have been able to sponsor all six hundred scrolls of the sutra, so it is reasonable to assume that he copied the text as part of a fellowship group, a topic we will return to later in this chapter. Similarly, a scrivener (*shishō* 史生) named Kurahashibe no Miyatsuko Maro 倉橋部造麻呂 commissioned a series of texts on behalf of his deceased father (*NCS*, plate 10; *NI*, 612-613). Maro's rank does not appear in the colophon, but his father was Junior Eighth Rank Upper; it is unlikely that the son would have significantly surpassed the recently deceased father's status. Maro, therefore, was most likely ranked even lower, if at all. These cases show that even the lowest level officials sponsored sutra transcription.

[38] His name appears on the back of manuscripts in the Shōgozō collection that were copied for the 5/1 canon. This is the primary source that identifies him as an employee of the Office of Sutra Transcription. See scroll 69 of the *Yogacara-bhumi* (Ch. *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論), *SK* 540. His name also appears partially in scroll 65 of the same text; see *SK* 539. We have no records of his rank, but scribes at the Office of Sutra Transcription were generally unranked or of very low rank.

Although we know little about the institutions through which they copied texts, it is clear that Buddhist practice extended to all ranks of individuals residing in the capital.

We also have evidence from colophons in extant manuscripts that wealthy individuals in the provinces sponsored sutra transcription. For example, a man named Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足 from Yamada district 山田郡 of Sanuki province 讃岐國 (around present day Takamatsu city in Kagawa prefecture) sponsored the transcription of the *Yogācāra-bhūmi-śāstra* (Ch. *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論) in one hundred scrolls. Since the text proper is in several different hands, we know that Kunitari's name in the colophon refers to the sponsor as opposed to the scribe. In addition to photographs of colophons from twenty-one scrolls presently in the Ishiyama-dera 石山寺 collection, I have carefully examined seven Kunitari manuscripts in university and museum collections.[39] My findings suggest that the project was copied through a single institution. For one, the paper size is consistent from scroll to scroll;

[39] I have relied on two scrolls at the Tenri University Library (scrolls 42 and 85), three scrolls at Kyoto University (scrolls 76, 81, and 97), one scroll at Ōtani University (scroll 44), and one scroll at the Nara National Museum (scroll 89). I have also referred to the partial digital reproduction and data from the Kagawa Prefectural Museum scroll (scroll 61). *NCS* contains photographs of the colophons and a brief description of one scroll from Ishiyama-dera (scroll 14) and one scroll in the Kyoto National Museum (scroll 65). See plates 35 and 36. Precise information about the size of individual sheets of paper is not listed in *NCS*. I refer to them as scrolls, because they were originally in scroll format. They were converted to accordion style books (*orihon* 折本) in 1787, although some have been returned to scroll format. See Yoshikawa 2010, 388.

each sheet of paper is about 56 centimeters long.[40] Various paper sizes were used in different sutra projects during the Nara period, so consistency across multiple scrolls suggests that the manuscripts were assembled in the same location. Second, although the colophons have some divergence in style—the column beginning with Sanuki appears next to any of the four characters "*jūroku nensai* 十六年歳" marking the date, the overall consistency of the colophon further supports the argument that that the texts were copied in a central location.[41] Judging from the regularity of the paper size, the structure of the colophons, and the appearance of multiple hands, it is reasonable to conclude that Kunitari had the text transcribed through some sort of centralized scriptorium with a steady supply of labor. The fact that a provincial patron could sponsor a project of a hundred scrolls shows that he was capable of managing significant material and human resources. We do not know if he copied the text through a household institution like the officials in the capital, but it is certainly a possibility. Other fragmentary examples from Kyūshū suggest that officials in Higo province 肥後國 (around

[40] I measured each sheet in each of the seven scrolls discussed above. The precise average sheet length are as follows: scroll 42, 55.9 cm; scroll 44, 56 cm; scroll 76, 55.9 cm; scroll 81, 56.2 cm; scroll 85, 56.1 cm; scroll 89, 55.9 cm; scroll 97, 55.2 cm.

[41] One major exception is scroll 84, presently in Ishiyama-dera. This colophon is unusual in that the "*ki*" from Sanuki is written with a variant 吉 as opposed to 岐 and begins much further down the sheet. It is unclear why this would be the case, but conclusions can only be made after a more exhaustive study of the manuscript. See Ishiyamadera bunkazai sōgō chōsadan 1996-2010, 3: plate 481.

present day Kōshi city in Kumamoto prefecture) also sponsored sutra transcription.[42] Provincial elites, much like aristocrats in the capital, were a driving force of promoting the expansion of Buddhism through much of the archipelago.[43]

These cases show that aristocrats in the capital and provincial elites sponsored sutra copying through scriptoria, many of which were maintained on their estates. These scriptoria ranged from relatively large institutions capable of copying entire canons to small ones connected to mid-level officials. Some scriptoria were likely ad hoc institutions that sprang up in response to events such as a death in the family that required sutra transcription for a particular occasion, but others were permanent offices that regularly transcribed texts.[44] For

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[42] *NCS* plates 34 and 48; *NI* 619 and 623.

[43] The precise geographic boundaries of sutra copying remain elusive due to the fragmentary nature of the sources. Extant manuscripts show the presence of sutra copying activities throughout western Japan, in both Kyūshū and Shikoku, and northward to Echizen province (present day Niigata). I have found little evidence of sutra copying in the northeastern part of the Japanese islands at this time. Much of this area remained a frontier for most of the eighth century. For some recent English language overviews of provincial administration and the limits of the political and cultural spheres, see Friday 1997, Batten 2003, and Takahashi and Friday 2005.

[44] In addition to the institutions listed above, we know of the existence of several other household institutions: Okamato Mansion (*Okamoto no Taku* 岡本宅), Western Mansion Scriptorium (*Nishi no Taku Shakyōjo* 西宅寫經所), the Scriptorium of the Vice Director of the Palace Construction Agency (*Zōgū no Suke no Taku Shakyōjo* 造宮輔宅寫經所), and a household scriptorium for Tachibana no Moroe 橘諸兄 (684-757). From the projects these institutions were involved in, some of these scriptoria appear to have been rather large, but the documentary record is sparse.

elites in the provinces, the situation is less clear, but the codicological evidence from the Toneri no Kunitari project suggests that the scrolls were likely copied in one place, possibly a scriptorium connected to Kunitari himself. Household scriptoria and individual provincial patrons played a major role in promoting Buddhism from the beginning of the Nara period, if not earlier.

Sutra copying was just one of many Buddhist activities that pious patrons engaged in in their homes. As Katsuura Noriko (2000, 68-93) has argued in detail, aristocratic estates commonly contained places of worship, where monks and nuns performed healing rituals and conducted dharma assemblies (*hōe* 法会), sometimes for extended periods of time. There is substantial evidence that provincial figures similarly invited monks to their homes to participate in rituals and that private residences included halls of worship (Suzuki 1994, esp. 39). The famous great state temples were not the only site of Buddhist practice in early Japan; a great deal of Nara-period religiosity took place in the home.

Imperially Sanctioned Scriptoria

Although we only have fragmentary records for the above institutions, we know a great deal more about two scriptoria that for at least part of their history became responsible for transcribing imperially sanctioned copies of the canon. The first originated with Emperor Shōmu's chief consort Kōmyōshi 光明子 (701-760) and eventually became a part of the Tōdai-ji

Construction Agency.[45] The second was connected to the Imperial Palace.[46] These institutions were similar to the scriptoria explored above in terms of manuscript cultures and institutional structures, but they also had unique access to human and material resources and produced canons that were unparalleled in terms of accuracy and scope.

The institution that evolved into the scriptorium at Tōdai-ji began as a household scriptorium for Kōmyōshi, a Fujiwara by birth. As we have already seen, the Fujiwara clan was particularly active in copying scriptures, and her household scriptorium represents just one of several such Fujiwara institutions. The earliest source we have for this scriptorium is a document that records the receipt of paper in 3/727 to copy the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* as well as other projects. Sakaehara Towao, who has explored the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* project in detail, argues that it was commissioned to ensure the safe birth of a male heir when Kōmyōshi was pregnant with a child of Shōmu.[47] It is likely that Shōmu dedicated the paper

[45] I will refer to her as Kōmyōshi throughout this dissertation. She is often called Kōmyō in secondary scholarship. I have chosen to use Kōmyōshi, because this name appears in a colophon to the 5/1 canon, which was sponsored by the Queen Consort. In the *Shoku Nihongi*, she is generally referred to by her title alone.

[46] Much of the following discussion about these scriptoria draws upon Yamashita Yumi 1999c, as well as Sakaehara 2000 and 2003 and Yamamoto 2002. For classic studies, also see the dated but still helpful works of Ishida [1930] 1966, esp. 187-254; Fukuyama [1930] 1982, 108-149; and Inoue 1966, 125-177 and 345-480.

[47] The child is often referred to as Prince Motoi 基王, but this name is from later sources and likely derives from a misreading; his actual name is unknown. He died soon after childbirth and a second project to copy the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* was initiated as a memorial

and may have even commissioned the project. For this reason, scholars such as Sakaehara and Yamashita have argued that the scriptorium had a state character from the start, since its initial project was connected to preserving Shōmu's line (Yamashita 1999c, 17).

The claim that this particular project was connected to politics is certainly true, but we should be careful about making generalizations from a single case to claim that the early scriptorium was in any way a state institution. For one, the project for the safe birth of Kōmyōshi's child blurs the boundary between private and state, as there was surely a personal element intermixed with the political. Second, as we will see in chapter three, individuals of diverse backgrounds prayed for the longevity of rulers and the stability of the realm. Many of these prayers were appended to manuscripts that were copied at scriptoria completely divorced from state structures. Transcribing a text on behalf of the future crown prince tells us little about the character of the institution as a whole. Finally, the early scriptorium of Kōmyōshi cannot be defined by this single project alone. Other projects that do not seem to have any direct connection to "state Buddhism" appear on the same document alongside the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*. These titles include Yogacara philosophical writings such as Vasubandhu's *Treatise on Consciousness Only* (Skt. *Viṃśatikā-vijñapti-mātratā-siddhi*; Ch. *Weishi lun*

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offering to the deceased prince. For more on this project, see Sakaehara 2000, 263-278. We will return to the political significance of the death of this prince in chapter four.

唯識論), Sthiramati's *Treatise on the Assorted [Abhidarma] Collections* (Skt. *Mahāyānâbhidharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā*; *Ch. Za ji lun* 雜集論); and Xuanzang's three scroll translation of the *Treatise on Distinguishing the Middle and the Extreme* (Skt. *Madhyântavibhāga-tīkā; Ch. Bian zhongbie lun* 辯中邊論; transcribed in this document as Jp. *Ben chū ron* 辯仲論). In addition, there are a number of influential sutras including the *Lotus Sutra*, arguably the most important scripture in East Asia; the *Extensive Scripture* (Ch. F*angguang jing* 方廣經), an apocryphal sutra for confession rites based on reciting names of the buddhas; the *Amitābha Sutra* (Ch. *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經), a fundamental Pure Land text; and the *Scripture on the One Who Observes the Sounds of the World* (*Guan shi yin jing* 觀世音經), an influential work dealing with Avalokiteśvara one of the most important bodhisattvas in East Asia. These texts could be used for a variety of purposes and were not exclusively connected to state protection. Finally, the document also records the receipt of paper to copy *Biographies of Female Exemplars* (Ch. *Lie nü zhuan,* here transcribed as 烈女傳 but more commonly written 列女傳), a non-Buddhist Chinese text that outlines the ideals of female virtue. We can speculate that Kōmyōshi would have been interested in learning about these female Chinese exemplars as models for her own behavior.[48] None of

[48] For the original document, see *ZZS* 4:20. The published version in *Dai Nihon komonjo* (*DNK* 1:381-382) is based on a copy of the original document made by the Kosugi Sugimura小杉榲邨 (1835-1910) in 1875-1876, when the Shōsōin documents were in Asakusa Library 浅草文庫. The early editors of *DNK* often lacked access to the original manuscripts and relied on

these texts imply that the scriptorium's primary role centered on state protection or asserting an official ideology. Although protecting the imperial line may have been one function of this scriptorium, it clearly filled other diverse needs as well.

In 729, Kōmyōshi received the title Queen Consort (*Kōgō* 皇后). From this period, the scriptorium came under the direct control of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency. Initially, the scale and organization of this institution did not differ from that of Kōmyōshi's household organization, but over time it expanded its staff to rival that of other large government bureaus.[49] Although the size expanded, the scriptorium still primarily served Kōmyōshi. She continued to sponsor the majority, if not all, of projects initiated through this institution. Moreover, it was located at Sumi-dera 角寺 (also Sumi-in 隅院) on the grounds of the Queen Consort's palace.[50] As before, the texts Kōmyōshi had transcribed covered a wide range of

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transcriptions by scholars such as Kosugi. These sections are notoriously unreliable and it is necessary to consult the reproduction of the original manuscript in *ZZS*.

[49] For more on the development of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency and its relationship to the former household organization, see Sagimori 1996, 8-11 and Yamashita 1999c, 17-18. The first record of scriptorium activities under the Queen Consort's Palace Agency dates to 730, but Yamashita speculates that the earlier household scriptorium would have been absorbed into the Queen Consort's Palace Agency from the time of its founding. The 730 document records the copying of a number of non-Buddhist texts such as the *Hanshu* 漢書, a Han dictionary entitled the *Fangyan* 方言, and the *Analects*. See *DNK* 1:393-395 (*ZZS* 16:2 verso). Non-Buddhist texts were copied periodically at the scriptorium, but the vast majority of transcriptions were of Buddhist materials. The copying of non-Buddhist works deserves further research.

[50] Yamashita 1999c, 30-32; Sakaehara 2000, 134-140. The scriptorium was located at Sumi-dera from at least 737 but possibly from as early as 729.

doctrinal orientations including Pure Land sutras, *dhāraṇī* collections, Perfection of Wisdom literature, texts on the bodhisattva path, and many others; there is little evidence that the scriptorium was exclusively concerned with state protection.[51] Rather, it functioned as a vehicle for Kōmyōshi to express her piety in diverse ways.

Soon after the creation of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency, the scriptorium initiated a project that it would continue for the next twenty-four years: a Herculean effort to copy an authoritative canon. This project, sponsored by Kōmyōshi, is known as the 5/1 canon (*gogatsu tsuitachi issaikyō* 五月一日一切經) after the date of its dedicatory prayer, which was only added to the text in 740.[52] The copying of the canon was administered under an institution that came to be known as the Office of Sutra Transcription (*Shakyōjo* 寫經所). Takaya no Akamaro 高屋赤麻呂, who had begun working at the scriptorium when it was still part of Kōmyōshi's household organization, supervised the canon copying, a fact that further highlights the connections between the earlier household institution and the scriptorium under the Queen Consort's Palace Agency. From 737, much of the copying took place at Nakashima-in中嶋院, another chapel on the grounds of Kōmyōshi's palace, while some facilities remained at Sumi-

[51] For a document that details the projects being performed at this time, see *DNK* 7:5-32 (*ZZS* 12:3). Also see Sakaehara 2000, 170 n.3 and Yamashita 1999c, 18.

[52] For overviews of the process of transcribing the 5/1 canon, see Minagawa 1962, Yamashita 1999c, 402-462, and Lowe 2011.

dera as well (Yamashita 1999c, 30-33). The rise of Kōmyōshi's status and the related increase in institutional capabilities helped enable the transcription of this canon. A project as large and complex as the 5/1 canon, which became the most comprehensive collection of Buddhist texts of its time, would have been difficult to organize through a smaller household institution.

The scriptorium under the Queen Consort's Palace Agency did not copy only the canon. A separate division known as the Office of Sutra Copyists (*Kyōshijo* 經師所) managed by Ono no Kunikata 小野國堅 handled individual projects between the years 737 and 738.[53] Individual projects sponsored by the Office of Sutra Copyists were diverse; to cite a few examples, this office copied a single 110-scroll project composed of a series of sutras dedicated to Avalokiteśvara alongside Yijing's translation of the *Diamond Sutra* (Ch. *Nengduan jingang bore boluomiduo jing* 能斷金剛般若波羅蜜多經); Asaṅga's *Compendium of Treatises on the Great Vehicle (She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論); the *Lotus Sutra*; the *Mahāmāyā Sutra* (Ch. *Mohe moye jing* 摩訶摩耶經), a scripture about the Buddha preaching to his deceased mother in the Trāyastriṃśa heaven; and others. Moreover, from the late 730s, some projects appear to have been

[53] For more on their administration of these institutions, see Yamashita 1999c, 20-28 and 193-198. For an overview of the career of Takaya no Akamaro, see Kitō 1977, 63-92. I use individual projects to translate the term "*kansha[kyō]* 間寫[經]." The character *kan* means interval and is used in contrast to canon copying projects known as "*jōsha*[*kyō*] 常寫[經]" or constant sutra copying. Constant copying refers to the canon projects such as the 5/1 canon, and the term interval is used to describe projects copied in between these larger and more time consuming endeavors.

sponsored by an imperial prince or princess. Although the documents only record this individual's title and not his or her name, there is reason to think that the patron may have been Princess Abe, who would go on to rule as Empress Kōken/Shōtoku.[54]

In fact, the scriptorium would go through a series of changes aimed at strengthening the fairly precarious political position of Princess Abe, who was Japan's first appointed female heir to the throne, beginning when she was named Crown Prince(ss) in the year 738.[55] For one, the Office of Sutra Copyists merged with the canon copying section known as Office of Sutra

[54] See *DNK* 7:125-126 (*ZZS* 17:3), 24:65 and 67-68 (*JK* 6 and 8). Some of these projects also appear in *DNK* 7:91 (*ZZS* 43:1 verso), 7:181 (*ZZS* 46:8). The document suggests that some texts were either transcribed for or by an imperial prince or princess. The alignment of writing in the original document of ZZS 43:1 verso makes it appear that the 110-scroll project was sponsored by a prince or princess, but it may have been the *Mahāmāyā Sutra*, which is the impression given by the printed version in *DNK*. This particular project warrants further study, but this may be an early example of Princess Abe's involvement in a sutra copying project through her mother's scriptorium. I have found evidence that an imperial princess (*naishinnō* 内親王), likely to be Princess Abe, began copying scripture through the scriptorium as early as 735 with a project to transcribe the *Golden Light Sutra*. See *DNK* 7:22 (*ZZS* 12:3). As we will see, Princess Abe became increasingly involved in sutra copying activities from this time. Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to her as Empress Kōken/Shōtoku after her coronation and Princess Abe for the period before she ascended the throne. For more on the political climate surrounding her ascension, see Piggott 2003. I will offer my own detailed study of the politics of her being named heir to the throne in chapter four.

[55] When discussing Abe as the Crown Prince(ss), I use the parentheses after prince to show that although she was a female (and thus a princess), she had the same title as male heirs to the throne (*kōtaishi* 皇太子). There is no native term denoting a named female imperial heir. As we will see in detail in chapter four, Princess Abe was the first princess to be named heir to the throne.

Transcription. They became a single unit referred to as the Bureau of Sutra Transcription (*Shakyōshi* 寫經司).[56] As Yamashita Yumi has argued, the transition to a bureau transformed the scriptorium into a more permanent and centralized institution at a time when Shōmu's line was being challenged (Yamashita 1999c, 29-30). In fact, the very first mention of the term Bureau of Sutra transcription records a request for payment for a project sponsored by Princess Abe (*DNK* 7:167-168 [*ZZS* 17:1]).[57] The connection between the scriptorium and Princess Abe was reinforced through the creation of an additional office within the Bureau of Sutra Transcription called the Office for Transcribing the Canon at Tōin (*Tōin Sha Issaikyōsho* 東院寫一切經所) in 739 (*DNK* 7:263-270 [*ZZS* 3:1]).[58] The institution was likely located on Princess Abe's estate and staffed by attendants from the Secretariat of the Palace of the Crown Prince(ss) (*Tōgūbō* 春宮坊) (Yamashita 1999c, 36-38). In addition to helping with canon copying projects, the Office for Transcribing the Canon at Tōin transcribed a range of texts sponsored by Princess Abe, including Perfection of Wisdom literature, *dhāraṇī*, and sutras on Avalokiteśvara (*DNK* 24:109 [*ZZS* 37:9]). In this way, the scriptorium began to grow into a

[56] The first appearance of this term can be found in *DNK* 7:167-177 (*ZZS* 17:1). For more on this transition, see Sakaehara 2000, 130-143 and Yamashita 1999c, 19-43 and 195-204.
[57] This project is also mentioned in *DNK* 24:66 (*JK* 8). The original order in *DNK* is incorrect; for the correct order, see *SMM* 5:88.
[58] Construction of the scriptorium took place in the first half of 739 and copying began in the seventh month. For a detailed discussion of this institution, see Yamashita 1999c, 33-38 and Sakaehara 2000, 144-152.

permanent institution with greater independence from Kōmyōshi and a deeper connection to the Princess, roughly from the time of Abe's appointment as the heir to the throne.[59] Institutional structures changed in accord with political realities—these transitions would shape the types of projects sponsored and the capabilities of the scriptorium over the next few decades.

After a one-year break from copying the 5/1 canon in 740, the project resumed in 741.[60] At this time, the scriptorium was moved to Fukuju-ji 福寿寺, a temple that would later develop into Tōdai-ji.[61] The transition to the Fukuju-ji site moved it off of the grounds of Kōmyōshi's palace and likely helped further establish the scriptorium as an increasingly independent and permanent institution (Yamashita 1999c, 39). With the move, it became known as the Office for Transcribing the Canon at Fukuju-ji (*Fukuju-ji Sha Issaikyōsho* 福寿寺寫一切經所). A year later, the title was changed to the Office for Transcribing the Canon at Konkōmyō-ji 金光明寺, reflecting the new name of the temple. From this time, the scriptorium ceased to be a part of

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[59] Although Princess Abe began to play a greater role in the scriptorium, Kōmyōshi was still central to the institution. For example, a major project to transcribe one hundred copies of the *Lotus Sutra* was initiated in 739 to cure Kōmyōshi of illness. It is likely that she sponsored the project herself. For a detailed study, see Sakaehara 2003, 57-83. Kōmyōshi's 5/1 canon also continued to occupy much of the resources of the scriptorium during these years.

[60] I have argued elsewhere that the reason for this break is connected to a large dedication ceremony performed on 5/1/740. See Lowe 2011, 14-15.

[61] *ZZS* 7:1 verso. This document is not included in *DNK*. For more on this institution, see Yamashita 1999c, 38-42 and Sakaehara 2000, 152-164 and 2003, 19-51.

the Queen Consort's Palace Agency and instead became a subset of the various Construction Offices affiliated with each of the incarnations of temples that finally became Tōdai-ji.[62] Although Kōmyōshi would continue to sponsor projects through the scriptorium and played a major role in shaping its character, it was no longer directly under her authority. In 747, the scriptorium became the Office of Sutra Transcription at Tōdai-ji in accord with the final name given to the temple.[63] The Tōdai-ji scriptorium would continue to be an important institution for sutra transcription for the next twenty-eight years.

These Konkōmyō-ji and early Tōdai-ji years were exceptionally productive for the Office of Sutra Transcription, as the scriptorium simultaneously copied three canons. One was the 5/1 canon and the other two were sponsored by Emperor Shōmu. Each canon was copied in

[62] It is likely but not certain, that the scriptorium was still under the broad umbrella of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency while it was at Fukuju-ji. There was a Fukuju-ji Construction Agency (*Fukuju-ji Zōbutsusho* 福寿寺造物所), but this appears to have been part of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency. See Yamashita 1999c, 42. For a detailed overview of the period when the scriptorium was called the Konkōmyō-ji Office of Sutra Transcription, see Yamashita 1999c, 54-93.

[63] The scriptorium at Tōdai-ji was a relatively large compound composed of several buildings surrounded by a brushwood fence (*shibagaki* 柴垣). These included sutra copying halls (*kyōdō* 經堂), an office (*zōshi* 曹司), a shed for pounding paper (*kamiya* 紙屋), dormitories for the workers (*shukusho* 經師等宿所 or *sokujo* 息所), a kitchen called the Office for Preparing Cooked Offerings (*Ryōri Kuyōjo* 料理供養所), a bathhouse (*yuya* 湯屋), and a storehouse (*hiwadafuki den* 檜皮葺殿). See Yamashita 2006, 15-19.

a separate hall and overseen by its own supervisor (*anzu* 案主).[64] To copy three canons at once along with other smaller individual projects that were transcribed simultaneously surely required significant human resources and administrative know-how that far surpassed the capabilities of the more humble household scriptoria discussed above. The increased centralization and incorporation into official structures of the scriptorium during this time enabled this expansion of transcription activities.

In addition to this rise in production, the 740s also witnessed gains in prestige, as the Office for Transcribing the Canon at Konkōmyō-ji came to be recognized as an imperially sanctioned scriptorium (*chokushi sha issaikyōsho* 勅旨寫一切經所) in 743. The scriptorium received this designation to signify the 5/1 canon's status as an officially sanctioned

[64] For more on the *anzu* system and its development over time, see Yamashita 1999c, 147-191 and 207-289. Karakuni no Hitonari, a figure we will explore in depth in the next chapter, and Shihi no Maro志斐麻呂 supervised the 5/1 canon until 749, when it was stopped for around two years before being restarted. Ato no Sakanushi administered Shōmu's first canon, which was first called the Great Official Canon (*daikan issaikyō* 大官一切經) and later came to be referred to as the Initially Transcribed Canon (*sensha issaikyō* 先寫一切經) in Shōsōin documents. The name change resulted from Shōmu initiating a second project called the Latter Transcribed Canon (*kōsha issaikyō* 後寫一切經). This second Shōmu-sponsored project, began in 746 and was supervised by yet another administrator, Iokibe no Oyori 伊福部男依. All of these "*anzu*," except for Shishi no Maro, who replaced Hitonari when he became a monk, had past experience working as scribes and proofreaders at the scriptorium. Maro did not have previous experience as a copyist or proofreader but instead likely had worked at the Konkōmyō-ji Construction Agency and was based at the Secretariat of the Palace of the Crown. See Yamashita 1999c, 439-447. For more on the Initially Transcribed Canon, also see Haruna 1995.

compilation.[65] The reasons for doing so are easily grasped; the 5/1 canon was by far the largest and most authoritative canon at its time. Altogether, the project spanned more than twenty years and was only completed in 756. By this time, a total of approximately 6,500 scrolls had been transcribed. It was the first canon to be based around standards established in the recently imported *Kaiyuan Catalog*, which was designed to weed out apocryphal works. Its accuracy was unparalleled, as it used many recently imported texts as exemplars and was collated against additional manuscripts of different lineages. Since it included commentaries (*shōsho* 章疏)—a category of texts not covered by the *Kaiyuan* Catalog—it was the most extensive collection of Buddhist texts in Japan to date. [66] Its status as an imperial sanctioned canon had profound effects on later editions, which used 5/1 manuscripts as exemplars and proof texts. The 5/1 canon was the most exhaustive and authoritative canon to be produced at the time of its transcription and remained influential throughout the Nara period and beyond.

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[65] The term imperially sanctioned scriptorium for copying the canon only appears in documents from 746, but Yamashita has suggested that this designation was likely used to refer to the scriptorium from 742 and continued to be employed for the duration of transcription of the 5/1 canon. See Yamashita 1999c, 393-401 and 453-455.

[66] The structure of this canon was based on the Kaiyuan Catalog, but it also included texts deemed non-canonical and extra-canonical by the catalog. For more on the structure of the 5/1 canon, see Yamashita 1999a, 1999b, and 2000. For the collation of manuscripts, see Miyazaki 2006, 247-279; Ōhira 1993, and Yamashita 2001. I will discuss one non-canonical text and its relation to the 5/1 canon in chapter four. I also plan to publish a study of Nara canons at a later date.

After the completion of the 5/1 canon, sutra copying activities slowed down considerably and the staff of the scriptorium was drastically reduced. No canons were copied and very few individual projects appeared between the completion of the 5/1 canon and the end of 757. Instead, the scriptorium prepared catalogs for the Bureau of Books and Drawings (*Zushoryō* 圖書寮), made paper for documents, and even employed artists (*gashi* 画師) to produce picture scrolls and other Buddhist images during this time.[67] This represents a marked change from earlier periods, when copying was relatively constant.

In the latter half of 757, sutra copying activities resumed in response to Kōmyōshi's bouts with a life-threatening illness. These projects on behalf of Kōmyōshi were managed under a new organization also known as the Office of Sutra Transcription (*Shakyōjo* 寫經所), which was distinct from the larger scriptorium referred to at this time as the Office of Transcribing Books (*Shashosho* 寫書所).[68] In contrast to the years of active canon copying where laborers had constant work at the scriptorium, the several individual projects sponsored between 757-760 gathered laborers to complete a given task and sent them back to

[67] For this period, see Yamashita 1999c, 108-109 and Sakaehara 1994, 362.

[68] Documents for the Office of Sutra Transcription are far better preserved than those for the Office of Transcribing Books. As a result, we know much more about the activities related to healing Kōmyōshi than other projects. For the best overview, see Yamamoto 2002, esp. 138-147 and 575-579.

their host institutions within the government bureaucracy after their work was done (Yamashita 1999c, 108-113).

These projects on behalf of Kōmyōshi involved numerous individuals and reveal her continued centrality to the scriptorium. Her nephew, Fujiwara no Nakamaro, sponsored many of the transcriptions during this period. Nakamaro first commissioned a series of texts connected to extending lifespans in response to Kōmyōshi's illness. This project was composed of a combined thousand scrolls of two *dhāraṇī* texts entitled the *Scripture on the Dhāraṇī for Gathering the Various Buddhas* (Ch. *Zhufo jihui tuoluoni jing* 諸佛集會陀羅尼經) and the *Scripture on the Dhāraṇī for the Adamantine Lifespan* (Ch. *Jingang shouming tuoluoni jing* 金剛壽命陀羅尼經). As her condition worsened, Nakamaro also initiated a 1,400 scroll project made up of three sutras: Bodhiruci's 菩提流志 (?-727) translation of the *Scripture on the Infallible Lasso* (Ch. *Bukong juansuo zhouxin jing* 不空羂索呪心經), the *Scripture [on the Dhāraṇī of the Bodhisattva With a] Thousand Hands and Eyes* (Ch. *Qianshou qianyan jing* 千手千眼經), and the *Scripture on the Medicine Master*, all texts tied to healing ritual.[69] Nakamaro was by no means alone in copying texts to cure Kōmyōshi. The monk Kyōshun 慶俊 (n.d.) organized a fellowship (*chishiki* 知識) of

[69] For the *Sutra [on the Dhāraṇī of the Bodhisattva With a] Thousand Hands and Eyes*, all but one hundred scrolls used Bodhiruci's translation. The other one hundred scrolls were copies of Bhagavaddharma's translation. These projects sponsored by Nakamaro generally tried to use the latest translations, and Bodhiruci's were preferred for this reason. See Yamamoto 193-196.

officials who copied two complete sets of the six-hundred-scroll *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* for the Queen Consort. Similarly, the abdicated Empress Kōken sponsored copies of Yijing's translation of the *Golden Light Sutra* (Ch. *Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經), the *Scripture on the Dhāraṇī of the Jeweled Star* (Ch. *Baoxing tuoluoni jing* 寶星陀羅尼經), the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Brahma's Net Sutra* (Ch. *Fanwang jing* 梵網經), and the *Consecration Sutra* (*Ch. Guanding jing* 灌頂經) for her ill mother in early 760, when Kōmyōshi's condition became grave. In fact, early 760 saw constant ritual activities for Kōmyōshi including sutra copying, recitation, and a hastily organized Assembly for the Humane Kings (*Ninnō'e* 仁王會), a ritual usually reserved for state protection. The fact that such a rite was held for Kōmyōshi suggests that her health was intimately connected to the well being of the realm (Sakaehara 2003, 219-222). These transcription efforts were to little avail. Kōmyōshi died on 6/7/760.

Kōmyōshi's death resulted in a series of memorial projects. On the very day she died, Fujiwara no Nakamaro and the monk Jikun 慈訓 (also read Jikin, 691-777) led an effort to copy the *Scripture in Praise of the Pure Land* (Ch. *Chengzan jingtu jing* 稱讚淨土經), Xuanzang's translation of the *Smaller Sukhāvati Sūtra*.[70] The most impressive memorial project was undoubtedly the One Year Memorial Canon (*shūkisai issaikyō* 周忌齊一切經), also initiated by

[70] Using Xuanzang's translation was an unusual choice and may have reflected Jikun's influence and connections to the Hossō school. See Miyazaki 2006, 329-344.

Fujiwara no Nakamaro.[71] This project began immediately after the forty-nine day memorial rite for Kōmyōshi ended and aimed to copy the entire canon in one year.[72] For this purpose, the scriptorium sometimes had 140 scribes, 10 assemblers, and 20 proofreaders on staff at once, although it was often staffed at only 50-60% of these numbers. In addition to the scribes and other workers, new administrators were brought in to help supervise what would have been an extremely complex and fast-paced project. The fact that Nakamaro could accomplish this feat points to his significant political power. The scriptorium remained intimately connected to Kōmyōshi into the 760s, even after her death.

After a brief yearlong move to Ishiyama-dera to copy the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* for the new temple, the scriptorium returned to Tōdai-ji at the end of 762.[73] Soon thereafter, it became the site of fierce contestation between two factions. Nakamaro and Emperor Junnin headed the first and the monk Dōkyō 道鏡 (?-772) and the abdicated sovereign Kōken led the

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[71] For a detailed study, see Yamamoto 2002, 268-354. The following paragraph draws from his findings.

[72] Earlier scholarship maintained that documents from the fourth month of 760 marked the start of this canon, but Yamamoto Yukio has definitively shown that these earlier documents are from a canon project initiated by Kōmyōshi in her last months. This project ended upon her death, and Nakamaro started a new project from the eighth month as a memorial. The Nakamaro canon was originally intended to be 5,271 scrolls, then increased to a target of 5,372, and ended with a scroll total of 5,258.

[73] The move was intended to be temporary from the start, as evidenced by the building's shingled roof (*itaya* 板屋); see *DNK* 15:236 (*ZS* 37). For more on this period, see Yamashita 1999c, 117-118 and 305-308 and Yokota 1978, 1054-1058.

second. The two factions were battling for power in the political sphere at this time and these tensions were reflected in the scriptorium. The Kōken faction sponsored the transcription of twelve copies of the *Consecration Sutra*, ten copies of the *Commentary of the Scripture on the Humane Kings* (Ch. *Renwang jing shu* 仁王經疏), the *Golden Light Sutra*, as well as assorted *dhāraṇī.* Nakamaro, on the other hand, ordered the transcription of two copies of the six-hundred-scroll *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*. The power struggle divided the scriptorium into two administrative structures—one loyal to Nakamaro and Junnin and the other to Kōken and Dōkyō. The tensions between the two camps boiled over in 764, when Nakamaro instigated an armed insurrection against the throne. Even scribes got caught up in the dispute. The vast majority of scriptorium employees were on Kōken's side, sixteen of them reported to the palace and helped guard the Tōdai-ji Construction Agency during the rebellion. But Shōsōin documents record one scribe fleeing in support of Nakamaro.[74] This period of contestation, which started soon after Kōmyōshi's death, shows how she had been the glue that held the institution and the fragile Nara polity together (Sakaehara 2003, 257-347 and Yamamoto 2002, 375-559).

[74] For the relevant documents, see *DNK* 17:1-7 (*ZSBS* 1:9-11 and 11 verso) as well as 5:505-507 (*ZZS* 18:7:5). For a summary, see Sakaehara 2003, 337-343.

Sutra copying at the Tōdai-ji scriptorium basically shut down from the time of Nakamaro's death in 764 through 770. During this period, the only activities we have records of are loaning sutras. The scriptorium served as a lending library but did not initiate any new projects. The staff was drastically reduced; at one point when the administrator Kami no Umakai 上馬養 was away working at the Office for the Penance Rite to [the Goddess of] Fortune (*Kichijō Keka Sho*吉祥悔過所), the only remaining worker was the long-employed assembler Noto no Oshihito 能登忍人. This lack of activity at Tōdai-ji does not mean that official sutra copying stopped altogether. Rather, much of the imperially sanctioned transcription after the completion of the 5/1 canon took place through the so-called Palace Scriptorium, which primarily handled projects sponsored by the sovereign (Sakaehara 1999b, 171-175).

In fact, the Tōdai-ji scriptorium's importance was likely eclipsed even prior to Kōmyōshi's death. During the *Tenpyō hōji* years 天平寶字 (757-765), Empress Kōken/Shōtoku initiated a project to copy what is now known as Jingo Keiun canon after the date of the dedicatory prayer found on some of its manuscripts.[75] She transcribed this project through the

[75] The Jingo Keiun canon is the name given to it based on the date of its vow, a text we will turn to in chapter three. Sakaehara Towao has studied the documents remaining from this project in detail and argues that it was likely copied in the Tenpyō hōji (757-765) years. Although most previous scholarship has mistakenly thought that the Jingo Keiun project used the 5/1 canon as exemplars, Sakaehara has convincingly shown that the 5/1 canon was only used for

Palace Scriptorium, an institution of a completely different lineage than the Tōdai-ji one. The origins of the Palace Scriptorium can be traced back to a canon sponsored by Shōmu containing a prayer dating to 734, although the institution may predate this project.[76] Although there are far fewer documents concerning the Palace Scriptorium compared to the Tōdai-ji institution, we should not assume that it was less important. The Jingo Keiun canon was a great accomplishment of Nara-period sutra copying. The 5/1 canon and the Jingo Keiun canon were the only two imperially sanctioned canons of the Nara period. In fact, the latter surpassed the 5/1 canon in both scale and authority. It incorporated more texts, many of which had not been imported at the time of the 5/1 canon's transcription. It likely had fewer errors, as it used the 5/1 for collation and an alternate set of manuscripts for exemplars. Unlike the 5/1 canon, it also collated the commentaries against other manuscripts (Yamashita

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collation alongside other proof texts. The Jingo Keiun canon used a different set of exemplars and therefore was not simply a copy of the 5/1 canon. See Sakaehara 2000, 119-124. There are 742 total scrolls extant in the Shōgozō collection. Of these, thirty-five are fragments. Only four of these have the prayer inscribed; the others are judged to be part of this canon based on their codicological features. See Iida 2011. For the manuscripts, see *Shōgozō kyōkan*, discs 89-94.

[76] The institution was likely first known as the Agency for Sutra Transcription (*Shakyōshi* 寫經司) and then became the Agency for Transcribing the Canon (*Sha Issaikyō Shi* 寫一切經司). There is some evidence that suggests it may have been based at Yakushi-ji 薬師寺, an important temple in Nara. For the early years of the Palace Scriptorium, see Sakaehara 2000, 37-53 and Yamashita 1999c, 463-470. Unfortunately, very few documents remain from this period. The 734 date is the earliest piece of documentary evidence, but it may date to an even earlier period. For a manuscript from Shōmu's canon, see *NCS*, plate 14.

2001, 84-85). It is in a large part a matter of chance that thousands of documents in the Shōsōin enable such a detailed history of the Tōdai-ji scriptorium. Other than some extant sutra manuscripts the Palace scriptorium can only be seen through the lens of Tōdai-ji records. Even from the limited available evidence, however, it is clear that the Palace Scriptorium, particularly in the 750s and 760s, was an influential institution in terms of producing large numbers of texts that were used in official rites and distributed throughout the realm.

From 770, transcription resumed at the Tōdai-ji scriptorium with a series of canon copying projects. The first, known as the Initial Single Set (*sen ichibu*先一部), was likely vowed by Kōken/Shōtoku and was intended to be used in a dharma assembly (*hōe* 法会*)* held by the monk Jitchū 實忠 (726-?).[77] It took about a year and a half to complete the 4,585 scrolls that composed this canon with some material support from the Palace Scriptorium (Sakaehara 2003, 448-473). It is unique in that it is the only case where monks administered the transcription of a canon at the official scriptorium. Jitchū held the top management position and handled

[77] For this canon, see Sakaehara 2003, 398-408 and Mori 2001, esp. 105-108. Sakaehara's study, originally published in 1977, is the classic work on this topic, but Mori has questioned many of his findings. Mori shows that the structure of this canon was different from others produced in the latter half of the eighth-century. He argues that it would have followed a different catalog than the others and was not a part of the ten sets of the canon vowed by Kōken/Shōtoku. In place of a single ten-set project, Mori proposes that there were three separate projects: 1) this project, which was vowed by Kōken/Shōtoku and supported by Jitchū, 2) four canons to be supplied to Saidai-ji, and 3) a ten-set canon. His conclusions are provocative but require additional research.

finances. Another monk named Hōei 奉榮 (possibly read as Buyō; n.d.) supervised the day-to-day affairs of the scriptorium.[78] The reason for this sudden change in administrative structure is unclear. It may be related to the fact that the entire canon was closely connected to Jitchū, as it was commissioned for a dharma assembly to be led by this Tōdai-ji monk. The monastic presence could also reflect the influence of Dōkyō and Kōken/Shōtoku's great reverence for the clergy.

Regardless, while the canon copying was still underway, Kōken/Shōtoku died in 770. The next sovereign, Emperor Kōnin, took over the project and saw it to completion, but he never affixed his own prayer to this canon. After Kōken/Shōtoku's death, Kōnin took over another of her projects to transcribe two additional canons called the Beginning Two Sets of the Canon (*shi nibu issaikyō* 始二部一切經). Prior to Kōnin's involvement, 3,723 scrolls had already been copied at Saidai-ji 西大寺, a temple intimately connected to Kōken/Shōtoku. Kōnin moved these scrolls to Tōdai-ji, restarted the project there, and affixed his own—no longer extant—prayer to the manuscripts.[79] These acts marked the canons as Kōnin's own and

[78] Although monks were frequently involved in borrowing texts and collating manuscripts, this was the only time monks worked as administrators at the scriptorium. In all other cases, the scriptorium was an exclusively lay institution. For Jitchū's role, see Yamashita 1999c, 315-316 and Mori 2001.

[79] For the canons copied in the 770s, I have mostly relied on Mori 2001. Also see Sakaehara 2003, 395-437 and Yamashita 1999c, 473-485.

separated them from Kōken/Shōtoku's authority and power base. As soon as these canons were completed, scribes began work on another set called Further Single Set of the Canon (*kō ichibu issaikyō* 更一部一切經) and then another called the Still Further Single Set of the Canon (*imasara ichibu issaikyō* 今更一部一切經) (Sakaehara 2003, 424-432). Each of these contained 4,609 scrolls.[80] While the first of these took only a year to complete, the second required more than two years, a strong decline in efficiency (Sakaehara 2003, 436). The reasons for this decrease in output are unclear, but the last canon was finally completed in 776. At this point, the Tōdai-ji scriptorium likely closed its doors after a half century of activity. We have no other documents from the scriptorium after 776 (Sakaehara 2003, 430-432).

Having traced the history of the Tōdai-ji scriptorium in detail, we can now better answer the question of whether it was a "state institution." In some ways, the answer is clearly yes—its staff was employed by the state, it oversaw the transcription of imperially sanctioned

[80] I should add that the very fact that Kōnin continued to copy these canons should call into question the commonly held assumption that he retreated from the pro-Buddhist policies advanced by Kōken/Shōtoku. For example, see Weinstein 1999, 456. Here, we see him continuing and appropriating these policies for his own purposes. The view that Kōnin took an anti-Buddhist position comes largely from a series of regulations he issued that aimed to weed out impious monks and from an edict where he cites poor monastic conduct as the reason pagodas had been destroyed by fire resulting from lightning. These edicts, however, can all be read as evidence of Kōnin's strong interest in Buddhism—he, like many before him, wished to enforce the highest standards of conduct amongst the clergy to ensure their ritual efficacy. Joan Piggott has also recently argued that Kōnin continued to support Buddhism, although she does not specifically look at sutra copying. See Piggott 2012 (unpublished presentation).

canons, and often sponsored projects for reasons related to sovereignty. On the other hand, several features of the scriptorium suggest a more complicated picture that makes it difficult to classify. For one, the development of the scriptorium in its early years was fairly organic; various steps including the move to the Fukuju-ji site, the imperial recognition of the canon, and the creation of institutional structures divorced from the Queen Consort's Palace Agency all made the scriptorium more state-like, but these changes happened slowly over many years. The early scriptorium was primarily tied to the will of Kōmyōshi and carried out projects for diverse purposes. In many ways, it appears to have been an institution similar to the other aristocratic scriptoria we explored earlier in this chapter, although admittedly better endowed. Even in its later years, it still centered upon Kōmyōshi, be it in sponsoring projects aimed at healing her when she fell ill or those commissioned for use in memorial rituals after her death. This evidence suggests that the scriptorium was connected to the individual of Kōmyōshi as much as it was to the state in any larger sense.

Moreover, after the death of the queen, the scriptorium became a site of contestation—if it can be called a state institution at this point, we must recognize how fractured the state was in the late 750s. The defeat of Nakamaro, in fact, represented a decline in influence for the Tōdai-ji scriptorium. Kōken/Shōtoku began to increasingly rely on the Palace Scriptorium as her favored institution for transcribing scripture from this time. Only with Kōken/Shōtoku's

death did the Tōdai-ji scriptorium once again become the center of copying, but this too was short lived. These efforts by Kōnin were themselves aimed at strengthening his power base. The scriptorium was less a single state institution than it was a tool used by different competing factions for their own individualized political ends.

This is not to say that connections with elite figures and state institutions were irrelevant. These networks set the Tōdai-ji and Palace scriptoria apart from the others we have looked at in several key ways. Most importantly, these two scriptoria had access to material and human resources that were beyond the means of even the wealthiest aristocrats. They could employ a large staff, access the most up-to-date manuscripts, and supply ample amounts of paper, ink, brushes, and other tools of the trade. The manuscripts copied through the Tōdai-ji and Palace scriptoria were sent to major monastic centers in the capital and used by monks who became the leading intellectuals of their age. In this way, these scriptoria had increased capabilities of output and a wider sphere of influence than the household scriptoria we explored at the beginning of the chapter.

On the Issue of "Private" Copying

An analysis of projects sponsored by individuals outside the triumvirate of Shōmu, Kōken/Shōtoku, and Kōmyōshi further blurs the status of the Office of Sutra Transcription. We

have already seen how ambitious ministers such as Fujiwara no Nakamaro occasionally used the scriptorium for individual projects. Monks such as Rōben 良弁 (689-773) and Genbō 玄昉 (?-746) similarly had access to the scriptorium's resources for their own transcriptions.[81] Moreover, the scriptorium occasionally engaged in sutra copying labeled as "private [*watakushi/shi* 私]." These private projects have received no sustained attention in any language to date but are vital to understanding the porous relationship between "state" and "popular" in early Japan. Unfortunately, most of the records of private endeavors are fragmentary, so it is impossible to trace a project with the same detail as those sponsored by the royal family.

One of the best sources for understanding private projects is a scroll in the Shōsōin with a wooden tag labeling it as a "Draft of [Requests] Arriving from the Private Offices" (*DNK* 9:191-199 [*ZZS* 11:5]). We need to be careful in treating this document as a single scroll, because data regarding the arrangement of the original configuration before the scroll was reassembled in the Meiji period has still not been published. From the photographs, there is no evidence of the "white paper" that was commonly placed between the individual documents after they were cut apart in the modern period and transformed into the *Zokuzokushū* 続々修,

[81] For a project related to Genbō, see Sakaehara 2003, 87-143. For Rōben, see *DNK* 3:471-472 (*ZSBS* 15) and 10:269-270 (*ZZS* 37:4).

where the current scroll is found. Still, the document may contain separate components (*dankan* 断簡) that were completely unrelated in the Nara period. It is quite possible that the original scroll looked nothing like the present configuration and probably included other sheets of paper that have now been scattered elsewhere in the Shōsōin collection.[82] These caveats aside, many of the sheets in the scroll as currently configured explicitly refer to "private" copying. For this reason, although we cannot treat the scroll as a single unit, the individual sheets that it is composed of provide a useful starting point for understanding the meaning of "private" transcription in early Japan.

The first sheet dates to 5/7/747. It records a project related to the transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* vowed by an individual referred to as Master Kawachi (Kawachi *senjō* 河内先生). This is most likely Kawachi no Oyatari 河内祖足, who was called "Master" in other documents to reflect his title as Chief Guard of the Crown Prince(ss) (*tachihaki no toneri* 授刀舎人). At this time, Oyatari also served as an administrator at the Konkōmyō-ji Construction Agency (Yamashita 1999c, 75). The document lists the paper and other copying supplies such as

[82] One clue that suggests it may have been reassembled in the modern period appears on the verso side of the scroll. The administrator Shihi no Maro signed his name between individual sheets, but in certain cases the signatures do not align. This suggests that some sheets were removed and then the scroll was reassembled again, after they were rediscovered in the nineteenth century. We must await publication of the relevant catalog of *Shōsōin monjo mokuroku* to confirm the structure of the original scroll, but this is probably some years away.

brushes and ink to be used for this project. It also records the rations of rice, seaweed, seasonings, and payment in the form of coin issued to the scribes, assemblers, and proofreaders, who would transcribe the *Lotus Sutra* commissioned by Oyatari. Other documents from the Shōsōin show that Oyatari sent supplies and money to transcribe what may or may not have been a separate project to copy the *Lotus Sutra* as well one to copy the *Scripture on the One Who Observes the Sounds of the World* (*DNK* 8:580 [*ZZS* 44:10]; 24:558 [*ZZS* 24:6 verso]). It seems likely that Oyatari provided the material and financial backing for the transcription but relied on laborers employed at the scriptorium. As we will see, many of the private projects involved people with personal connections to the sutra copying bureau. Oyatari surely would have benefited from his position at the Konkōmyō-ji Construction Agency and as the head of Princess Abe's guard.

The next sheet in the current configuration of the scroll records the receipt of paper made of paper mulberry (*kōzo* 楮) from the palace (*miya* 宮)—a term that in this context refers to the Queen Consort's Palace Agency—to copy the *Scripture on the Medicine Master* as well as two other obscure works that we have no other records of: the *Scripture on the Subtle Eye* (Ch. *Miao yan jing* 妙眼經) and the *Scripture on the Northern Spirit* (Ch. *Bei shen jing* 北神經). At the beginning of the sheet, a different hand labeled the project "private writing" (*shibun* 私文). This note appears to have been written by an administrator after the rest of the document was

complete. This project differs from other "private" transcriptions in that the paper was sent from the Queen Consort's Palace Agency; it is possible that someone close to Kōmyōshi vowed this project and Kōmyōshi helped supply the raw materials.[83] A scribe from the Office of Sutra Transcription named Yamabe no Chitari 山部千足 copied the texts. A memo at the end of this sheet in vermillion records that the transcription was completed and the payment allotted. This project is somewhat opaque, but the fact that it is labeled private suggests Kōmyōshi did not sponsor it, although someone close to her surely vowed it.

Sheet three records a request to pound 120 sheets of paper for private writing (*shisho* 私書). Pounding was performed to prepare a manuscript for transcription.[84] The following sheet (number four) lists unpounded paper (*arashigami* 荒紙) received for a private sutra copying project by Saeki no Imaemishi (here using his original name Saeki no Wakako 佐伯若子), an administrator at the Konkōmyō-ji scriptorium. Although pounding paper seems to have been a relatively simple process that required little training, these documents suggest that some patrons outsourced the labor to the scriptorium. Much like Oyatari, Imaemishi's unique

[83] This sheet is unique from the others in that the verso also contains writing. This topic deserves further consideration, although its significance is unclear at present. The verso text can be found in *DNK* 9:199.

[84] The exact process and timing of pounding is still poorly understood. For some tentative conclusions on the topic, see Sugimoto 2001b, 73-79, Sakaehara 2009, 129-130, and Watanabe 2010.

role as an administrator would have surely helped him gain permission to use the resources at the scriptorium for his private projects.

The fifth sheet refers to a transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* by two sponsors. The first is Ishikawa no Okumaro 石川奥麿, a figure for whom we have no other records. The second is someone listed simply as Wakako 若子, a name that I take to again refer to Saeki no Imaemishi.[85] It is notable that "Wakako" lacks a surname and that his name is written in slightly smaller characters than Okumaro. Although it may be possible to read too much into this paleographic feature, it likely shows that the project was primarily sponsored by Okumaro, but Imaemishi used his authority at the scriptorium to help organize the project commissioned by an acquaintance. The document records that the payment was issued to two scribes, a title copyist, an assembler, and two proofreaders from the Office of Sutra Transcription. As in the other examples, someone with a connection to the scriptorium was able to rely on its laborers to commission sutra copying sponsored by individuals outside of the imperial family.

The next project listed can be examined in some detail, since several other sources provide corroborating evidence. The relevant sheet (number six) is a request for payment sent by the Office of Sutra Transcription for transcribing two hundred fifty sheets of a text known

[85] The *Nihon kodai jinmei jiten* speculates that Ishikawa no Okumaro is the same figure named Ishikawa secretary in another private project we will return to below. I argue that the Ishikawa secretary was likely Ishikawa no Toyohito. See Takeuchi et al. 1958, 1:176.

as the *Three Scroll Digest* (Ch. *San juan chao* 三卷鈔). An administrator labeled the document as "private writing," using identical language to that found on sheet two. The original request would have been sent from the scriptorium, and our document appears to be a copy (*utsushi* 寫) made for internal records.[86] This is further supported by a memo at the end in vermillion that had originally noted that payment had not been received but was later crossed out and replaced with an annotation recording receipt of payment. From other sources, we can tell that the *Three Scroll Digest* likely referred to *Searching for the Essentials of the Vinaya* (Ch. *Pini taoyao* 毘尼討要) by Daoshi 道世 (?-683).[87] The request for payment dates to 6/10/746, but if we look at the activities of Manda no Emaro 茨田兄麻呂 (n.d), the scribe who copied the text, it is likely that the actual transcription took place during the period between 4/16 and 5/17, as Emaro stopped receiving paper for copying other official projects during this span (*DNK* 9:15

[86] We can tell it is not a draft, as there are no edits made to the body of the document. Moreover, the hand of copies has a distinct feel that is easily gained after viewing several examples. We can think of these documents as the equivalent of a carbon copy, although rewriting the document by hand was surely more labor intensive.

[87] Other Shōsōin documents attribute the three-scroll commentary to Daoshi (using his style Xuanyun 玄惲) and the length of the text cited in Shōsōin documents roughly corresponds to the modern edition in *Z* 44, n. 743. Finally, a report of activities by the scribe who copied this text uses both titles. See *DNK* 9:234 (*ZZS* 23:4). Notably the report refers to this as a separate (*betsu* 別) project, so the scribe distinguishes private from public in his report.

[*ZZS* 35:6]; 9:205 [*ZS* 10 verso]).[88] The length of his absence from other activities also corresponds to the approximate time it would take a single scribe to copy two hundred fifty sheets of paper. During this period, we have one record of Emaro receiving an "old brush," suggesting that the scriptorium might have issued him leftover supplies to enable this private copying project (*DNK* 9:53 [*ZS* 12 verso]). It is uncertain who the patron was, but there is reason to suspect it may have been a monk known as Zenki 善基 (n.d.), as we have an undated record of him sending 170 sheets of paper to copy the *Three Scroll Digest* and a second document mentioning 180 sheets of paper being pounded for the three scroll commentary on 4/17/746 (*DNK* 9:197 [*ZS* 11:5] and 13:63 [*ZZS* 37:9]).[89] This date marks the beginning of the time when Emaro would have been freed from other obligations and available to copy the text, so it seems likely that the paper was pounded and then given to him for transcription. If the above

[88] From these documents, we can see that Emaro was issued paper and performed proofreading for other projects regularly in the period before and after the interval of 4/16 through 5/17 , when he did not copy anything else as part of his official duties.

[89] Another record (*DNK* 13:62 [*ZZS* 16:7]) shows that Zenki borrowed a copy of the *Scripture of Immeasurable Meanings* (Ch*. Wuliang yi jing* 無量義經). In this request, Zenki wrote that he is unable to access the text but had heard that Tōdai-ji had many copies. The fact that he borrowed a text from the Tōdai-ji scriptorium suggests that his home monastery was elsewhere. At the same time, the administrators of the scriptorium must have known him as trustworthy, because they sent the materials soon after receiving his request. Other than this fragment there is no other record of Zenki, but he was surely interested in studying monastic codes to have borrowed Daoshi's lengthy digest on the *vinaya*.

analysis is accurate, this project provides an example of a monk relying on lay laborers employed at the Office of Sutra Transcription to assemble and copy a text.

Sheet seven lists a project to transcribe twenty-six scrolls of the *Amitābha Sutra* (Ch. *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經) sponsored by an individual described as the Ishikawa secretary (*daishin* 大進). This likely refers to Ishikawa no Toyohito 石川豊人, who served as the secretary of the Palace for the Crown Prince(ss).[90] This project to copy twenty-six scrolls totaling 320 sheets of paper used five scribes and two proofreaders. A second document records a request by Ishikawa to have 319 pages glued together, pounded, and lined, so we know that the whole process from the assembling through proofreading was subcontracted to the Office of Sutra Transcription (*DNK* 9:208 [*ZZS* 37:1]).

In the final sheet that we will examine from this scroll, Prince Ichihara 市原王 sponsored a transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Scripture on the Medicine Master*. Ichihara was a former employee of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency and a high-level administrator at the Konkōmyō-ji scriptorium.[91] Although we do not know the precise purpose he had for copying these texts, a poem of his preserved in the *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* (*Man'yō shū* 萬葉集) suggests he had an interest in the *Lotus Sutra* and even composed poetry based on its

[90] For Ishikawa no Toyohito, see Yamashita 1999c, 97, n. 38.

[91] For his career at the scriptorium, see Yamashita 1999c, 74-83.

parables (Yamada 1989, 97). In broad terms, Prince Ichihara appears to have been a particularly devoted individual who sponsored various Buddhist projects and spent most of his professional career administering official institutions related to Buddhism. As in the case of Oyatari, individuals with close connections to Princess Abe and the scriptorium's administration were able to use the laborers at the scriptorium to sponsor "private" projects.

The extant evidence, of which the above is only a fraction, does not provide enough grounds for an exhaustive definition of "private" copying, but some broad patterns can be identified. For the most part, only individuals with personal connections to the scriptorium, generally through their roles as administrators, were able to use its resources. The doors to the scriptorium would not have been open to any pious commoner. Although our contemporary sensibilities may suspect that this reliance on personal connections was essentially corrupt, there does not seem to be any discussion of the impropriety of private copying in documents from the scriptorium or elsewhere. Boundaries between private and official copying were asserted, but the category appears to have been primarily used to denote the allocation of resources rather than reflect any conception of appropriateness. From this evidence it is clear that the Office of Sutra Transcription, a nominally official institution, played a central role in the "privatization" of Buddhism; that is to say, it provided individuals outside of the imperial

clan and lacking the wealth to have a household scriptorium with an opportunity to participate in Buddhist ritual practice.

Although the individuals sponsoring private copying were generally working within state institutions and had connections to ruling elites, the evidence is insufficient for reducing private copying to a form of patronage intended to advance state ideology.[92] Private patrons copied a range of texts through the scriptorium including commentaries on monastic rules, texts about popular buddhas and bodhisattvas, key works discussing lay precepts, and a variety of other topics. There is not enough documentation to determine the precise intentions of the patrons, but the nature of the texts transcribed privately does not explicitly imply ideological motivations connected to the imperial project. Although it is speculative, it seems quite plausible that private copying allowed individual patrons to express their own devotional commitments and promote doctrinal study, as well as support state interests. Pious figure such as Kōmyōshi may have viewed these activities favorably without regard to their role in strengthening her family's political authority.

[92] Yamashita Yumi approaches this position but does not provide any sustained analysis to support it. Yamashita 1999c, 497.

Fellowship Groups in Early Japan

Up until this point, we have primarily focused on transcription commissioned by individuals. A great deal of sutra copying, however, was sponsored by Buddhist fellowships known as *chishiki*, a term that frequently appears in colophons and narrative tales. The word *chishiki* (Ch. *zhishi* 知識), an abbreviation of *zenchishiki* (Ch. *shan zhishi* 善知識), is a translation of the Sanskrit phrase *kalyāṇa-mitra*, meaning "good friends." In canonical Buddhist texts, good friends are described as those who encourage an individual in religious practice and help him or her achieve liberation.[93] In the context of the cases cited in this dissertation, it refers to groups of individuals joined together to sponsor Buddhist projects. Members of fellowship groups pooled their resources to sponsor pious practices that would have likely been beyond the means of individual members. Fellowships played a prominent role in commissioning statues, constructing temples, copying sutras, holding rites, erecting stele, and building bridges in early Japan.[94] With regard to sutra copying, Sonoda Kōyū (1972, 244-245) has found extant manuscripts sponsored by nineteen fellowship groups. This number is significant, as it surpasses the number of identifiable projects for which we have extant manuscripts

[93] For example, see *Zeng yi ahan jing*, T 125.2.596c-597a and *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T 262.9.60c.
[94] This was first pointed out by Takeuchi Rizō in 1931. He uncovered many of the epigraphic sources that scholars continue to rely on today. See Takeuchi [1931] 1998. I will cite much of the more recent Japanese scholarship on *chishiki* groups in the following paragraphs.

commissioned by Kōmyōshi, Prince Nagaya, Ishikawa no Toshitari, Emperor Shōmu, and Kōken/Shōtoku combined.[95]

In fact, Nakai Shinkō (1991, 403) has argued that these groups were so central to Nara religiosity that we would do well to speak of "fellowship Buddhism" as a distinct category used alongside more commonly applied concepts such as "state Buddhism" and "clan Buddhism." According to Nakai (1991, 383-390), Nara period fellowship groups can be classified into two types based on social organization. The first were small scale (usually less than ten people) and aligned to kinship groups. They often sponsored projects on behalf of their ancestors. The second were larger, sometimes numbering several hundred members. These were organized around regional ties that often transcended kinship bonds. Nakai's classification is a useful starting point, but we will see that the lines between the two types are often blurred and some groups do not easily map onto Nakai's schema.

A fellowship group based at Keta-ji (also read as Kita-ji or Kita-dera; usually transcribed as 既多寺 but also as 気多寺) temple in Harima province sponsored the transcription of the

[95] The total number of scrolls is much larger for the individuals mentioned above, mainly because large numbers of manuscripts are extant from single projects such as the 5/1 canon, the Jingo keiun canon, and Prince Nagaya's *Wadō-kyō*. Of course, the Shōsōin documents have enabled us to know about hundreds of projects sponsored by the imperial family through the Office of Sutra Transcription. Only a small percentage of the projects sponsored by exalted figures survive, a fact that reminds us that there were probably far more than nineteen fellowship groups active in the Nara period as well.

Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom (Ch. *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論) in 744.[96] There are more than seventy manuscripts extant from this project out of an original one hundred scrolls. The paper size of the individual sheets is uniform throughout, as are the margin lines and size of the columns. This suggests the manuscripts were assembled at a single location, most likely in the Kamo district in Harima province at Keta-ji temple, the site listed in the colophons. The skill of the assembly is on par with that of the capital. There is about a two-millimeter overlap where individual sheets were glued together, a reflection of the consistent and precise work of assemblers. Also like the scriptoria in the capital, the manuscripts appear to have been proofread. In some places, we can see individual characters and sometimes even whole lines being erased where there were mistakes. My research on provincial manuscripts in general suggests provincial patrons produced manuscripts using the same basic techniques as those in the capital. They began by gluing single sheets of paper together from left to right into a single scroll. After connecting the paper, the assemblers lined it, as is clear from the fact that the

[96] Several scholars have studied this project. I have relied mostly on Satō 1999, 209-222; Sakaehara 1999a, Takemoto 2008, Imazu 2010, and Yoshikawa 2010. I have also looked at eight extant manuscripts: Kyoto University (scroll 40), Tenri Central Library (scrolls 54, 96, and 97), the Nara National Museum (scroll 66), Tokyo University's *kokugo kokubun kenkyūshitsu* 国語・国文研究室 (scroll 81), Tokyo University Historiographical Institute (scroll 87), and Harvard University (scroll 90). These were not included in the earlier codicological surveys by Takemoto and Yoshikawa on manuscripts at the Shimane Prefectural Museums and Ishiyama-dera temples respectively. Imazu (2010, 490-491) suggests that the correct reading is likely Keta-ji.

lines connect perfectly between each sheet. This was followed by transcription, proofreading, and final assembly when the cover sheet and roller were attached.[97]

At the same time, there are some minor idiosyncrasies in the Keta-ji manuscripts. For one, the first sheet is nearly the same size as the other sheets. This differs from the 5/1 manuscripts transcribed at roughly the same time, where the first sheet is usually shorter than the others, because space was left open at the beginning to affix a cover (Takemoto 2008, 37-38).[98] Second, the right margin of the first sheet of each manuscript contains a note listing the total number of sheets per scroll. This is another feature unique to this scriptorium and was likely added as a means to simplify future transcriptions. These facts show that the Keta-ji scriptorium had some of its own distinct practices that differed from the Office of Sutra Transcription, while following the basic techniques of scroll production employed in the capital.[99]

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[97] For more on the process of manuscript production at the Tōdai-ji scriptorium, see Lowe 2011. In Japanese see Kurihara 1972 and 1983 and Sakaehara 2002,142-181.

[98] Takemoto's findings are only based on two manuscripts, but they are supported by more complete data from Ishiyama-dera and from my own study of eight manuscripts. There are some Keta-ji manuscripts where the first sheet is significantly shorter; in most of these cases the first sheet was replaced for repairs. My own study of 5/1 manuscripts has suggested that there are examples when the first sheet is roughly the same size as the others, but this is relatively uncommon.

[99] Other scriptoria likely had their own idiosyncratic practices as well. For example, the Toneri no Kunitari manuscripts, which were discussed above, do not show any evidence of pages being removed for mistakes, as was done at many other scriptoria. In cases where sheets were

Of the extant manuscripts from the Keta-ji fellowship group, all but ten have colophons citing the names of the patron who sponsored each individual scroll.[100] The majority of colophons list individuals from clans based in Harima province. The clan Harima no Kuni-no-Miyatsuko is represented twenty-eight times, more than three times as many as the next highest clan, Yama no Atai 山直. Other clan names that appear include Harima no Atai 針間直 (six times), Saeki no Atai 佐伯直 (four times), Ishitsukuri no Muraji 石作連, and Mononobe no Muraji 物部連 (twice each), as well as a variety of others that appear once. From this, we can see that this particular fellowship transcended clan based ties and forged a new social organization for the purpose of commissioning a pious project.

When we look at the way scrolls forty through one hundred were organized into wrapped bundles (*chitsu* 帙), we can see that the underlying structure of the fellowship can be divided into four subgroups: 1) bundles five and six, 2) bundle seven, 3) bundles eight and nine, and 4) bundle ten. These subgroups are organized around leaders of the Harima clan, whose

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removed, the width of the sheet is often shorter and the margins do not line up. For a discussion of this practice, see Lowe 2011, 29-31. We have already seen how Prince Nagaya's household scriptorium transcribed scripture on unlined paper. These examples suggest that while many of the techniques for making a scroll were widely shared, there was some variance within each institution.

[100] For the best published catalog of colophons and location of extant manuscripts from this project, see Kasai-shi 2006, 74-77. For photographs of the colophons currently at Ishiyama-dera, see Ishiyamadera bunkazai sōgō chōsadan 1996-2010, 3:237-245.

names appear at the start of each bundle. For example, scrolls 61-70, which made up bundle seven, starts with the names of five people from the Harima no Kuni-no-Miyatsuko clan, followed by two from Harima no Atai, and three other clan names. The next bundle again begins with patrons from the Harima no Kuni-no-Miyatsuko clan followed by other clan names. Although the Harima (including those with the *kabane* or hereditary title of Atai) clan members appear in multiple bundles, no other name straddles these subdivisions. In other words, each of the other clans is placed within a Harima-led subgroup. It is likely that the fellowship was led by the Harima clan and that powerful Harima individuals brought neighbors and allies into subgroups that joined together to sponsor the project. This structure at once reflected the strength of this clan in the Kamo district and provided them with a chance to visually demonstrate their power.

The project appealed to both new and old forms of religious and political authority; Imazu Katsunori 今津勝紀 (2010, 490-491) has argued that the Keta-ji temple would have been located near a burial mound (*kofun* 古墳*)* for the Harima no Kuni-no-Miyatsuko clan. If he is correct, the Harima would have been able to display the strength of their ancestors while also establishing their own position as leaders in what was a relatively new religious movement that was being increasingly embraced by elites in the capital at this time. It is also noteworthy that the names of some clans that lived in this area do not appear in any colophons. This

suggests that some groups were either intentionally excluded by the Harima or chose not to participate in a Harima-led project. A fellowship in early Japan could transcend the familial and bring people together, but it also functioned to augment the local political power of certain groups at the expense of others.[101] There is not enough evidence to know whether this organization would have served imperial interests or not, but at the very least we must remember that Buddhism and sutra copying had an effect on local politics. If sutra copying was connected to ideology, it was surely not only a matter of state power but also had effects on a regional scale.

The Harima-led group was not limited to men but also included women. We do not have names of patrons for the first thirty scrolls, but the fourth bundle (scrolls 31-40) was likely composed of scrolls sponsored exclusively by women. Two of the individuals appearing in colophons in this bundle are referred to as nuns and two others as female lay practitioners (Skt. *upāsika*, Jp. *ubai* 優婆夷) [102] Since earlier scrolls are not extant or lack colophons, it is unclear if

[101] The above discussion on the relationship between the structure of the bundles and the social organization of the group draws heavily from Imazu 2010, esp. 482-491 and Sakaehara 1999, esp. 63-76.

[102] Satō 1992, 220; Sakaehara 1999, 69-70; and Imazu 2010, 484-486. The gender of Mutobe no Nasahisa (?) 六人部奈支佐, who appears in the colophon to scroll 37, is uncertain, but the fact that all the other patrons listed in this bundle are female suggests that she was likely a woman. Imazu has speculated that all of the women on this scroll with lay names may have been *upāsika*.

other nuns and female lay practitioners sponsored the preceding manuscripts, but there is at least one other woman listed in a colophon from a later scroll.[103] We have little grounds on which to speculate about the exact percentage of female patrons for this group, but other cases show that women actively participated in the religious life of Buddhist fellowships. For example, in a canon project led by the monk Kōkaku, 49% of all participants were women (Katsuura 2000, 364). A group known as "the Fellowship of Intimate Servants of Yoga Practice" that we will return to below was composed of twelve women and nine men (*NI*, 621). Roughly 60% of a fellowship from Izumi province were female devotees (*NI*, 612). For a group from Kawachi province, there may have been as many as three women for every one man (Inoue 1964, 53). Katsuura (2000, 364) has argued that we should not view these numbers as exceptional; the strong presence of women was likely the norm for eighth-century Buddhist patronage. We have seen that elite women such as Kōmyōshi, Fujiwara no Bunin, and Kōken/Shōtoku were similarly active in the capital.

In addition to their role as patrons, women also likely performed various forms of labor within fellowship groups. One story from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* (*Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記) describes women preparing ink for sutra transcription sponsored by

[103] See scroll 82, which is in the Tōhoku University Library. I have been unable to look at the original manuscript at this time.

a fellowship (*Nihon ryōiki* 3:18, *SNKBT* 30:154-155).[104] We also have records of female lay practitioners carrying out a range of tasks at the Tōdai-ji scriptorium including cooking, making strings used on sutra covers, washing robes, and sewing (Nemoto 1976, 73). It is likely that women in fellowship groups engaged in similar activities.

As noted above, the first bundle of the Keta-ji manuscripts lacks colophons and the next two are no longer extant, so we cannot exhaustively assess the composition of the fellowship.[105] Monks and male lay practitioners appear with surprising infrequency, but this does not mean that they were not involved. Since the organization of extant bundles progresses from nuns and female lay practitioners to primarily male lay patrons, it seems at least possible that earlier scrolls could have contained the names of monks and male lay practitioners.[106] Although we cannot know the extent of involvement from such figures, names of a monk (*sō* 僧) and a meditation master (*zenshi* 禪師) appear amongst the individuals listed

[104] The full title is *Records of the Numinous and Strange from the Realm of Japan [Demonstrating] Retribution in this Life for Good and Evil [Acts]* (*Nihon koku genpō zen'aku ryōiki* 日本國現報善悪靈異記). I will use the abbreviated title, *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*, throughout this dissertation.

[105] The most recent codicological evidence has shown that the first bundle was likely part of the original set, but it is unclear whether the texts ever had colophons. See Yoshikawa 2010, 392-393.

[106] Imazu speculates that this may be the case. See Imazu 2010, 486.

in the ninth bundle.[107] Monks were clearly involved, but extant sources hinder an assessment of the degree to which they played a strong organizational role in the movement.

If monks were absent from the leadership structure, this would be a relative anomaly. Evidence from several other Nara manuscripts as well as inscriptions in sculpture suggest that monks frequently organized fellowship groups (Nakai 1991, 388). For example, the monk Dōgyō 道行 led a project to copy the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* by a fellowship based in either Yamato, Ōmi, or possibly even Izumi province.[108] The opening of the prayer appended to one scroll from this project offers a vivid description of the leader of the group:

> The *śrāmaṇera* Dōgyō yearns for the virtue and fidelity of the wise men of the past and follows the age-old manners of the great sages. [He] abandons and forgets the worldly dust, which is more vulgar than a cicada molting. [He] does not cherish bodily life, which is lighter than a goose feather. Only by leaving one's neighborhood and entering the distant mountains can one put away the frivolous pleasures [that lead to] defilement and fetters and wrap up the disorderly heart [that leads to] lust and self-indulgence. Solemnly, [Dōgyō] shuts himself away and takes refuge in the three treasures. (*NCS*, plate 56)

Although some of the description is fairly standardized, it seems likely that Dōgyō was someone who spent time shut away (*heikyo* 閉居) in remote mountains far removed from

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[107] For example, see scrolls 83 and 86. Photographic reproductions of these colophons can be found in Ishiyamadera bunkazai sōgō chōsadan 1996-2010, 244.

[108] See Takatori 1982 and Takemoto 2008. The three manuscripts extant from this project are all currently housed at Jōraku-ji 常楽寺 temple in Mie prefecture. Although two of these manuscripts, including the one with the long prayer, may slightly post-date scroll number fifty which is likely the original, Takemoto and Endō have both suggested that the prayer dates to the Nara period. See Takemoto 2008, 12 and Endō 2008.

worldly dust (*zokujin* 俗塵). Later in the prayer, a straightforward and far less literary passage describes how the vow to copy the scripture was issued while Dōgyō was carrying out mountain austerities; the flowery and stereotypical language quoted above does appear to accurately describe his character to a degree. A monk who engaged in these types of ascetic practices likely had charisma amongst local communities.[109] It is unlikely, however, that an itinerant monk would have had the material and technical skills to assemble and transcribe six hundred scrolls of scripture. As the prayer notes, "had [Dōgyō] not been able to rely on the efforts of virtuous friends (*zenyū* 善友), how could he have been able to achieve this great merit? Thus, he called widely on friends and acquaintances and cooperated [with them] to so excellently transcribe [the scripture]." Dōgyō was able to unite patrons and scribes into a fellowship to achieve a highly meritorious act. This social organization enabled a monk to fulfill his vow to copy scripture, while also allowing the members of the group to share in the merit from his pious practice.

Dōgyō is but one example of a monk who led fellowship groups in the provinces. We have already seen how Japan's earliest extant sutra was copied by a fellowship organized by a monk named Hōrin in Kawachi province. Another monk named Manpuku 萬福 similarly organized a

[109] Ascetic practices in mountains were believed to lead to thaumaturgical powers; these were valued at both official temples and amongst the populace. For an overview on the topic, see Sonoda 1981, 27-52.

group that engaged in various acts ranging from building bridges to transcribing texts. Notably, the colophons for these manuscripts refer to Hōrin as a teacher and converter (*kyōke* 教化) and Manpuku as a master of conversion (*keshu* 化主).[110] These titles, which both utilize the character convert, highlight the role local monks played as missionaries bringing the populace into the fold of the Buddhist community.

Monks and powerful clans were not the only people to organize fellowship groups. A colophon appended to a manuscript of the *Record of the Inner Scriptures from the Great Tang* (Ch. *Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐内典錄) records that a provincial doctor (Jp. *kokuishi* 國医師) of Junior Eighth Rank Upper, named Mutobe no Azumabito 六人部東人, led a fellowship group to copy the Buddhist canon.[111] Labor for this project was divided between individuals in the capital and Echizen province. The copyist and assembler were from the capital, but the proofreading was first done by a man from the Nyū district in Echizen. The second proofreading was then performed by a monk at Kokudai-ji 國大寺 temple (likely in Echizen Nyū district).[112] Azumabito employed a labor arrangement similar to that used at the scriptoria of the capital;

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[110] For the group lead by Manpuku, see Gorai 1956 and Nakai 1973, 159-171. In English, see Augustine 2005, 90-91.

[111] For a useful overview of this project, see Sakuma 1983, 282-300. The manuscript is currently in the Nezu museum. For the colophon, see *NCS*, plate 52 and *Nara ibun*, 625.

[112] The temple may have been the Provincial Temple (k*okubunji* 國分寺) of Echizen, a fact that would further support the argument that this project relied on both state and local networks. For the temple, see Tateno 2006, 39-40.

namely, an assembler, a scribe, and two proofreaders worked on each scroll. Azumabito's scripture copying used the same basic institutional configuration as sutra transcription in the capital but recruited individuals from diverse geographic regions.

The labor arrangement also reveals how this project united people from the capital and the provinces. It is likely that Mutobe no Azumabito needed to have the texts copied in the capital, because Echizen lacked the human and material resources for a large-scale project such as the entire Buddhist canon.[113] Azumabito, himself a native of Echizen, would have been able to use his role as a provincial doctor—an official post in the *ritsuryō* system—to forge these networks with the capital to enable a large scale transcription project.[114] On a more local level, his charisma as a specialist in healing techniques would have likely helped him build a grassroots network of devoted supporters for his canon. In this way, he may have been able to

[113] These shortcomings occurred despite the fact Buddhism was a large part of Echizen province's religious life from quite early on. For example, in the Nyū district, where the proofreader was from there are remains from a late seventh-century structure known as the Ōmushi 大虫temple site. Numerous other temples are in neighboring districts. See Sakuma 1983, 299. Despite Buddhism's importance, we have little evidence that the canon existed in the provinces at this time, so we can assume this was an unparalleled undertaking that required support from the capital. From the ninth century, however, there is evidence of canons being distributed to the eastern provinces. For more on this, see Maki 2004.

[114] Although the Mutobe clan was mostly based in Mino, they had a presence in Echizen as well. Some members of the Mutobe family resided in the same district in Echizen that the first proofreader hailed from. Saeki Arikiyo has argued that Azumabito himself was from Echizen, See Saeki 1982, 3:347.

draw on similar thaumaturgical gifts employed by monks working in the provinces. The case of Mutobe no Azumabito is significant because it blurs the boundary between state and popular and highlights the capabilities of government officials in forging fellowships that enabled local residents to engage in large-scale projects.

In fact, officials were active in participating in fellowship groups in the capital as well. For example, Shōsōin documents show that Fujiwara no Toyonari 藤原豊成 (704-765) joined a fellowship group of officials to commission a series of images and texts in response to an epidemic (Suhara 1999; Sugimoto 2001a). There is an extant manuscript in the National Museum of Japanese History that was copied by a fellowship group based at the Southern Fujiwara household (*NCS*, plate 86). We have already seen how a fellowship composed of officials and led by the monk Kyōshun 慶俊 copied two sets of the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* on behalf of Kōmyōshi when she fell ill in 758.[115] After her death, a number of low-level officials joined a project to memorialize Kōmyōshi as well (Katsuura 2000, 354-364). These cases suggest that sutra copying by fellowship groups was by no means limited to lower classes or the provinces. Scholars such as Wakai Toshiaki (2004, 113-114) and Furuoya Tomohiro (2010, 209-231), who have looked at fellowships more generally in early Japan, have argued that these

[115] For more on this project, see Miyazaki 2006, 113-130 and Yamamoto 1986 and 2002, esp. 87-96, 228-231.

groups were active at all levels of society and were often organized through structures created by the state. If Nakai Shinkō is correct that we need to account for a form of early Buddhism called "fellowship Buddhism," great care must be taken to avoid conflating this category with "folk Buddhism" or "popular Buddhism" as an entity distinct from "state Buddhism."

Although the social organization and political function of these groups is important, we cannot overlook the role fellowships played in forging religious communities based around shared practices and cultic beliefs. These more spiritual aspects of fellowships are difficult to ascertain from extant sources, but careful attention to colophons can illuminate the religious significance of these communities. For example, a group discussed briefly above referred to themselves as the "Fellowship of Intimate Servants of Yoga Practice." The term I have translated as intimate servants (*gonji* 近事) refers to lay practitioners who upheld the five lay precepts. The sutra they copied, the *Scripture on Understanding the Profound and Esoteric* (Skt. *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*, Ch. *Jie shenmi jing* 解深密經), describes meditation practices and bodhisattva conduct, in addition to outlining the core doctrines of the Yogacara tradition. The members of this group all recorded their dharma names in the colophon and frequently employed characters from the sutra's title in their names (*NI*, 621; Nakai 1991, 389). Although we have no way of knowing how familiar the members of the group would have been with the text, one passage that may have been influential to them describes practices such as copying

scripture as foundational for the bodhisattva path (T 676.16.703b; Keenan 2000, 77-78). The fact that they had dharma names and saw themselves as "intimate servants" who upheld precepts implies that they were likely interested in engaging in bodhisattva practice.

Another example similarly reveals how groups may have joined together to encourage one another in observing precepts as a means to become bodhisattvas. In this case, a monk known as Ryōshūn 靈春 led a fellowship composed of a novice monk (Skt. *śrāmaṇera*; Jp. *shami* 沙彌) and a group of lay men and lay women. They copied the *Brahma's Net Sutra*, a text that centers on bodhisattva precepts (*NCS*, plate 53; *NI*, 626). Again, considering the composition of the group and the contents of the text, it is likely that this group was bound by agreements to follow a set of rules and work together to become bodhisattvas. In chapter three, we will see how some patrons prayed that they could become bodhisattvas through transcribing scripture; some members of fellowships surely aspired to similar spiritual goals.

There were numerous other religious reasons that brought groups together as well. Some scribes participated in fellowship groups as a form of training for monastic ordination and self-cultivation, a subject that we will examine in detail in chapter two. In addition, many fellowship groups had connections to the cult of Maitreya and likely copied scriptures out of devotion to him.[116] Others sponsored sutra transcription as a memorial rite for their ancestors.

[116] For one such Maitreya based group, see Sonoda 1972.

These religious motivations will become clearer over the next two chapters that look at scribes and dedicatory prayers respectively. It is vital to remember that fellowships were not only social and political organizations but also religious ones.

These cases suggest that we should understand the relationship between religious devotion and social structure as dynamically interrelated. Existing social organizations provided a means for individuals to encourage one another in religious pursuits and transcribe texts for diverse cultic and memorial purposes. At the same time, the devotion of members of these groups engendered new forms of community that, at least in some cases, existed independently of state and kinship structures. Shared religious values could serve as the underlying social organization.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have traced the institutions through which sutra copying took place. Individuals from assorted backgrounds and geographic regions commissioned sutra transcription in early Japan. The institutional and social structures through which patrons transcribed texts were diverse. They included aristocratic households, large imperially sanctioned scriptoria, and fellowship groups in the provinces and the capital. It is impossible to calculate precisely the total number of sutras these individuals and groups sponsored, but

even conservative estimates suggest that well over one hundred thousand scrolls were produced in the eighth century alone. The situation by end of the Nara period was vastly different from that of a century before, when the textual footprint of Japanese Buddhism was quite small. The emergence of a scriptural tradition of Buddhism in Japan, which would serve to enable doctrinal study in future generations, was mediated through institutions, technologies, piety, and social organizations that developed over the course of the late seventh and eighth centuries.

Transcribing scripture was an inherently social endeavor. It required an assembler skilled at putting together a scroll, scribes capable of accurately copying texts, and proofreaders with a careful set of eyes, not to mention an economic system that enabled the trade of paper, brushes, and ink. Many of the social organizations that pious patrons relied on developed as a result of emerging state structures. This was not only true for the imperial family but also for aristocrats who received tracts of land and pensions in accord with their rank and for provincial fellowship groups as well. These groups are frequently glossed as a form of "popular Buddhism" in the secondary literature, but they were often organized in accord with geographic districts that had been defined by official statutes and led by regional leaders who themselves benefited from participation in state created inter-regional political institutions. Most of these groups did not develop in opposition to the state. Instead, the

expansion of imperial authority and official institutions likely played a pivotal role in enabling these groups to form.

The fact that state structures helped enable the social and institutional organizations that promoted sutra transcription should not, however, lead us to conclude that all scriptoria can be understood as forms of "state Buddhism." For one, the case of Fujiwara no Nakamaro has shown how sutra copying was the site of political contestation, even amongst elites at court. Sutra transcription was undoubtedly political, but it by no means evoked a universally acceptable notion of the state. Rather, it contributed to fractures in an already weakened system of succession and sovereignty. Second, most fellowships and household scriptoria performed a wide range of roles not directly related to promoting state interests. Aristocrats could use these institutions to display their wealth and practice piety; clans could strengthen their own position within regional politics and perform rites for ancestors; and local communities could forge new bonds amongst like-minded individuals in fellowship groups. In short, there was far more diversity and contestation on the ground than the state Buddhism model permits. Finally, patrons at all levels of society were motivated to transcribe scripture for diverse religious reasons in addition to political ones. These include memorial ritual, doctrinal study, and devotional cults. In thinking about these religious reasons, it is important to remember that just as social structures engendered pious practices, spiritual motivations

also contributed to community organization. It was this particular combination of piety, technology, and social change that enabled scriptoria to emerge in the eighth century.

Chapter Two: A Scribal Vocation

Although we may consider
Life to be composed
Of hardship and shame,
We cannot fly away.
Alas, we are not birds.
-Yamanoue no Okura[1]

In this short poem (*tanka* 短歌), Yamanoue no Okura 山上憶良 (660-733) at once laments the difficulties of the human condition, while recognizing that one still must find a way to live within an often cruel world.[2] The *tanka* itself concludes a longer "Dialogue on Poverty" that describes numerous miseries and tribulations that plagued much of eighth-century society. Scribes at the Office of Sutra Transcription would have likely sympathized with the destitution and anguish to which Okura refers; they worked exhausting jobs for meager salaries, suffered from countless illnesses resulting from poor nutrition, and had little opportunity for social advancement. But just as the poem by Yamanoue no Okura recognizes

[1] *Man'yōshū* 5.893, *SNKBT* 1:503-504.

[2] *Man'yōshū* 5.892-893, *SNKBT* 1:502-504. For English translations of the entire "Dialogue on Poverty," see Carter 1991, 46-48 and Brower and Miner 1961, 121-123.

the need to go on living despite adversity, scribes also found ways to live meaningful lives amidst social and economic restrictions.[3]

Much of this chapter will focus on a single scriptorium employee named Karakuni no Muraji Hitonari 韓国連人成（also frequently 辛国連人成; 721-??), who worked at the Office of Sutra Transcription for eight years including some time as a scribe before becoming a monk.[4] On the one hand, scribes performed demanding work with little chance for economic or social advancement. On the other hand, the Office of Sutra Transcription offered an ideal setting for personal cultivation. Hitonari engaged in literary pursuits, practiced calligraphy,

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[3] I will use the terms sutra copyist and scribe interchangeably throughout this chapter. In Nara period sources, these workers are most commonly referred to as *kyōshi* 経師, which can literally be translated as "masters of scripture." The term *shosei* or *shoshō* 書生, which can refer to both Buddhist and secular scriveners, is also used, particularly for those copying commentarial literature. In later periods, the term *kyōshi* takes on the meaning of someone assembling a manuscript. In modern Japanese scholarship, scribes and employees of the scriptorium are often called *shakyōsei* 写経生. In discussing scribes, I will not provide the abbreviation "n.d." for those whom we do not know their years of birth and death. Such individuals comprise the vast majority of eighth-century Japanese sutra copyists.

[4] As will be discussed below, Karakuni no Hitonari performed numerous tasks, primarily administrative, in addition to his scribal work. In this chapter, I will focus on his role copying sutras. For his administrative career, see Yamashita 1999, 203 and 226-228. I have chosen to focus on an individual who worked as an administrator because of the detailed record left behind including poetry jottings and calligraphic practice recorded on the back of administrative documents. Although some of the details of Hitonari's life may have been particular to his role as an administrator, most of the following narrative can be generalized for sutra copyists as a whole. I will cite the cases of several other individuals throughout this chapter to support this claim.

and participated in a variety of Buddhist activities at the scriptorium. The case of Hitonari as well as that of several other scribes discussed in this chapter will show how these cultural and ritualized practices at once met the demands of the patrons and enabled scribes to pursue particular paths, such as monastic ordination.[5]

In contrast to the state Buddhism model, which focuses on the control (*tōsei* 統制) of Buddhism by the state, I will use an interpretive framework that views scribal practices as disciplinary regimes. Control assumes a unidirectional imposition of authority, but terms such as discipline and regime allow us to consider regulation from the perspective of both the regulators and the regulated. The word regime, which now commonly implies an unjust system of government, originally referred to dietary and meditative practices that were intended to improve a person's welfare—a meaning that is preserved in the modern English word regimen. Hitonari's experience at the Office of Sutra Transcription provided him with opportunities for self-improvement. Moreover, as implied by the multiple meanings of regime, these practices had the potential to benefit both the scribe and the state.

The term discipline similarly has a passive and active sense. First, discipline can be imposed from above, as in being disciplined by one's teacher. In the second sense, which may

[5] I use the term practice to refer to dynamic human action that is enabled through historically contingent power relations and institutional structures. My use of the term practice draws upon Bourdieu 1977.

arise as a result of the first, one becomes self-disciplined and is able to do what is required independent of external force.[6] More concretely, patrons and administrators at the Office of Sutra Transcription demanded that scribes uphold ritual protocol tied to diet and dress and maintain strict calligraphic standards to ensure that the manuscript would become empowered to efficaciously answer the patron's prayers. These same practices enabled scribes to cultivate themselves in a manner in line with broader cultural and religious values. I will suggest that the very practices demanded by the state aided Hitonari in becoming a monk. In this way, I hope to insert a sense of agency into our understanding of scribes by considering the ethical implications of scribal practice, while recognizing that agency does not necessarily imply a subversion of norms or a resistance to authority.[7]

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[6] My use of discipline as an analytic tool draws heavily from Talal Asad 1993, 159-167. More generally, recent work on the body that explores how specific skills and dispositions are cultivated through pedagogical practices has been helpful in framing my discussion. For this, see Asad 1993 (esp. 83-167) and 1997 and Mahmood 2001a and 2005. It perhaps goes without saying that Foucault's seminal study of penal systems influences my thinking on the notion of discipline. See Foucault 1995. In particular, Foucault's emphasis on the contingency of power and his argument that power structures in disciplinary regimes function to produce particular forms of knowledge can help us move beyond binary models that reduce the relationship between the state and the scribe to simple exploitation.

[7] My use of the term agency is in line with recent work in anthropology by scholars such as Saba Mahmood, who suggest that we can think of agency, "not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create." Mahmood 2001b, 203. In this way, I do not use agency to suggest that scribes acted against or in resistance to power structures, particularly since the power structures themselves defined what types of actions were available. Instead, agency is

Social and Economic Perspectives

Karakuni no Muraji Hitonari began working at the scriptorium in 737, right around the time when the Office of Sutra Transcription was being established as part of the Queen Consort's Palace Agency. He was sixteen years old at the time.[8] Like other employees at the scriptorium, Hitonari was low-ranked and unordained.[9] At this early stage, the Office of Sutra Transcription was primarily staffed with workers who had originally served as attendants (*toneri* 舎人) at the Queen Consort's Palace Agency. It is likely that Hitonari entered the scriptorium through a connection with this Agency. When the Office of Sutra Transcription

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used to describe the way that sutra copyists lived within a set of historically conditioned norms that governed their behavior. My thinking on agency has been shaped mostly by Asad 1993 and 2003 and Mahmood 2001b and 2005. In calling scribal practices ethical practices, I am referring specifically to the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics. The relationship between Buddhism and Aristotelian ethics has been explored at length in Damien Keown 1992, esp. 193-229.

[8] His age is based on a document from 745, which lists him as twenty-four years old and having labored at the scriptorium for eight years. Unfortunately, since the original document has been blotted out, it is unclear if the number in the published photostatic copies reads twenty-four or thirty-four. I have followed the reading given by the editors of the *DNK* and *NI.* It is possible, however, that he would have been twenty-six at the start of his employment. There is evidence of other teenagers being employed at the Office of Sutra Transcription, so we have no reason to doubt the younger age. I will discuss the document that records his age more fully below. See *DNK* 24:298 (*ZZS* 37:9 verso).

[9] In fact, Hitonari was most likely without official rank. Many scribes did not hold rank and those that did were on the bottom rungs of the social scale. Recent research on Dunhuang colophons suggests that scribes in medieval China came from similar social backgrounds and were also unordained. See Wang 1995, 128-136 and McNair in Harrist 1999, 230.

became independent of the Queen Consort's Agency, workers were increasingly transferred to the scriptorium—often on a temporary basis—from other state bureaus including the Council of State (*Daijō kan* 太政官), the Ministry of Central Affairs (*Chūmu shō* 中務省), and the Ministry of Ceremonials (*Shikibu shō* 式部省) (Yamashita 1999, 28; Inoue, 1966, 131-132).

In addition, some sutra copyists were hired from outside the government bureaucracy. Many of these scribes were recommended by people with a connection to the scriptorium. Recommenders included monks, employees at the Tōdai-ji Construction Agency, and other copyists.[10] For example, on 3/8/ 771, a scribe named Yahagibe no Hiromasu 矢作部廣益 was recommended by the monk Jisō 慈窓, who had previously performed collating duties for the Office of Sutra Transcription.[11] In another case, a scribed named Hata no Okimi 秦男公 was recommended by Masuda no Nawate 益田縄手, a carpenter working at the Tōdai-ji Construction Company (*DNK* 15:460-461 [*ZZS* 44:6 verso]).[12] Familial or clan based connections

[10] For scribes being recommended by monks, see *DNK* 22:39 (*ZZS* 40:4 verso). For scribes being recommended by another scribe, see *DNK* 17:198 (*ZZS* 39:1 verso) and 22:39 (*ZZS* 24:7). For scribes being recommended by employees at the Tōdai-ji Construction Agency, see *DNK* 16:112 (*ZZS* 4:21).

[11] For the recommendation letter, see *DNK* 6:126 (*ZSBS* 47:11). For Jisō's role as a proofreader, see *DNK* 18:453 (*ZZS* 34:10).

[12] This recommendation letter was addressed to another scribe named Kachibe no Oguro 勝部小黒.

also played a role, as we have cases of administrators at the scriptorium recommending people with the same clan name (*DNK* 17:198 [*ZZS* 39:1 verso]).

Scribes were also expected to have calligraphic expertise. The existence of calligraphy exams suggests that some potential sutra copyists were tested on their hand prior to being hired at the Office of Sutra Transcription.[13] Moreover, recommendation letters occasionally mention the candidate's ability to write, which further points to the importance of calligraphic ability (ex. *DNK* 22:40 [*ZZS* 26:5 verso]). As will be discussed in more detail below, Hitonari and other scribes worked diligently to improve their calligraphy by patterning their hand after past masters. Personal connections surely helped, but calligraphic talent was also a prerequisite for employment.

Shōsōin documents provide rich demographic data about scribes. Many appear to have come from Korean immigrant groups. [14] The majority of scribes were in their twenties or early

[13] The texts of the calligraphic exams can be found in *DNK* 11:107-112, 19:133-140, 25:197 (*ZSKS* 22:1 verso, *ZZS* 22:3 verso, and *ZS* 44:16). For a brief discussion of the calligraphic qualities of these exams, see the entry by Minagawa Kan'ichi in Imai 1975, 254-255. Also see Tōno 1989.

[14] The immigrant origins of scribes were first pointed out in a 1932 article by Kishiro Shūichi, which was later republished in Kishiro 1982, 78. For a list of the names of scribes employed at the Office of Sutra Transcription, see Tanaka 1953, 50-66. Karakuni no Muraji Hitonari's own background is slightly ambiguous. Despite his Korean sounding name, it is not clear if he was actually of Korean descent. Genealogical records from the early Heian period state that the name Karakuni (with the *kabane* Muraji 連) originated in the reign of Buretsu 武烈 (late sixth century) and was bestowed on a branch of the Mononobe clan who had been sent as envoys to Korea. See *Shinsen shōji roku*, 270 and *Shoku nihongi* 11/10/790, *SNKBT*, 16:480-481. It is of note

thirties. There were certainly exceptions to this, as some employees such as Hitonari and Haji no Muraji Azumabito土師連東人 started working in their teens. Others such as Kume no Atai Kumataka 久米値熊鷹 began in their late forties or early fifties. Most were low-level bureaucrats or otherwise hailed from families that possessed titles (*kabane* 姓) but lacked official posts. Hitonari held the title Muraji, which suggests his family had historically held some prominence.[15] Although most scribes came from close geographic proximity to the capital, some hailed from as far away as Hitachi 常陸 (present day Ibaraki 茨城県) and Mino 美濃 (present day Gifu 岐阜県).[16] We have no records that directly speak to where Hitonari came from, but his lineage group was most likely based in Izumi Province 和泉 (present day Osaka) (Saeki 1982, 4:270-272). This region housed many immigrant communities, and its residents actively engaged in Buddhist practice.

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that many people from the clan of Karakuni appear to have been engaged in various ritual activities. The clan name and its background are discussed in detail in Saeki 1982, 4:270-272. Despite the official account of the Karakuni name, Saeki suggests that it is possible that the clan actually originated from Korea. Regardless, the strong presence of scribes from the Korean peninsula in the Office of Sutra Transcription is undeniable. For the importance of such immigrant groups in the cultural, religious and political spheres of early Japan, see Como 2008 and 2009, as well as Ooms 2009, especially 86-104.

[15] The most detailed English language treatment of the *kabane* system can be found in Miller 1974. Miller's work, however, was dated even at the time of publication and must be used cautiously. For a trenchant review, see Kiley 1977.

[16] I have drawn much of the information about ages and places of origin from *DNK* 3:78-81 (*ZS* 28:8).

Once employed at the scriptorium, Hitonari performed a range of tasks. He first appears as a proofreader in a documented dated to 2/737 (*DNK* 7:102 [*ZZS* 43:1]). During his first few years at the Office of Sutra Transcription, he served as an attendant (*toneri* 舎人), ran errands such as returning sutras to their respective owners, and checked administrative documents for accuracy. While these activities surely occupied much of Hitonari's time, he also proofread and copied sutras. Hitonari's administrative duties increased over time, and he eventually took on the position of supervisor (*anzu* 案主) from around 743, when the Office of Sutra Transcription became divorced from the Queen Consort's Palace Agency.[17] In this role, Hitonari compiled registers and prepared other administrative documents. He was in many ways a jack-of-all trades, and he continued to perform these various administrative, proofreading, and copying tasks concurrently for much of his time at the Office of Sutra Transcription.

Hitonari would start his workday at sunrise and complete daytime and evening shifts. Most scribes worked over twenty days and nights per month at the scriptorium. Records indicate that Hitonari was particularly disciplined in his work and often labored more than twenty-eight days and nights a month, sometimes working on every day of the month (*DNK*

[17] As outlined in chapter one, supervisors managed separate projects to copy the Buddhist canon. The other supervisor at this time was Ato no Sakanushi 阿刀酒主. See Yamashita 1999, 224-228.

7:411-418 [*ZZS* 24:5]). Scribes slept at the scriptorium and were only able to return home for vacation once every two or three months. Although they were granted a holiday around the New Year, they were not afforded the privilege of going home during planting and harvest times, which was a benefit traditionally granted to other state employees.[18] Labor conditions were the source of occasional grumblings by scribes, as is clear from a petition that lists several demands including five days of vacation per month and improvements in the quality of the food, which was provided by the scriptorium.[19.] Other scribes complained about the aches and pains that accompanied long hours sitting and copying scripture (*DNK* 24:116-118 [*ZZS* 46:8]).

[18] Much of the above paragraph and the following discussion of the social and economic history of scribes draws from the work of Kishiro [1932] 1982; Maruyama 2010, 177-221; Ōi 1982; and Sakaehara 1985, 80-97; 1987, 196-209; and 1991, 233-242. The best overview in English on the labor conditions of scribes can be found in Farris 2007, 428-430.

[19] Breakfast, dinner, and a light afternoon snack were provided. Meals consisted of a simple diet including rice, beans, seaweed, pickled vegetables, fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables, soy products, and crackers. As I will discuss in detail later in this chapter, the diet was intentionally vegetarian for reasons related to ritual. For more comprehensive lists of what scribes ate see Ishida [1930] 1966, 211-214; Sekine 1969; and Maruyama 2010, 191-197. Overall, it appears that their diet was nutritionally deficient in some areas, which may have lead to the frequent complaints about health and rampant illness at the Office of Sutra Transcription. See Shinmura 1985 and Sakaehara 1991, 234-236. For an assessment of calorie and vitamin intake at the Office of Sutra Transcription, see Seo, et al. 1982.

When transcribing scripture, scribes copied an average of 8.6 sheets a day with the fastest scribes copying over thirteen sheets.[20] Scribes had incentive to copy sutras quickly, as they were paid for their work based on the number of sheets copied. The Office of Sutra Transcription paid scribes in cloth at a rate of one unit (*tan* 端) for every forty sheets copied or in equivalent coin payments of five *mon* 文 per sheet.[21] This rate holds for Hitonari, who was paid 1,655 *mon* on 7/10/742 for copying 331 sheets (*DNK* 8:110 [*ZSBS* 49:1]).[22] Sometimes, it appears that the productivity of scribes exceeded the supply of paper. Shōsōin records show that scribes lamented that paper allotments were inadequate for the number of scribes employed (*DNK* 24:116-117 [*ZZS* 46:8]).

Although speed was clearly valuable in copying scripture, accuracy was equally important, as scribes were fined for sloppy work. Sutras were proofread twice and sometimes

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[20] I take this data from Sakaehara 1987, 203. Each sheet contained around 24 lines composed of seventeen characters per line. In this way, scribes averaged more than 3,500 characters a day, and the fastest scribes finished close to 6,000 characters per day. In contrast, as Yamada Hideo notes, monks who were forced to copy sutras for punishment were required to copy five sheets a day. Yamada 1965, 4-5. For legal commentaries that outline sutra copying as punishment see *Ryō no gige* 令義解, *KT* 24:85. The number of five sheets a day appears in the late ninth century *Ryō no shūge*令集解 commentary and is taken from the no longer extant Chinese code, the *Daoseng ge* 道僧格. See *Ryō no shūge*, *KT* 25:135.

[21] One *tan* of cloth was worth 200 *mon* of coin.

[22] The pay for his 302 sheets on 12/17/742 is a bit more complicated. He was paid 1,495 *mon* for this work. Of the sheets he copied, 297 were full and 5 were prayers appended to the end of sutras (*kechigan* 結願). The total payment is reached through a calculation of 5 mon per full sheet and 2 mon per prayer added. See *DNK* 8:158-159 (*ZZS* 3:2).

three times after being copied. According to official regulations, scribes suffered pay reductions for mistakes. These rules changed over time, but according to guidelines issued on 2/8/751, one *mon* was deducted for every five characters missed. Larger fines were assessed for more grievous errors such as skipping an entire line. Proofreaders, on the other hand, received bonuses as incentives for catching errors.[23] In this way, a regulatory structure ensured that scribes produced reliable texts by penalizing them for inconsistencies.

At times, a sutra copyists pay provided a modest but livable income. In the volatile inflationary environment that plagued the Nara period, however, a scribal salary sometimes became difficult to get by on.[24] Particularly in the 770s, scribes faced pay reductions, stricter food rationing, and burdensome high interest loans.[25] They borrowed anywhere between one hundred *mon* to five string (*kan* 貫; one *kan* is equivalent to one thousand *mon*) at a time (ex.

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[23] This was first pointed out in Ishida [1930] 1966, 216-18. Also see Haruna 1995, 10-13, 17, and 22-25. For documents, see DNK 3:487-489 (*ZZS* 46:6); 11:485-486 (*ZZS* 46:6); and 2:353.

[24] For a good overview of the problems with inflation throughout the Nara period, see Farris 1998b, 313-318. For the effect of inflation on scribes, see Yamada 1965.

[25] For pay reductions, see Yamashita 2006. Loan requests (*gesshaku senge* 月借銭解) have been the focus of some of the earliest studies of Shōsōin documents. See Aita 1923 and Kishiro [1932] 1982, 81-86. Later detailed studies can be found in Kitō 1977, 196-235; Maruyama 2010, 211-221; Nakamura 1992; Sakaehara 1987, 256-261 and 1991, 239-242, and Yamashita 2010. In English, see Farris 2007, 429-430. Yamashita's recent work, which is the best overview of the topic, revises previous views by showing how the Office of Sutra Transcription initiated loans for reasons tied to the institution's finances. She suggests that loans were not a symptom of scribes' underlying economic duress but instead represent a causal factor that contributed to their financial difficulties.

DNK 6:518-519 [*ZS* 24:11]). According to legal codes, the standard rates were fifty percent interest for eight months (*Yōrō ritsuryō,* NST 3:496). Although these rates are high by modern standards, loan rates rose to even more exorbitant levels of around thirteen to fifteen percent a month in the 770s (*DNK* 6:424-426 [*ZS* 23:2-3]; 6:515-516 [*ZS* 24:8]).

These high interest loans often put scribes in dire situations. For example, in one well-known case, a group of scribes fled the scriptorium, because they could not pay the interest. They were later found working under assumed names at Ishiyama-dera. Each scribe had merely borrowed a hundred coins, suggesting that even a small loan could pose substantial financial threats.[26] Although we do not have any evidence that Hitonari, who likely earned more as an administrator, faced financial difficulties, it is clear that many employees of the Office of Sutra Transcription struggled to get by, particularly in the years following Hitonari's departure from the scriptorium.

In addition to these economic obstacles, scribes had little opportunity for social advancement. They were assessed annually (*kō* 考) on their performance to determine whether they had completed 140 days of labor in a given year (*Yōrō Ritsuryō*, NST 3:295-296).[27]

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[26] This case is discussed in Sakaehara 1987, 256-261 and 1991 239-242. In English, see Farris 2007, 429-430. The relevant document is translated in Farris 1985, 130-131 and can be found in *DNK* 15:441 (*ZZS* 45:3 verso).

[27] For a detailed overview of the structure of the bureaucracy and the intricacies of the assessment system, see Nomura 1967 and 1975.

Six successful assessments were required to gain rank. As a result, even if a scribe were to work for forty years, he would only have six opportunities for promotion. No matter how hard the average scribe struggled, he would have had little chance to move beyond the seventh or eighth rank. Since there was a dramatic cutoff in terms of social prestige and economic benefits between sixth and fifth rank, it was nearly impossible to gain elite status through scribal labor (Sakaehara 1991, 236-237).[28]

The above discussion has followed the standard narrative presented by scholars such as Sakaehara Towao and Wayne Farris who specialize in social and economic history. According to this narrative, the scribal life was bleak; scribes worked long hours of excruciating labor for little pay with only modest potential for increase in rank. In some extreme cases, they were forced to flee when faced with heavy debts. While labor conditions, pay rates, and chances of promotion are all relevant subjects for research on sutra copyists, focusing exclusively on these variables risks reducing scribes to their economic potential. The scribal life--and the human condition in general—is not simply a narrative of dollars and cents. In the field of cultural history, it is important to avoid the crude Marxist trap of reducing all cultural practice

[28] Even those who were able to achieve important administrative positions at the Office of Sutra Transcription faced similar obstacles. Joan Piggott has traced the careers of three administrators, and it is significant that the only one to reach fifth rank was born into a family that had already achieved this status. See Piggott 1987, 148-156. There are a few cases of scribes gaining elite rank. I will briefly discuss the case of one such scribe later in this chapter.

to a superstructure that simply reflects an economic base. We should remember that although the precise modes of practice that one can engage in are surely circumscribed by economic and social structures, many individuals viewed cultural and religious practices as meaningful in and of themselves. In the remainder of the chapter, I will trace the literary, calligraphic, and religious possibilities opened up to Karakuni no Hitonari through his work at the Office of Sutra Transcription.

Literary Production

The Office of Sutra Transcription provided Hitonari with ample opportunities to learn a literary discipline. At the scriptorium, Hitonari would have had access to canonical Buddhist and classical literary texts. For example, we have records of scribes copying *Literary Selections* (*Wen xuan* 文選) and the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), as well as other texts that functioned as primers for learning literacy.[29] Scribes were able to utilize these resources to participate in the literary culture of the Nara period.

[29] Tōno Haruyuki argues that the *Wen xuan* became widespread in the Nara period amongst both powerful families in the provinces and low-ranking officials in the capital. He points to numerous cases of low-ranking employees at the scriptorium copying the *Wen xuan* and notes that other literary texts were also available at the Office of Sutra Transcription. See Tōno 1977, 189-224. For a brief overview on the way low ranking officials at the scriptorium learned the Chinese classics through their employment at the Office of Sutra Transcription, see Hamamichi 2010. For the *Wen xuan* in later periods, see Steininger 2010, 35-83.

The fruits of Hitonari's learning are preserved in a poem and preface authored by him dating to 745.[30] The preface to Hitonari's poem can be translated as follows:

> 'Tis the fine days of early autumn and the refreshing season of the seventh night. The cool air begins to rise, as singing cicadas clamor in the willows of the courtyard. White dewdrops start to form, as golden fireflies fly around the grass of the stone steps. At such a time, the learned gentlemen pour one another unfiltered wine [*moromi* 醪][31] on this auspicious day. The fair maidens thread the needle on this fine night. How can I take up a brush at this moment? Each person selects their rhymes and composes two verses. (*ZS* 32:6).[32]

The preface identifies the occasion as *Tanabata* 七夕, which celebrates the festival of the seventh night of the seventh month. Tanabata poems formed a distinct sub-genre in Japanese poetics; the festival was the topic of compositions in classical Chinese and Japanese.[33] In the Nara period, people often gathered together to exchange poems to celebrate this holiday. The concluding line suggests that the preface and poem may have been composed for such a gathering, as it asks each participant to present two verses. Although we have no other Tanabata poems authored by scribes, other Chinese compositions extant in the Shōsōin collection suggest that some copyists were competent in writing verse.[34] This leaves open the

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[30] For the dating of the preface and poem, see Minagawa Kan'ichi's entry in Imai 1975, 236.
[31] Here I follow Kojima in substituting this character for 滲. Kojima 1965, 1319.
[32] I have found Watanabe 2009 to be particularly helpful in sorting out transcription and translation problems in this preface.
[33] For the classic overview of *tanabata* poetry in early Japan, see Kojima 1962, 1120-1153.
[34] For one such poem, see *DNK* 17:486 (*ZZS* 39:2 verso). A brief overview can be found in Maruyama 2010, 230-231. Also see Kojima 1965, 1320.

possibility that scribes may have gathered for a Tanabata poetry session to celebrate the arrival of autumn.[35]

Hitonari's preface reveals a deep familiarity with the Chinese poetic tradition. For one, he uses seasonal words such as cool air (*ryōki* 涼気), singing cicadas (*meisen* 鳴蟬), golden fireflies (*kinkei* 金螢), and grass on the stone steps (*seisō* 砌草).[36] Each of these terms has precedents in Chinese poetry and is used to express the feeling of an early autumn night. Amongst other things, Tanabata traditionally marked the passing from summer to early autumn, so the usage of these terms makes the reader immediately aware of the Tanabata season. Other terms such as threading the needle (*senshin* 穿針) draw upon continental themes of weaving cults tied to Tanabata; this image is frequently used in Tang dynasty poems about the Seventh Night Festival. Although the tonal structure is by no means perfect, his understanding of tones compares favorably with poems contained in the elite poetry of *Fond Recollections of Poetry* (*Kaifūsō* 懐風藻) (Watanabe 2009, 124). Finally, the overall structure of the

[35] A document discussing scribes being supplied with the seven types of food to celebrate Tanabata provides further evidence that scribes joined together to celebrate this holiday. *DNK* 6:239 (*ZSBS* 12 verso). Maruyama has argued that scribes joined together to celebrate seasonal festivities throughout the year. See Maruyama 2010, 236-238.

[36] The image of golden fireflies comes from an autumn poem by Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (?-684), see *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩, *juan* 78, p. 851. The term "grass on the stone steps" was taken up by Tang poets as well; see *Quan Tang shi*, *juan* 747, p. 8505. The other phrases are extremely common in literary texts such as the *Liji*, *Wen xuan*, and medieval Chinese poetry; see Watanabe 2009, 125-129.

preface, which first establishes the setting of the banquet and then expresses the poet's desire to compose verse, follows patterns found in medieval Chinese poetry prefaces and is particularly influenced by Wang Bo 王勃 (649-746).[37]

The text of the two poems shows Hitonari's familiarity with the work of masters from the continent and the Japanese archipelago. His first verse reads:

> Shining woman east of the heavenly river
> Exalted herdsman west of the celestial stream.
> Holding back bitterness and waiting for the seventh night.
> Smiling finely and yearning for the three months of autumn.
> Anticipating the brief joy of seeing you face to face,
> But lamenting the long anguish after we part.
> Who can understand how with passions unfulfilled,
> We still gaze at one another in lament? (*ZS* 32:6)

The first two lines, "Shining woman east of the heavenly river/Exalted herdsman west of the celestial stream" are almost direct quotations from *Literary Selections* (*Wen xuan*, *juan* 29, p. 410). Moreover, the final two lines subtly allude to a Tanabata poem by the sixth-century Chinese poet Wang Yun 王筠 (481-549) (*Yi wen lei ju,* 144).[38] The couplet "Anticipating the brief joy of seeing you face to face/But lamenting the long anguish after we part" is taken directly from Fujiwara no Fuhito's 藤原不比等 (also 藤原史; 659-720) Tanabata poem later included in the

[37] For these structural issues, see Kojima 1965, 1320 and Watanabe 2009. For the importance of the *Wang Bo ji* in the Nara period, see Tōno 1977, 154-161.

[38] These allusions are pointed out by Kojima and Maruyama. See Kojima 1962, 1135 and Maruyama 2010,226-229.

Fond Recollections of Poetry (*Kaifūsō* 33, *NKBT* 69:101-102). The fact that the *Fond Recollections of Poetry* as a collection was not completed until 751 suggests that Hitonari became aware of Fuhito's poem through another source.

His second verse continues to draw from *Literary Selections*, early Tang poetry, and the Fujiwara clan:

> The passing moon shines on the back of the mountain.
> The old spirits frolic in the celestial river.
> Fortunately, although we three may part from one another (?),
> None will go home without getting drunk (*ZS* 32:6)

Many of the phrases used here are common in early Tang poetry. The final line also makes allusions to the *Literary Selections* and hints at a poem by Fujiwara no Umakai 藤原宇合 (694-737) that appears in *Fond Recollections of Poetry* and ends in a similar fashion (*Wen xuan, juan* 20, p. 283; *Kaifūsō* 88, *NKBT* 69:148-149).[39] Although it is impossible to know if he was aware of Umakai's poem, this example suggests that Hitonari was at the very least participating in a literary tradition in a way similar to that of powerful aristocrats.

Scribes may have been underpaid and overworked, but they were able to join a literate and literary community at the scriptorium. While the constant references to Chinese and

[39] These statements about not leaving without getting drunk have a long history in the Chinese poetic tradition that can be traced back to the *Shi jing*. See *Shi jing,* "Zhan lu"; *SSJZS* 1:421. Hitonari makes other allusions to the *Shi jing* in the preface. For this, see Watanabe 2009, 130, 138.

domestic sources may appear derivative to the modern eye, such imitation was a respected practice in the Chinese literary tradition. In fact, Hitonari's use of allusions reveals a subtle and strategic skill. For one, his references to Chinese classics and domestic poems show that Hitonari was capable of participating in the same literary traditions of social elites in the capital.[40] Second, his blending of quotations from Fujiwara no Fuhito with allusions to *Literary Selections* skillfully places Fuhito's poetry on par with the great Chinese masters. As an employee of the Office of Sutra Transcription who had most likely gained his appointment through the Queen Consort's Palace Agency, these allusions would have reflected his gratitude and allegiance to Kōmyōshi, who was Fuhito's daughter. When we consider that the poem came around two years after Hitonari had been promoted to supervisor and shortly before he embarked on the monastic path, it seems possible that these poetic strategies would have helped him achieve his religious ambitions and express gratitude for his present accomplishments. As we will see later in this chapter, literary skill would have been viewed favorably by those assessing ordination requests. Regardless of whether the poem itself helped Hitonari advance on the Buddhist path, this example shows how the Office of Sutra

[40] In discussing Hitonari's skill, I do not intend to give the impression that his poems by any means reflect perfect classical Chinese. Kojima has pointed out several Japanese influenced errors in his poem. See Kojima 1965, 1322-1323. At the same time, such errors are not limited to low-ranking scribes but also appear in works by aristocrats later anthologized in lofty compilations such as the *Fond Recollections of Poetry*.

Transcription, with its wealth of literary resources, could have functioned as a place of learning and culture for a low-ranking but highly literate employee, who might have otherwise had difficulty gaining access to texts.[41]

Calligraphic Practice

It perhaps goes without saying that calligraphic expertise was a valuable skill for a scribe. As noted above, calligraphy exams and recommendation letters suggest that officials at the Office of Sutra Transcription sought calligraphically proficient copyists. Scribes constantly wrote characters, whether in the context of transcribing scripture, filling out paper work, composing poetry, or practicing their hand on scrap paper. Fortunately for our purposes, various manuscripts and documents from diverse genres in the Shōsōin and Shōgozō collections preserve the hand of Hitonari.

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[41] Hitonari was by no means the only scribe who was able to use his literary skills to advance socially. The best example of this is the Haji clan. As Robert Borgen notes, the Haji family were not only employed in funerary affairs, as is commonly known but had actively branched out to numerous careers including working as sutra copyists in the Nara period. The literary skills of the Haji enabled them to gradually move up the social latter from the late Nara period, culminating with the early Heian rise of Sugawara no Michizane. Michizane descended from the Haji clan, which was later granted the name Sugawara. See Borgen 1986, 23-68. The evidence presented above on the scholarly and literary connections to sutra copying suggest that literary people were attracted to the scriptorium and that transcribing scripture promoted literary production by exposing copyists to important continental texts.

Although some earlier scholarship was dismissive of sutra copyists for their lack of creativity, recent works suggests that scribes are best understood not as artists but as artisans: skilled laborers whose work was valued more for mastery of traditional techniques than for creativity.[42] In the case of sutra copyists, values such as personal expression, individuality, and inspiration are secondary to legibility, precision, and formality.[43] These traits are evident in what modern scholars call a sutra copying script (*shakyōtai* 写経体), a mode of writing used for transcribing scripture.[44] For the most part, this mode follows standard script (*kaisho* 楷書). It uses very few variant characters (*itaiji* 異体字), which makes it highly legible in a way that facilitates recitation.[45] At the same time, sutra copying script employs slightly simplified forms

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[42] For a representative view of the older positions, see Shimizu and Rosenfield 1984, 34. Recent scholarship on Chinese sutra copyists has shown that scribal calligraphy is a worthy subject of study. For example, see Wang 1995 and McNair in Harrist 1999. Also, John Carpenter, in his examination of Heian calligraphy, has similarly deemphasized individuality and pointed out the importance of mastery of past styles and "anti-innovative techniques." See Carpenter 1997, 2006, and 2008. Despite these important studies, originality and individuality continue to be used as meaningful ways to assess calligraphic value. For but one recent example in English, see Wen Fong's praiseworthy description of Wang Xizhi as a "free spirit in a repressive Confucian state." See Wen in Harrist 1999, 41. Similarly Katō Hōjin has looked at administrative work reports written by scribes at the Office of Sutra Transcription to show how sutra copyists expressed their individuality in these documents. See Katō 2002.

[43] McNair in Harrist 1999, 232. Also, see Wang 1995, 136-138.

[44] For more on this style of script, see Rosenfield 1973, 16-19. Also see McNair in Harrist 1999.

[45] There are some exceptions to this on the continent and possibly even in Japan. For example, a sutra currently housed in the Ōtani museum, which was owned at one point by Kōmyōshi, is written in a cursive grass script (*sōsho* 草書). Miyazaki, however, convincingly demonstrates that this sutra was imported from Silla. See Miyazaki 2006, 33-58. Harrist notes that in China

with more connections between ligatures than in standard script (McNair 1999, 232). This style enabled scribes to write at a fast pace while preserving the legibility and reverence expected for calligraphy used in Buddhist scripture.

Documentary records show that Hitonari copied a set of manuscripts now preserved in the Shōgozō collection in Nara, Japan and in the Princeton University East Asian Library and Gest Collection.[46] The manuscript, which is a copy of the *Abhidharma Treatise of Discerning Myriad Things* (Skt. *Abhidharma prakaraṇapāda śāstra*, Ch. *Zhong shifen apitan lun* 衆事分阿毘曇論), reveals many of the attributes characteristic of sutra copying script. His characters are highly regular but have a distinct rhythm. Some forms are slightly abbreviated and ligatures occasionally flow together to a greater degree than is common in strictly defined standard script. Hitonari's hand is well adapted for the speed and efficiency needed for sutra copying,

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some sutras were copied in a cursive script, but this practice was discouraged and even criticized. See Harrist 1999, 11. Sutra commentaries, on the other hand, were sometimes copied in cursive scripts. For example, see the monk Kōken's 興顯 transcription of a commentary by Fazang from 765. The manuscript is located in Chion-in, but I have relied on the partial reproduction in *NCS*, plate 67.

[46] There are several sources that allow us to connect this manuscript with Hitonari. First are pay records that describe Hitonari as the scribe responsible for copying this text. See *DNK* 8:94 (*ZZS* 1:2), *DNK* 8:112 (*ZZS* 28:3), *DNK* 8:101 (*ZZS* 1:2), and *DNK* 8:158 (*ZZS* 3:2). Second is the appearance of his surname on the verso of some manuscripts in the Shōgozō collection. Finally, Hitonari has a fairly idiosyncratic hand that is easily identifiable. See SK 752-761 and GM 220 for other sutra manuscripts copied by Hitonari. For a detailed study of the Princeton manuscript, see Lowe 2011. For an assessment of Hitonari's hand in diverse contexts, see Shōsōin jimusho 1964, 27-48. Also see Matsushima 1975, 44-63 and Matsumoto 1964, 32.

while preserving the legibility and formalism of standard script.

This is not to say that all scribes wrote in identical hands. To make but one comparison, the unique character of Hitonari's hand is particularly clear when placed alongside that of another copyist named Takebe no Hirotari 建部廣足. Hirotari's calligraphy may be described with adjectives such as neat, clean, and even.[47] Hitonari's calligraphy has a more rhythmic and unrestrained character with occasional bold strokes standing out and balancing nicely with softer brushwork in other places. He shows a great control over the brush with a freer feel than Hirotari. Hitonari's hand evokes the "solemn grace [*kingen tansei* 謹厳端整]" and "supple strength [*shinayakana chikara* しなやかな力]" that are said to represent the pinnacle of Japanese sutra copying.[48] Since these two sutras were copied at roughly the same time, the differences between hands cannot be explained by stylistic shifts over time. While each scribe displays his own idiosyncrasies, both write in a script that reveals great attention to legibility, precision, and formality.

Hitonari and other scribes adopted different hands for different purposes. Numerous examples of Hitonari's calligraphy from diverse genres such as official documents and poetry drafts are contained in the Shōsōin collection (Shōsōin jimusho 1964, plates 9 and p. 59-65).

[47] For Takebe no Hirotari's calligraphy, see the sutras in SK 462-464. For the documents linking these scribes to these particular manuscripts, see *DNK* 8:92 (*ZZS* 1:2).
[48] I borrow this descriptive vocabulary from Akao 1989, 37-39.

Hitonari's sutra copying hand is fairly consistent and steady, but the hand he used for administrative reports varies in each document and incorporates more cursive elements (*SS* 9:11 verso; *ZZS* 1:2 and 14:3). His poetry draft in particular reveals a bold and expressive cursive hand (*ZS* 32:6).[49] Other scribes, such as Furu no Kamitoko 古神徳, similarly employed different calligraphic modes for writing documents and sutra manuscripts.[50] The hand used for copying sutras displays a more careful and reverential quality than the relatively relaxed brushstrokes used in preparing documents or authoring poetry.

Some evidence suggests scribes actively promoted themselves as masters of different hands. In one case, a sutra copyist named Yamato no Oyumi 和雄弓 used two different styles in a letter he wrote to the scriptorium asking for employment. The letter begins by following a standard script for the heading but then uses an elegant cursive hand for the body of the letter. It is possible that he used this strategy as a way to market his calligraphic skills (*DNK* 5:332 [*ZS* 47:5]).[51]

The fact that scribes used a different hand for copying sutras than for other documents—many of which would also have been expected to be legible and quickly written—suggests that

[49] The document itself seems to be an early draft that was not meant for circulation.
[50] Furu no Kamitoko's hand is discussed briefly by Minagawa Kan'ichi in Imai 1975, 158-159.
[51] See Mori 2009, 209-210. In Europe, scribes similarly advertised their ability to write in different hands. For this, see de Hamel 1992, 38.

sutra copying script did more than serve utilitarian functions. The consistent hand used in the eleven extant scrolls that can be traced to Hitonari represents a specific mode of calligraphy that was formalized and repeated over time. In this way, sutra copying can be described as a ritualized calligraphic practice. Catherine Bell (1992, 74), in her seminal work on ritual, defines the process of ritualization as "the way in which certain social actions strategically distinguish themselves in relation to other actions...a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities." The controlled and reverent hand of a sutra copyist not only contributed to legibility but also increased the overall aura of a text by marking it off as calligraphically distinct from other forms of writing. Calligraphy would have helped empower the text so that it was capable of answering the patron's prayers. The ability to write not only well but also in different modes would have been valuable for a scribe such as Hitonari. As we will see in the next section, calligraphy was only one of several ritualized aspects of sutra transcription.

The controlled calligraphy of a sutra copyist required constant training. Hitonari worked diligently to cultivate his hand over time. One scrap in the Shōsōin collection reveals that Hitonari practiced calligraphy by copying the *Thousand Character Essay* (*qianzi wen* 千字文)

(*ZSBS* 48:4).[52] This text, which as its name suggests consists in toto of one thousand characters in the form of four character couplets, was frequently used as a primer for learning to read and write and for calligraphic practice in Nara Japan.[53] In copying the *Thousand Character Essay*, Hitonari and other scribes patterned their hand after past masters such as Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303?-361?), the so-called "sage of Chinese calligraphy [*shu sheng* 書聖]."[54]

A calligrapher's skill with the brush was thought to reflect his moral uprightness and cultural pedigree.[55] In this way, improving one's calligraphy by imitating past masters was not only a means to a pay check (which it surely was) but also functioned as a form of personal

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[52] Naitō attributes this fragment to Hitonari based on the character of his hand. Although judging hands can be a notoriously problematic endeavor, I find Naitō's assessment convincing. See Naitō in Shōsōin jimusho 1964, 45.

[53] Scribes frequently copied sections of the *Thousand Character Essay* for calligraphy practice. See Maruyama 2010, 221-224. In addition to the extant copies of this text in the Shōsōin collection, it seems to have been widely used as a primer for teaching basic literacy and for practicing calligraphy. Numerous copies have also been unearthed on wooden tablets known as *mokkan* throughout the Japanese archipelago. See Tōno 1977, 125-148. For an example, see *HKM* 3:5100. The *Thousand Character Essay* was also frequently used as a primer and for calligraphy practice in Dunhuang, as well. See Tōno 1992, 239-254

[54] Naitō in Shōsōin jimusho 1964, 45. The copies of the *Thousand Character Essay* follow the forms used by Zhi Yong 智永 a seventh generation descendent of Wang Xizhi, who is said to have copied eight hundred scrolls of the *Thousand Character Essay* in the hand of his famous ancestor. For the broad importance of Wang Xizhi as a calligraphic model, see Tōno 1977, 225-236.

[55] The idea that the mastery of the calligraphic styles of past masters reflects one's own character was true in both China and Japan. For China, see Harrist 1999, 4. For Japan, see Carpenter 1997, 9-15. For the importance of Tang masters as models for Nara scribes, see Kurihara 1983, 15-17. For an excellent description of the particular types of pedagogical practices used to master the Wang style, see Carpenter 2008.

cultivation. A top-down perspective may suggest that calligraphic discipline was imposed from above through entrance exams and a system of fines aimed at regulating scribal writing practices. If we look at calligraphy from the perspective of scribes, however, we can see that the bodily practice of writing functioned to form habits that could lead to cultural and personal enrichment.[56] For Hitonari, the hours he spent copying texts such as the *Thousand Character Classic* would have been a way for him to further discipline himself and participate in a cultural pursuit that was also popular amongst social elites. Moreover, we will see that calligraphy itself may have helped Hitonari advance on the monastic path.

Although a skilled hand was surely valued at the Office of Sutra Transcription, some Buddhist literature produced in China and Japan portrays calligraphy as insignificant compared to true faith and proper ritual conduct.[57] In one tale from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*, a woman copies sutras at a mountain temple when a passerby snickers at her mistaken characters. Immediately, the critic's mouth becomes deformed as punishment. At the end of the tale, the narrator notes, "One must not criticize such mistakes" (*Nihon ryōiki*

[56] In considering calligraphy as a bodily practice, it is worth pointing out that the critical vocabulary used to describe calligraphy in medieval China relied on bodily metaphors such as "boney," "fleshy," and "sinewy." See Hay 1983. These metaphors continue to be used today. For example, what I have translated as sutra copying script could quite literally be translated as the sutra copying "body" (*shakyōtai* 写経体).

[57] I will explore the meaning of the term purity in the next section.

III.20, S*NKBT* 30:157-158).[58] Although the officials at the Office of Sutra Transcription exerted great effort to prevent errors from appearing in manuscripts, this story suggests that, at least in the context of an individual copying a sutra out of personal devotion, sincerity overrode calligraphic prowess.

Moreover, a popular medieval Chinese tale suggests that the desire to produce texts in a fine hand could actually threaten the efficacy of the sutra if other more important ritual acts are sacrificed. In this story, a man named Linghu Yuangui 令孤元軌 copies a group of sutras while maintaining purity in accord with the correct method (*rufa jiejing* 如法潔淨). When he returns home, he stores the texts carefully, but a fire breaks out and burns the building to the ground. His servants search through the ashes and are fortunately able to recover the sutras. Although the boxes containing the texts have been reduced to ash, the scriptures themselves emerge for the most part unscathed. Upon closer examination, however, Yuangui notices that the title of the *Diamond Sutra* has been charred black. The narrator explains that Yuangui had hired a scribe with particularly fine calligraphy to transcribe the title of the *Diamond Sutra*. This scribe, however, "ate various things [*zashi* 雜食]...and did not maintain purity [*buhu jiejing* 不護潔淨]." As a result of the scribe's indiscretion, the section transcribed by the title copyist failed to become ritually efficacious. The fine calligraphy burned while the purely copied

[58] The entire tale is translated in Nakamura 1973, 248-249.

characters remained.[59] According to this tale, a sutra copied faithfully is superior to one made by a proficient professional.

The importance of upholding proper ritual protocol while copying scripture is a common trope in medieval Chinese and Nara period Buddhist literature. The spirit of these stories is captured nicely in one eighth-century Chinese tale, which states, "[it is most important] to hire a scribe who is able to maintain purity. It does not matter if he is skilled or clumsy or exalted or base" (*Hongzan fahua zhuan,* T 2067.51.45b). According to this quotation, purity is paramount. Although calligraphic expertise was surely valued at the Office of Sutra Transcription, the next sections will show that patrons' and scribes' concerns over maintaining purity played at least as strong a hand as calligraphy in shaping Hitonari's career at the scriptorium.

Defining Purity

Chinese and Japanese sources frequently describe sutra copyists as "purely [Ch. *qingjing*,

[59] I have relied mostly on the version in the *Fahua zhuanji*, T 2068.55.83b-c and have also consulted versions in the *Jishenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T 2106.52.428a-b, *Da Tang neidian lu*, T 2149.55.340a, *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林, T 2122.53.416b-c, *Hongzan fahua zhuan*, T 2067.51.45a, and *Pŏp'wagyŏng chip'ŏmgi* 法華經集驗記. All the versions mention that the title copyist did not maintain purity, but only the *Fahua zhuanji* and the *Fayuan zhulin* versions specifically state that the scribe "ate various things." The phrase "ate various things" implies meat eating.

Jp. *shōjō* 清淨 or Ch. *jiejing*, Jp. *ketsujō* 潔淨]" transcribing manuscripts.[60] Later Japanese ritual manuals would codify the proper means for sutra transcription, but Tang and Nara period texts use the term "pure" to refer to an assortment of practices.[61] Most commonly, scribes who are depicted as purely copying sutras perform some combination of the following: water ablutions, sexual abstinence, meat and alcohol avoidance, upholding precepts, wearing white garments known as pure robes (*jōe* 淨衣), and transcribing scripture in sanctified spaces.[62] These assorted practices share a concern with ritually cleansing the body and avoiding things

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[60] Many of these examples are found in tales about sutra copying from medieval China. In particular, see the collections contained in *Fahua zhuanji* 法華傳記, T 2068.51.80a-87c; *Hongzan fahua zhuan*, T 2067.51.42b-47c; and the *Huayan jing zhuanji* 華嚴經傳記, T 2073.51.170c-172a. Some of the stories in these collections come from earlier sources such as *Jishenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通録, *Fayuan zhulin*, *Mingbaoji* 冥報記, and *Da Tang neidian lu*. For an introduction to this genre of devotional writing, see Stevenson 1995, 426-451 and 2009, 132-150. There is also a work in this genre from Silla entitled *Pŏp'wagyŏng chip'ŏmgi* that was compiled by Ŭijŏk 義寂 (ca. 681-705). This work contains a chapter on sutra copying, but all of the stories are borrowed from tales in the above Chinese collections. At the very least, this source suggests that such tales were circulating widely. For an overview of the contents of the *Pŏp'wagyŏng chip'ŏmgi*, see Takahira 2008. In addition, colophons from Dunhuang also frequently refer to the purity of scribes and the abstinential practices they engaged in. See BD 14496, N 066, 069, and P 2056. For more on the Dunhuang colophons and the broader East Asian context, see Lowe (forthcoming, 2012).

[61] For later ritual manuals, see *Nyohō kyō genshu sahō* 如法経現修作法, T 2730.84.890a-898a and *Jōdo sanbu kyō nyohō kyō shida*i, 浄土三部経如法経次第, *JZ* 9:370-372. The development of standardized forms of copying sutras in accord with the correct method is discussed in detail in Kabutogi 1983, 3-143.

[62] Many similar practices aimed at purification were also employed in the manufacturing of cloth paintings known as paṭa in the Pāla Buddhist tradition. For this see, Kapstein 1995, esp. 247-252.

deemed to be defiling.

In order to understand why these practices were described as "pure," it is first necessary to explore the meaning of the term purity in early sources. Terms translated as purity include *sei/shō* (also *kiyoshi* 清), *sei/jō* (also *kiyoshi* 淨), and *ketsu/kechi* (also *isagiyoshi* and *kiyoshi* 潔)—all of these share a sense of cleanliness. More specifically, these terms imply the absence of dirt or defilement (*kitanashi* and *kegare* 汚, 穢), which is generally viewed in negative terms. In Buddhist sources, words that are translated as purity have connotations of the absence of negative features and the presence of virtuous ones. The Sanskrit *śuddha* (Ch. *qingjing* 清淨), one of the more common words used for purity in Buddhist sources, is said to be acquired by developing good roots and removing mental and bodily hindrances (*Mohe bore boluomi jing*, T 223.8.340a). *Brahma-caryā* or pure conduct (Ch., *fanxing* 梵行 or *jingxing* 淨行) refers to behavior in line with the Buddhist precepts and is often used to mean sexual abstinence.[63] Purity, therefore, has a negative quality—namely, the absence of bodily defilement and the avoidance of physical acts and mental states that hinder spiritual progress—and a positive one

[63] This general meaning of the term pure conduct (*brahma-caryā*) as upholding the precepts is common in some of the earliest Buddhist literature. See for example the *Zengyi ahan jing* 增一阿含經, T 125.2.714c. In other texts, it is closely associated with cutting off desire and sexual abstinence in particular. Commentaries suggest that the term continued to have both meanings in medieval China. See Jizang's 吉藏 (549-623) *Fahua yishu* 法華義疏, T 1721.33.557b for an example. Other meanings of the term are well summarized and cited in Mochizuki 1954, 4678-4679.

of engaging in practices conducive to more enlightened mental states.

Purity, in the sense of removing defilement, cleansing the body, and upholding virtuous behavior, was particularly important in the ritual sphere of early Japan. Some of the earliest Chinese reports of life on the Japanese archipelago suggest that individuals practiced sexual abstinence, performed ablutions, and avoided meat at specific times including periods of mourning or while awaiting the return of seafarers (*San guo zhi* [Wei shu], 30.855). In legal codes from the Nara period, those who had been in contact with death or illness or who had consumed meat were prohibited from participating in state rites (*Yōrō ritsuryō*, *NST* 3:213). This is closely related to the idea that appearing before *kami* 神 in a defiled state could evoke a wrathful response. As a result, great care was taken to ensure that all those engaged in *kami* ritual avoided defilement.[64] Similarly, numerous ninth-century Buddhist tales describe the karmic punishments one can receive for failing to uphold purity (Kurosu 2004). Early Japanese conceptions of purity and ideas about its connection to ritual efficacy, therefore, derived from diverse sources including continental religious practice, canonical Buddhist texts, and indigenous beliefs.

Where impurity could provoke danger, the cultivation of pure states promised numinous

[64] See Okada 1982 and 1989. Of course, the association between impurity and danger is common to numerous societies throughout the world, as is famously argued in Douglas 1966.

rewards. For one, pure individuals are portrayed as possessing extraordinary powers. In one Japanese story from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*, a woman purifies her body (*kesshin* 潔身) through bathing and diet and is then able to ascend into the heavens (*Nihon ryōiki* I.13, *SNKBT* 30:26-27; Nakamura 1973, 124-125). Similarly, in a canonical Buddhist tale that was known in Nara Japan, a practitioner named Vimala (Ch. *Wugou* 無垢)—a name that in Chinese translation literally means without defilement—is able to prove his own purity by levitating in the air (*Da baoji jing*, T 310.11.596c-597a). In sutras, the maintenance of purity is specifically connected to the bodhisattva path. For example, in the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*, the Buddha explains, "Through pure body and mind [*shenxin qingjing* 身心清淨], one can transcend the stage of the voice-hearers and the *pratyeka-buddhas* and enter the rank of the bodhisattvas" (*Mohe bore boluomi jing*, T 223.8.340a). In other early Mahāyāna texts, lay bodhisattvas are advised to uphold purity (*jingjie* 淨潔) by avoiding alcohol and sexual intercourse (*Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經, T 418.13.910b; Harrison 1995, 58-60). In this way, virtuous conduct and the avoidance of defilements were said to grant a practitioner special powers and help him or her advance on the bodhisattva path. These dual benefits would have been valuable for Hitonari, who was responsible for creating empowered texts for his patron and also sought monastic ordination for himself.

Transcribing Purity

As noted above, numerous stories explain how a scribe could produce efficacious texts by upholding purity. In fact, scribes were required to preserve ritual purity in their day-to-day lives at the scriptorium. The practices enforced at the Office of Sutra Transcription included copying scripture in a space deemed ritually pure; maintaining a vegetarian diet; performing water ablutions before copying scripture; wearing special garments known as pure robes; and avoiding contact with pollutants such as death and illness.

When Hitonari worked at the Office of Sutra Transcription, it was located at chapels and temples such as Sumi-dera and Konkōmyō-ji. Hitonari would have slept at the temple compound and taken his meals there as well. Temples were considered pure spaces, as is reflected in the 5/15/716 edict that declares, "In operating and maintaining a Buddhist temple, purity [*shōjō* 清淨] is primary" (*Shoku Nihongi* 5/15/716; *SNKBT* 13:10-12).[65] Significantly, many Chinese stories describe patrons building a pure chamber (Ch. *jingshi* 淨室) for copying scripture. One popular Chinese story that was also known in Japan and Silla describes a nun from Hedong 河東 who hires a scribe to copy the *Lotus Sutra*.[66] She installs a bamboo pipe

[65] Temples as pure spaces have been studied in depth in Hongō 2005 5-30.

[66] See *Fahuan zhuanji*, T 2068.51.85b; *Jishenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T 2106.52.428b; *Da Tang neidian lu*, T 2149.55.340b; *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122.53.486c; *Hongzan fahua zhuan*, T 2067.51.43b; *Mingbaoji,* T 2082.51:789a; and *Pŏp'wagyŏng chip'ŏmgi*. In Japan, the story is cited in the *Nihon ryōiki* III.10; *SNKBT* 30:144 and also appears in *Konjaku monogatarishū* 7:18, *SNKBT* 34:120.

through the wall of the sutra copying chamber and makes the scribe breathe through the pipe whenever he exhales in order to maintain the purity of the room.[67] In another tale, a monk named Deyuan 德圓 builds a special hall for copying scripture. In preparation for construction, he washes timbers in fragrant water as a means to sanctify the space (*Huayan jing zhuanji*, T 2073.51.1070c-1071a).[68] In a Japanese story that will be discussed below, a scribe is karmically punished by death for defiling temple grounds while copying scripture (*Nihon ryōiki* III.18, *SNKBT* 30:154-155; Nakamura 1973, 245-246). The location of the Office of Sutra Transcription at chapels and temples, therefore, must be understood within this broad discourse of setting aside pure space for copying scripture. This would have at once enhanced the efficacy of the sutra copying project and provided Hitonari with an ideal location for Buddhist practice.

Dietary practices at the Office of Sutra Transcription were also connected to purity. Hitonari would have observed a vegetarian diet and avoided the five pungent roots while employed at the Office of Sutra Transcription.[69] Food was provided by the scriptorium, so the

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[67] The breath is thought to be defiling in Buddhism. Even today, monks usually do not extinguish a candle with their breath but instead use a snuffer or their hand.

[68] This story is also discussed and partially translated in Jinhua Chen 2007, 213-215.

[69] This was first pointed out in Ishida [1930] 1966, 204. For one document that details the diets of scribes, see *DNK* 13:284-317 (*ZZS* 8:19). More exhaustive studies can be found in Ishida [1930] 1966, 210-214 and Sekine 1969. Lists for the five pungent roots vary from text to text, but a ninth-century Japanese legal commentary of the *Sōniryō* lists garlic (*ōhiru* or *ninniku* 大蒜), asafoetida (*kōko* or *kureno'omo* 興渠), and three types of green onion (these include *wakegi* or *jisō* 慈葱, *nira* or *kakusō* 角葱 (also written 革葱), and *mehiru* or *ransō* 蘭葱). See *Ryō no shūge, KT*

dietary intake of scribes was strictly controlled. The rations given to sutra copyists were often referred to as food offerings (*ryōri kuyō* 料理供養) in Shōsōin documents. The term *kuyō* implies an offering given to the Buddha or monks.[70] The use of such religious language and the vegetarian diet at the scriptorium suggests that scribes occupied an ambiguous space between unordained officials and ordained clerics.[71]

Some evidence suggests that potential scribes practiced food avoidance prior to employment at the Office of Sutra Transcription. In one case, Yamato no Oyumi, whose calligraphy was discussed above, noted in a letter that he had been engaging in abstinential

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83. This list appears to be based on the *Fan wang jing* 梵網經, T 1484.24.1005b. Prohibitions against the five pungent roots can be found in the Daoist tradition as well. See Kohn 2003, 127.

[70] Notably, *upāsikā* (*ubai* 優婆夷) played a strong role in preparing scribe's food. As is becoming increasingly well-understood *upāsikā* and *upāsaka* (*ubasoku* 優婆塞) were not merely lay householders, as is commonly thought but rather were somewhere in between laity and the clergy. They often engaged in strict Buddhist practices but had not undergone full ordination. See Harrison 1995, 58-62 and Nattier 2003, 25. For the usage of the term in Japan, see Nemoto 1976 and Abé 1999, 76-83. For an example of their role in the kitchen, see *DNK* 5:185 (*ZSKS* 34). Upāsikā also engaged in other tasks such as sewing for scriptorium employees, laundering the robes of monks, and making the cords used on sutra wrappers. See *DNK* 6:422 (*ZSBS* 13:1) and 6:484 (*ZSBS* 12:2)

[71] Recent archaeological analysis of fecal parasites has confirmed that other state officials did consume meat, so the vegetarian diet appears to be particular to employees at the Office of Sutra Transcription. For the archaeological report, see Imai, et al. 2010, 126-131. We also have records of meat being offered to senior officials at the Tōdai-ji Construction Agency. Maruyama speculates that some scribes may have had the chance to share some of these fares, but she admits that this is only based on her own imagination—an imaginary vision that I see to be rather fanciful. See Maruyama 2010, 238-240.

dietary practices (*saishoku* 齋食) for some number of fortnights. It is likely that this letter was used as an application for work at the scriptorium (*DNK* 5:332 [*ZS* 47:5]). It seems that potential scribes would have viewed vegetarian practices as prerequisites for scribal labor. This training would have served to purify potential sutra copyists' bodies.

In Japan, prohibitions against meat eating were deeply connected to preserving ritual efficacy. Many of the ideas about the relationship between ritual and meat-avoidance were shaped by continental practices shared by Buddhism, Daoism, and the state-cult, as well as what may be called indigenous ideas of ritual.[72] Drawing on these traditions, eighth-century Japanese law required all those participating in state ritual to first abstain from meat.[73] Moreover, temporary prohibitions against meat-eating were often ordered to improve agricultural bounties, cure members of the imperial family suffering from illness, and respond to calamities such as droughts and plagues.[74] Furthermore, the section of the Nara period legal

[72] For a good outline of the continental practices, see Grumbach 2005, 50-70. For early indigenous practices, see *San guo zhi* ("Wei shu"), 30.855. Here, residents of Wa are described as abstaining from meat for ten days during periods of mourning and as selecting one representative who would abstain from meat when others embarked on seafaring journeys to ensure their safe return.

[73] For example, see *Yōrō ritsuryō*, *NST* 3:213. Also see Okada 1989, 24-25 and Ooms 2009, 257.

[74] For the general connection between agriculture, ritual, and meat-avoidance in early Japan, see Taira 1997; Harada 1993, 70-83 and 2000; and Hirabayashi 2007, 168-223. In English, see Grumbach 2005, 72-81. Scholars such as Hirabayashi and Harada note that ideas of meat avoidance did not emerge from general associations between animal flesh and defilement, as notions of *kegare* were not yet fully formed in Nara Japan. Although I agree with Harada, and

code that deals with monastic affairs specifically prohibits the consumption of alcohol, meat, or the five pungent roots by the clergy, except when used as medicine (*Yōrō ritsuryō*, *NST* 3:218).[75] As Hongō Masatsugu (2005, 34) has argued, these rules were instituted to preserve the purity of monks and nuns; a defiled monastic community was thought to cause natural disasters and disorder. With regard to sutra copying specifically, several tales describe how it is necessary to avoid meat as a means to empower a text.[76] When we consider the ration records from the Shōsōin collection in this context, it is clear that the vegetarian diet of scribes helped ensure ritual efficacy.

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others that *kegare* as a general concept probably did not emerge until the mid to late ninth century—as seen in texts such as the *Jōgan kyaku shiki* 貞觀格式 (compiled between 820 and 868 and completed in 871) and the *Engi shiki* 延喜式 (compiled late ninth century and presented to the emperor in 905)—concerns over purity in the more narrow contexts of ritual are constantly referred to in Nara and early Heian sources.

[75] Notably, scribes appear to have consumed alcohol at the scriptorium, often under the guise of medicine. For this see, Shinmura 1985, 166-77 and Maruyama 1998, 119-144 and 2010, 197-200. Overall, Buddhism generally permits the use of alcohol as medicine. For example, see *Sifen lü*, T 1428.22.672b. For the role of alcohol and its function as medicine in Chinese Buddhism, see Michihata 1970, 214-348; Benn 2005, 22-230; and Liu 2008, 398-435. Numerous primary sources suggest that alcohol was frequently used as a medicine and perhaps even manufactured at temples in Japan. Some monks such as Saichō, however, seem to have been opposed to the practice, while Kūkai's disciples appear to have endorsed it. For some of these diverse positions in early Japanese Buddhism, see *Eizan daishi den* in *DDZ* 5 furoku, 39; *Goyuigō* in *KDZ* 2:799; and *Nihon ryōiki* II.32, S*NKBT* 30:109-111; translated in Nakamura 1973, 203-205.

[76] For example, see the tale of Yuangui discussed above. In a later Japanese tale, both the patron and the scribe are sent to hell after the copyist eats meat while transcribing scripture. See *Konjaku monogatari shū* 14:29, *SNKBT* 35:333-338 and *Uji shūi monogatari* 8:4, *NKBT* 27: 244-245.

Buddhist discourse on meat is complex, but the form of Buddhism that entered Japan lauded vegetarianism as an ideal and strongly associated it with purity. The connection between meat eating and impurity can be traced back at least as far as the *vinaya*. For example, the *Four Part Vinaya*—the most important monastic code in East Asia—forbids the clergy from eating meat that they had seen, heard, or suspected of being butchered specifically for their consumption. The Buddha refers to meat prepared in these manners as impure (*bujing* 不淨). Although these regulations actually functioned to permit meat eating, the passage is important for our purposes in that it makes an early association between meat and impurity.[77] These views would be solidified in a select group of Mahāyāna texts, which contain passages condemning meat eating of all kinds.[78] For example, the *Scripture on Entering [the Country] of Lanka* (Ch. *Ru lengqie jing* 入楞伽經) likens meat to the impurity of a corpse and encourages those cultivating pure conduct to avoid meat, alcohol, and the five pungent roots (T

[77] *Sifen lü* 四分律, T 1428.22.872b. I should note that the *Four Part Vinaya* suggests monks and nuns struggled over whether or not it was acceptable to receive meat as offerings. In the passage before the rule is declared, a nun is confronted with a slaughtered cow that a wealthy patron had prepared for the Buddha and his entourage. The nun reacts to the scene by "throwing her hands in the air, wailing, and lamenting the injustice." Her surprise and the need for the *vinaya* redactors to discuss the issue at all shows that meat eating was a contested topic amongst the Indian monastic community. We would be wrong to view the early clergy as simply accepting meat-eating.

[78] For a good overview, see Kieschnick 2005. The classic anti-meat eating position in Mahāyāna Buddhism can be found in *Da banniepan jing*, T 374.12.386a-c.

671.16.562c-564b). In China, apocryphal texts such as the *Brahma's Net Sutra* (*Fan wang jing* 梵網經) and hagiographical literature would further advance vegetarian ideals.[79] These Mahāyāna sutras and Chinese tales were influential in early Japan and surely popularized the idea that the clergy should abstain from consuming meat. For Hitonari, practicing meat abstinence at the scriptorium would have helped empower the texts he copied and would have enabled him to put monastic ideals into practice.

Before copying scripture, Hitonari would have also performed ablutions. In both China and Japan, bathing is an ancient tradition tied to purification that transcends denominational boundaries.[80] In tales about sutra copying, scribes are commonly portrayed as undergoing ritual baths before copying scripture. One detailed story of this nature appears in the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*:

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[79] For the role of dietary practices in shaping monastic ideals in medieval China, see Kieschnick 1997, 22-28.

[80] For a sweeping overview of ancient and medieval Chinese bathing practices, see Schafer 1956, esp. 66-69. Also see Yates 1997, 513-516. Both scholars note the importance of bathing for those engaging in ritual. For bathing in the medieval Daoist tradition, see Kohn 2003, 114-119. Early Chinese accounts of the people of "Wa" describe ritual bathing that occurs after funerals for purification. See the *San guo zhi* ("Wei shu") 30.855. Also, in the well-known story from the *Kojiki*, Izanagi bathes to purify himself after emerging from the land of the dead. See *Kojiki*, *NKBT* 1:62-69 and *Nihon shoki*, *NKBT* 67:90-95. In English, see Philippi 1969, 61-70 and Aston [1896] 1972, 24-28. For a historical survey of baths in early Japan, see Butler 2005, esp. 2-4. Butler notes how temples often had baths used for purifying priests before conducting religious services.

> The *śrāmaṇera* Muro牟婁 was from the Enomoto clan. He was self-ordained and without [a clerical] name. Since he was from the Muro district in the Kii province, he shall be called the Novice of Muro. He lived in Arata village in Ate district and shaved his head. He wore a *kaṣāya* while following a lay life and supported a family through maintaining an occupation. He made a vow to *purely copy* one volume of the *Lotus Sutra* in accord with the [correct] method [*minori no gotoku kiyomarite utsushi tatematsuru* 如法清淨奉寫]. Completely by himself, he copied it and *each time he urinated or defecated, he washed himself and purified his body* [*kawa'ami, mi wo kiyomu* 洗浴淨身]. From when he went into the chamber, six months passed and at last he finished cleanly copying it. (*Nihon ryōiki* III.10, *SNKBT* 30:143)[81]

In the end, the sutra copied by Muro becomes fireproof as a result of his diligence in upholding purity.

These bathing practices, which are portrayed as an ideal in narrative tales, were put into practice at the Office of Sutra Transcription. For one, documents from the early years of the scriptorium, when Karakuni no Hitonari was active, show that scribes were issued loincloths for bathing (*mizufundoshi* 水褌)(Sekine 1974, 158-159).[82] Second, accounting records also show that a bathhouse (*yuya* 湯屋) existed at the Office of Sutra Transcription (ex. *DNK* 15:66 [*ZZS* 10:7 verso]). Third, Shōsōin documents reveal that firewood was supplied for daily

[81] The above translation is my own, but the remainder of the story can be found in English in Nakamura 1973, 235-236.

[82] Sekine notes that these loincloths only appear in documents dating up until 739 and suggests that bathing may have been characteristic of the early scriptorium. As we will see, however, other documents related to firewood and the construction of tubs for scribes show that the practice likely continued after the loincloths disappeared.

baths.[83] This suggests that the scriptorium contained bathing facilities for the scribes and that scribes used them every day. The frequency of the baths is significant, because commoners and elites alike at this time were unlikely to have bathed daily.

Moreover, it appears that a sutra copying project could be delayed as a result of insufficient bathing facilities. For example, in the brief one-year period that the Office of Sutra Transcription was located at Ishiyama-dera, a project was initiated to copy the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*. An order issued by the Ishiyama-dera Construction Agency on 1/23/762 requested seven or eight scribes to be summoned for the project, which was set to begin on 2/8/762 (*DNK* 15:141-142 [*ZSBS* 5:6 verso; *ZS* 44:12-13 verso]). Slightly before the scheduled start of the transcription, construction of a bath was initiated.[84] Records show that boards were received for constructing the bath on 2/2/762, and nails for the bath were allotted on 2/7/762 (*DNK* 5:41 [*ZZS* 45:3 verso]).[85] The allotment of nails on the day before the project was set to

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[83] For example, see *DNK* 2:187-190 (*ZSKS* 31:6-9) and 18:19 (*ZZS* 39:1 verso). Note that the latter example records activities at the scriptorium from the fall of 770.

[84] It should also be noted that the construction of bathhouses is thought to be meritorious in Buddhism. For example, see *Wenshi xiyu zhongseng jing* 温室洗浴衆僧經 T 701.16.802c-803c. This text was copied in Japan and lectures were given about it. See *DNK* 9:597 (*ZZS* 19:10 verso) Later hagiographies of Kōmyōshi describe her as building a bathhouse and personally washing 1,000 people. See Meeks 2010, 198-200 and Ury 2002, 194-195.

[85] For the nails, see *DNK*15:295 (*ZZS* 45:2), 5:61 (*ZZS* 45:2 verso), and 15:317 (*ZZS* 44:6). Two baths were made at this time: one for the scribes and one for the prelate (*sōzu* 僧都). The fact that scribal baths were built at the same time as the prelate's shows the important role bathing was

begin shows that the carpenters were working on a tight schedule. In fact, the actual copying began on 2/11/762, three days after it was originally scheduled and four days after formal construction of the bath commenced. Similarly, in 7/764 when repairs and improvements were being made in preparation for another project to copy the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* after a year hiatus from sutra copying activities, the first records we have are of materials being received to complete work on an ablutions pavilion (*chōzusho*手水所) and a bathhouse (*DNK* 16:517-520 [*ZZS* 4:16]).[86] Sutra copying, as these examples suggests, could not begin without a bath.[87]

Another Shōsōin document further reveals the purifying effects that washing could have for scribes (*DNK* 22:215 [*ZZS* 40:1 verso]). In this document, a scribe requests four days off from work to bathe.[88] In asking for time off, the scribe notes that he needed to "bathe and purify the body [*mi mokuyoku shi kiyomen* 身沐浴清]." The character *kiyomeru* 清 means to

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viewed to have at this time. Rōben 良弁 (689-773) served as the prelate in 762 and was the founder of Ishiyama-dera. See *Sōgō bunin* 僧網補人, *DBZ* 65:4.

[86] For a good overview of this period in the scriptorium's history, see Yamamoto 2002, especially 548-549.

[87] I would like to thank Kuwabara Yūko for suggesting that I look into the Ishiyama-dera bath. Personal correspondence 1/14/2010.

[88] Studying requests for time off (*seikage* 請暇解) has been greatly facilitated through the work of the COE for Research on Formation and Characteristics of Ancient Japan (古代日本形成の特質解明の研究教育拠点) at Nara Woman's University, who has published an annotated collection of all the Shōsōin *seikage*. See Nara joshi daigaku 2005-2007. Many of the *seikage* are also compiled in *NI* 2:573-609.

purify and the phrase *mokuyoku* 沐浴 has religious connotations of ritual bathing. Moreover, the requested four-day period implies that this was not a case of regular daily ablutions but perhaps reflects a more serious case of contact defilement.[89] These examples suggest that bathing represented another means through which scribes prepared themselves for ritual activities.

After bathing, Hitonari would have put on pure robes (*jōe* 浄衣) before copying scripture. These robes were issued to new scribes when they started at the scriptorium (*DNK* 8:579 [*ZZS* 44:10]).[90] In Shōsōin documents, the term refers broadly to any type of purified garment used while engaged in religious work (Sekine 1974, 93-95).[91] This process of bathing followed by donning pure robes appears frequently in Chinese sutra copying tales. In one tale, the monk Tanyun 曇韻 desired to copy the *Lotus Sutra* but could not find anyone of like mind. Without notice, a scribe mysteriously appears who agrees to help Tanyun purely copy the scripture (*jiejing xiejing* 潔淨寫經) in accord with the [correct] method (*rufa* 如法) by bathing,

[89] I will discuss contact defilement more fully below.

[90] Early discussions of pure robes can be found in Ishida [1930] 1966 and Kishiro [1932] 1982. Pure robes continued to be worn by scribes in the medieval period For this, see Komatsu 1976, 207.

[91] Workers performing various tasks such as proofreading and assembling paper all wore pure robes at the Office of Sutra Transcription. Moreover, workers engaged in temple construction, including yin-yang specialists (*onmyōji* 陰陽師) performing rites at a new temple, were also issued pure robes. See *DNK* 25:321 (*ZZS* 45:5).

donning pure robes, and receiving the eight precepts before entering the pure chamber.[92] In another tale about copying the *Flower Garland Sutra* (Skt. *Avataṃsaka-sūtra;* Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經), a scribe bathes three times in a fragrant bath, receives the abstinential rules (*zhaijie*齋戒), wears pure clothing (*jingfu* 淨服), and dons a crown of flowers before beginning to transcribe the text (*Huayan jing zhuanji*, T 2073.51.1070c-1071a). In wearing pure robes when copying scripture, Hitonari would have been following continental ideals regarding scribal conduct.

When scribes returned home from work for periodic vacations after completing their assignments, it was required that they turn in their robes before leaving.[93] Scribes donned pure garments to mark their entrance into the ritual sphere and took them off when they returned to the secular world. This transition was not merely symbolic. Much of the regulation of early Japanese Buddhism was centered on keeping monastics separate from the populace to prevent the clergy from losing ritual efficacy through contact with the defilements of the non-

[92] For versions of this story, see *Hongzan fahua zhuan*, T.2067.51.45a; *Fahua zhuanji*, T 2068.51.83b; *Jishenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T2106.52.428b; *Fayuan zhulin*, T2122.53.421b; *Da Tang neidian lu*, T 2149.55.340b; and *Pŏp'wagyŏng chip'ŏmgi*.

[93] For the rule, see *DNK* 17:607 (*ZZS* 20:2 verso). For examples, see *DNK* 8:580 (*ZZS* 44:10) and 17:559-560 (*ZZS* 39:1 verso). I have learned a great deal about the relationship between laundering pure robes and defilement discourse from Takemoto Akira's unpublished 2004 presentation on the topic and am grateful to him for sharing his handout from this talk with me.

monastic population.[94] Similarly, the change in dress for scribes represented a transition in their nature; in wearing a pure robe, a scribe's body became that of a ritualist and his actions came to have ritually significant effects.

Robes were further purified through periodic laundering. Shōsōin documents contain numerous requests for time off to launder a scribe's defiled robes (*ē* 穢衣).[95] Documentary records show that female laborers (*yatoime* 雇女) were responsible for the laundry (ex. *DNK* 6:415 [*ZSBS* 13:2]). As Katsuura Noriko (1995, 197-200) has noted, laundering in premodern Japan was not simply a form of housework or cleaning but was deeply connected to purifying garments used in ritual.[96] Through periodic laundering, robes were transformed from a defiled state to a pure one.

Evidence also suggests that Hitonari would have avoided contact with defilements stemming from illness and death. Death defilement has a long history in Japan. It appears in well-known foundational myths such as the story of Izanagi and Izanami, in which Izanagi

[94] Hongō Masatsugu has argued that many of the regulations against monks in early Japan were intended to prevent interactions between the monks and the populace, as such interactions risked defiling the clergy. See Hongō 2005, 34-47.

[95] For example, see *DNK* 4:347 (*ZS* 20:2), 6:288 (*ZS* 20:14), 17:573 (*ZZS* 39:2 verso), 18:542 (*ZZS* 3:8 verso), and 20:56 (*ZZS* 39:4 verso).

[96] For more on this in later periods, see Meeks 2010, 140-141.

becomes defiled after venturing to the underworld in pursuit of his deceased wife.[97] In broad terms, those who had come into contact with death defilement were forbidden from engaging in ritual activities in early Japan.[98] Concerns over death defilement extended into the Buddhist sphere as well.[99] For example, one story from the ninth-century collection of Buddhist tales, entitled *Records of Numinous Responses from Japan* (*Nihon kanrei roku* 日本感靈錄), features a poor man, who had been given food and clothing by monks at Gangō-ji 元興寺 temple. Still unsatisfied, the man returns to the temple to steal oil to sell for drinking money. Not only this, he enters Gangō-ji after having come into contact with corpses while working at a burial ground (*shisō no tokoro* 死喪之所). After drinking half of the wine he had purchased with the money he obtained from selling the stolen oil, he once again returns to the temple to seek

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[97] See the references to the Izanagi story in footnote 108 above. As Okada Shigekiyo (1989, 18) notes, death is often referred to as defilement (*kegare* 穢, *owai* 汚穢, *aiaku* 穢悪) in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* and the world of the dead is called the defiled realm (*kitanaki kuni* or *owai no kuni* 汚穢之国). Also see Okada 1982, 274-317. Even earlier references to death pollution can be found in Chinese reports of the kingdom of "Wa," See *San guo zhi* ("Wei shu"), 30.855. For a good overview of later Heian developments with regard to death defilement, see Kim 2004, 82-103 and Yamamoto 1992, 14-27. This is not to say that concerns over death defilement are at all uniquely Japanese. For example, the notion that corpse demons could infect a family by traveling from the deceased to the living existed in medieval China; see Strickmann 2002, 37-39. For contemporary accounts of death pollution in China, see Watson 1982.

[98] The Yōrō administrative code banned those who were in mourning or who had inquired after illness from engaging in state rites. See Okada 1982, 97-103 and 1989, 24-25. For later developments, see Yamamoto 1992, 14-15 and Kim 2004, 77-78.

[99] For later developments in Buddhism, see Stone 2007 and 2010.

lodgings. His tale ends with misfortune; the destitute man dies before the night is out. The narrator explains that the thief was punished not only for stealing from the temple but also for defiling it: "Know this! Dirtying pure grounds with an impure body and committing unprincipled acts only invites premature death" (*Nihon kanreiroku* 12, 74-75).[100] The impure body in this story refers to the man's defilement accrued from his contact with corpses.

These concerns with death pollution extended to employees at the scriptorium. For example, the following petition submitted by a scribe in 770 or 771 shows that contact with death could be used as a reason to request time off from work:[101]

> Petition [*ge* 解] by Ōyake Dōji 大宅童子. Regarding the reason for not going [to work]
> Younger sister of the same last name with the first name of Yamonko (?) 屋門子, Age 51
> The above-mentioned person [the sister] had a serious illness since the end of last month and passed away on the thirteenth day of this month. Starting at this time, I am *urgently* (?) *fearful of defilement* [*kegare wo awatadashiku osore haberu* 穢忽恐侍] so for a twelve-day period, I hope to aid/cross/extinguish... (*DNK* 17:561 [*ZZS* 39:1 verso])[102]

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[100] This collection is no longer fully extant, but what remains can be found in Tsuji 1981, who has provided both the original text and annotations. I refer to the collection by first giving the tale number and then the page number in Tsuji.

[101] Despite the fragmentary character of the document it is possible to date it, as it was reused on the verso in 3/12/771. We can assume that this document dated originally from 770 or early 771, as the backside of the paper for such requests for time off were usually reused soon after being submitted.

[102] I have followed the *kundoku* and annotations of Nara joshi daigaku 2005, 114. Readers familiar with classical Chinese will notice the odd syntax, but Japanese grammatical patterns frequently appear in Shōsōin documents written in "Chinese."

The document breaks off here, as it was cut to be reused on the other side. The phrases that I translate as "aid/extinguish/cross" and "urgently" are difficult to interpret. Another possibility is that the final character 濟 (*sukuu, wataru, seisu* aid/cross/extinguish) reflects a transcription error for 齋 (Ch. *zhai*, J. *sai*), which refers to abstinential practices often performed by employees at the Office of Sutra Transcription during times of mourning. Notably, *zhai* were thought to have purifying effects. Regardless of these interpretive problems, it is obvious from this document that the scribe is requesting time off from work as a result of his contact with death defilement. Significantly, the scribe notes that he is *fearful* of defilement; as Okada Shigekiyo (1982, 11-61) has noted, the fear of danger arising from impurity was a central motivation for ritual avoidances in early Japan.

Death was not the only source of contact defilement. Another document shows similar concerns over pollution from contact with illness:

> On why I have not gone to work for so long.
> With regard to the above matter, starting on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, there was an illness in my household. Everyone, both young and old, was bedridden and there was no one left to go here and there. Only with trepidation did I not go [to work]. However, from this month, on the eighth or ninth day, [their illness] appeared to abate a little. Now, as is necessary, *once I have finished cleaning and purifying* [*kansen shite, harau* 浣洗解除], my house I will return to work. So, I have recorded this letter and sent it with my son Otsutsugu 乙繼. Respectfully submitted. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the fifth year of Hōki [774]. (*DNK* 22:589 [*ZZS* 40:3 verso]).

Here we have a case where the scribe is explaining his absence from work based on the need to purify his home after encountering illness. The exact means by which he would do this is unclear, but it appears to involve cleaning or washing (*kansen* 浣洗) and ritual purification (*harai* or *kaijo* 解除) in addition to an avoidance period.[103]

A third Shōsōin document further indicates delays in sutra copying projects related to defilement. The petition, which is fragmentary, notes, "As sons and daughters in our household have said orally, 'Our household has become defiled, and we cannot possibly purify it for some time'" (*DNK* 22:56-57 [*ZZS* 40:4 verso]). The letter continues to note that the senders expect to complete the project and dedicate the sutras soon. Unfortunately, the name of the sender has been lost and the document can only be dated roughly to early 774 or late 775, but it is probably a petition by a household scriptorium writing with regard to borrowing texts for a sutra copying project. The mention of household defilements possibly points to illness or death, particularly when read against the above two documents. Regardless of the particular referent, the petition clearly connects purification with copying scripture.

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[103] The character 解除 is frequently glossed as *harai* in the early chronicles of Japan. I should note that *harai* in and of itself is secondary to the avoidance period. It appears that the *harai* was often performed at the end of the avoidance period before returning to one's regular duties. See Yamamoto 1992, 164-185 and Kim 2004, 180-187. Although Yamamoto and Kim primarily deal with later sources, in this case, their interpretation seems plausible, as the petitioner submits his request six or seven days after the illness had abated and states that he will perform a *harai* before returning to work.

The idea that illness was defiling for those involved in religious practices was widespread in Nara and early Heian (794-1185) Japan. Legal codes of the period require that those who call upon the ill first purify themselves before engaging in state rites (*Yōrō ritsuryō*, *NST* 3:213-214).[104] *Records of Numinous Responses from Japan* provides further evidence; one tale mentions the need to purify oneself from illness defilement before entering a temple. In this story, a girl hurries to Gangō-ji when she hears that the Four Heavenly Kings enshrined at the temple might be able to cure her illness. She wanders behind the lattice where the Four Heavenly Kings stand but is soon flung out by a Yakṣa. The story concludes, "Foolish woman...she ought to have proceeded only after purifying [lacuna]. Then what she wished for would not be in vain" (*Nihon kanrei roku* 3, 62-64).[105] Contact with illness could compromise the efficacy of a ritual.

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[104] In English, see Ooms 2009, 257. In Japanese, see Okada 1982 104-114 and 1989, 24-27.

[105] Katsuura Noriko has recently examined this tale and reached a different conclusion. She suggests that the woman's impurity may have arisen from menstruation, rather than illness. She argues that it would be a contradiction for the woman to first have to purify herself from illness in order to pray to be cured of her ailments. The story itself provides no evidence whatsoever that the woman was menstruating and we have no sources that portray menstruating women being forbidden from temples in this period (although there is some evidence that blood in general was viewed as a pollutant). I prefer to either accept the contradiction as a contradiction or interpret "purification" as referring to a temporary purification conducted before praying. This reading is strengthened by the fact that other sources (described above) provide evidence that those who had come into contact with illness were prohibited from engaging in ritual in early Japan. For Katsuura's view, see Katsuura 2009a, 9. This article has also appeared in English in Katsuura 2009b.

When we consider the above examples together, it seems reasonable to argue that scribes who had come into contact with defilements related to death and illness were permitted to miss work. Notably, we have over a hundred cases of scribes being excused from work due to illness and a dozen cases where they are allowed to miss work due to death in the family (Sakaehara 1985, 87; 1987). Surely part of the reason for excusing workers in these situations is consistent with practices in today's work environment: namely, to allow time for healing and mourning. At the same time, many requests for time off from mourning specifically mention the performance of abstinential rites (Ch. *zhai*, J. *sai* 齋); we should remember that mourning in Nara Japan was not simply for the emotional well-being of the mourner but was also considered a purifying act (Okada 1982, 290-317).

Sexual abstinence is another practice commonly associated with purity in numerous religious cultures throughout the world. In the East Asian context, abstinence became viewed as an ideal for the Buddhist and Daoist clergy.[106] Narrative tales produced in Japan also point to the risks involved in sexual intercourse for scribes. A tale in the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* specifically discusses the relationship between sex and sutra copying.

[106] For abstinence in the Daoist monastic context, see Kohn 2003, 119-123. For a good overview of Buddhism's complex attitudes toward sexuality, see Faure 1998. For abstinence as an ideal in Chinese Buddhism in particular, see Kieschnick 1997, 17-22. There are also early depictions of abstinence amongst the people of "Wa" with regard to the person ritually responsible for the safe return of seafarers. See *San guo zh*i ("Wei shu") 30.855.

> Tajihi 丹治此 the scribe was a man from the Tajihi district in Kawachi Province. Since his family name is Tajihi, we will use this as his name. Within that district, there was a place of practice called the Nonaka Hall 野中堂. There was someone who made a vow, and in the summer in the sixth month of the second year of Hōki *kanotoi* [771], he invited the scribe [Tajihi] to the hall to have him copy the *Lotus Sutra*. A group of women gathered there and *added pure water* [*jōsui* 淨水] to the ink for copying the sutra. At the time of *hitsujizaru* [2-4 PM], clouds suddenly gathered and rain fell. All entered the hall to escape the rain. Since the back of the hall was small and narrow, the scribe was in the same place as the women. Here, the scribe's lecherous heart kindled and he squatted behind the woman's back, lifted up her skirt, and began to fornicate. As soon as his Māra penetrated her vagina, they died together in embrace.[107] The woman died foaming from the mouth. (*Nihon ryōiki* III:18, *SNKBT* 30:154-155)[108]

The narrator explicitly states that the source of Tajihi's demise was related to impurity; "clearly it is known that this is a crime against the guardian of the [Buddhist] law. Even if the fires of lust flame up in one's body and heart, one should not commit a *dirty act* [*egyō* 穢行] based on a lustful heart." (*Nihon ryōiki* III:18; *SNKBT* 30:155). A later version of this tale is even more explicit in declaring that such dirty thoughts have no place in copying scripture:

> To think about this, even if a scribe gives rise to a mind full of lust and feels that it is burning his heart, he should stop thinking these thoughts while he is copying scripture...They truly received punishment for their crimes for defiling a temple and not believing in the scripture. (*Konjaku monogatari shū* 14:26, *SNKBT* 35:331)

[107] Māra, the infamous demon king, is frequently used as a euphemism for penis in Buddhist texts.

[108] For an alternative translation, see Nakamura 1973, 245-246.

In other medieval tales, a scribe's sexual misconduct could result in the copyist and his patrons being summoned to hell.[109] Lust and sexual deviance could compromise the ritual act of copying scripture and have grave effects on both the patron and the scribe.

It is unclear if Hitonari and other sutra copyists employed in the Office of Sutra Transcription were required to be sexually abstinent. Although we have no records of Hitonari having a wife or child, other documents suggest that some scribes kept families.[110] Despite this, it seems plausible that Hitonari and other sutra copyists would have been expected to be abstinent while they were copying scripture. Scribes resided at the scriptorium on temple grounds and could only return home for yearly holidays, for a short vacation after completing a set of scriptures, or for emergencies. In being isolated from their families, scribes were transformed into temporary renunciants who like their monastic brethren had "left the household [*shukke* 出家]." In being set off from their families, scribes were better able to empower texts and those with monastic ambitions could further cultivate themselves through practicing abstinence.

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[109] See *Konjaku monogatari shū* 14:29, *SNKBT* 35:333-338 and *Uji shūi monogatari* 8:4, *NKBT* 27:244-245.

[110] Most often family members such as children and spouses are mentioned in requests for time off to mourn the dead or to care for the sick. For children, see *DNK* 2:191 (*ZS* 31:12 verso), 4:494 (*ZZS* 3:4 verso), 15:99 (*ZZS* 3:4 verso), and 17:603-604 (*ZZS* 39:2 verso). For wives, see *DNK* 17:598 (*ZZS* 39:2 verso).

The language used to refer to scribal salaries further reflects how officials viewed sutra copyists as different from ordinary government workers. Stipends given to secular officials were known as a salary (*roku* 禄) in accord with the *ritsuryō* codes (*Yōrō ritsuryō,* NST 3:304-307). When scribes such as Hitonari were paid, however, it is generally referred to as almsgiving (*fuse* 布施).[111] The term *fuse* is a translation of a technical Buddhist term used to describe the offerings given to monks (Skt. *dāna*). In this way, scribes were not simply paid as state employees but were given alms in a manner that closely paralleled donations made to the clergy. In short, Hitonari lived a life at the scriptorium that fell somewhere between that of a monk and a layman.

Beyond the Office of Sutra Transcription

Scribes working outside of the Office of Sutra Transcription came from diverse backgrounds with differing skill levels but were expected to follow many of the same practices that sutra copyists at the official scriptorium engaged in. Narrative tales and colophons suggest that some provincial scribes were laypersons, as was the case at the Office of Sutra Transcription. In other instances, however, novices (*shami* 沙弥) or lay practitioners (*ubasoku*

[111] For pay records issued to Hitonari that use the term *fuse* see *DNK* 8:152-153 (*ZZS* 7:4) and 8:158-159 (*ZZS* 3:2).

優婆塞) took up the brush. In addition, monks occasionally transcribed sutras themselves.[112] As one may expect with scribes of such diverse backgrounds, the calligraphy in provincial sutras are of uneven quality. Some provincial copyists wrote with a skill that matches that of scribes in the capital, but other manuscripts reveal a "rustic" and sloppy hand that suggests it sometimes may have been difficult to find skilled copyists in the provinces.[113]

Concerns over the purity of a scribe were not only limited to the Office of Sutra Transcription but extended into local Buddhist practice as well. For one, numerous stories in the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* associate purity with scribes. The stories themselves take place in multiple locales. The mere presence of these tales in the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* suggests that the discourse of purity had broad appeal in the Nara period. This is particularly true if we accept the claims of some recent scholarship that monks traveling in the provinces likely delivered sermons based around collections of tales such as the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* and *Records of Numinous Responses from*

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[112] For example, see *NCS*, plates 55-57. For scripture copied by a monk, see plate 6. The fact that sutra copying was described as a form of monastic punishment in the legal codes suggests that the practice was considered beneath most fully ordained monks. That said, numerous well-known monks did sponsor large scale sutra copying projects, but these examples are far fewer than lay patronage.

[113] For useful overviews of calligraphy outside of the Office of Sutra Transcription, see the discussions of individual works in Tanaka 1953 and Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan 1983. Of course there is a fair amount of subjectivity involved in such analysis. It is not uncommon for one scholar to dismiss a sutra's calligraphy as poor and another to praise it.

Japan (Suzuki 1994; Kurosu 2004). If this were the case, we can expect that some provincial Buddhists would have been familiar with stories that advocate upholding purity when copying scripture.

Beyond the realm of narrative tales, however, colophons provide more concrete evidence that those in the provinces sought out pure scribes whenever possible. For example, a colophon from a 757 copy of the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* transcribed by a local Buddhist fellowship group from Ebara village 家原里 in Kawachi province reads: "Since there was no scribe present, a defiled person [*esha* 穢者] stained [*someru* 染] this sutra."[114] The colophon uses a clever play on words with the verb *someru* 染める, which I have translated as "to stain." The character itself has a semantic range that includes not only "to stain," but also to defile/to dirty (*kegasu*) and to write/to dip one's brush (*kaku*). The usage of this character as defilement is common in Buddhist sources; it appears frequently in compounds such as a defiled mind (Ch. r*anxin*, Jp. *zenshin* 染心) or polluted (Ch. *wuran* 汚染, Jp. *osen* or *wazen*).[115] As the word at once means to defile and to write, the text of the sutra was defiled as it was written. The implication

[114] The colophon appears in Tanaka Kaidō's catalog of sutras. See Tanaka 1973,62. Unfortunately, the manuscript itself is no longer extant, as it was lost to flooding in 1953. See Gorai 1956. Without the extant manuscript, we have no way of confirming that the colophon is written in the same hand as the copyist, so my reading is somewhat speculative.

[115] For one classic depiction of the defiled mind, see *Dasheng qixin lun*, T 1666.32.577c. In Japan, this compound of defiled mind appears in the *Nihon kanrei roku* and is used in direct contrast to a pure mind (*shōjō no kokoro* 清淨心); see *Nihon kanrei roku* 4, 64-65.

that such defilement was only performed in the absence of a professional scribe suggests that a sutra copyist was expected to be pure.

Although the connection between scribes and purity may have been widespread, this colophon suggests that some provincial patrons had trouble finding ritually pure sutra copyists. The story of the Tajihi scribe discussed above further reveals the difficulties that local patrons may have encountered in seeking out a scribe who was calligraphically proficient and ritually pure. These two examples suggest that scribal practices at the Office of Sutra Transcription and those of ad hoc fellowship groups shared common concerns over upholding ritual purity. The main difference between these two groups lies not in the ideology of regulation but rather in the ability (or inability) to secure the necessary manpower to carry out a sutra copying project.[116] In this way, regulation as an ideal was by no means unique to the state. What separated the state from other forms of Buddhism was its capability to staff a large workforce of calligraphically proficient and ritually efficacious scribes.

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[116] This is not to suggest that the scribes at the Office of Sutra Transcription necessarily maintained purity. It seems likely that some scribes did break rules. In fact, we have one letter submitted to the Office of Sutra Transcription by a scribe apologizing for committing an error (*ayamachi* 過) that was both grave (*jinshin* 甚深) and went against decorum (*reigi* 礼義); the scribe expressed regret (*sange* 懺悔) and promised to show more diligence (*shōjin* 精進) in the future. See *DNK* 6:162 (*ZS* 19:6). The letter is signed by eleven employees of the Office of Sutra Transcription. Of course, we have no way to confirm whether his transgressions had anything at all to do with purity, but we should not assume that every scribe obeyed the regulations of the scriptorium.

Sutra Copying as Monastic Training

The above discussion has focused on the way scribal bodies were disciplined from above to meet the demands of their patrons. In line with the broader goal of this chapter, it is also necessary to further explore the ways that sutra copyists were able to actively learn a discipline through copying scripture. We have already seen how scribes were able to cultivate literary and calligraphic skills at the scriptorium, but sutra copyists also engaged in religious training that would allow them to advance in their own Buddhist practice.[117]

To return to the case of Hitonari, his experience at the scriptorium prepared him for ordination. After eight years of labor, Hitonari applied for ordination on 8/1/745 (*DNK* 24:297-298 [*ZZS* 37:9 verso]).[118] He was not the only employee at the Office of Sutra Transcription to

[117] Copying manuscripts represented a pious act that functioned as a form of monastic training in other medieval traditions as well. In Christianity, copying scripture was believed to lead to more highly developed spiritual states and served as a means to gain God's blessings. See Leclerq 1982, 122-123. Muslim scribes known as *warraq* are particularly illuminating as a comparative case. *Warraq* were expected to copy in a state of ritual purity (*taharah*) while wearing clean clothes and maintaining pure intentions (*niyah*). Moreover, the elegant handwriting of a copyist was believed to relieve him of his sins. For an overview, see Gacek 2006, 704-705.

[118] We can assume he was granted ordination, because he stopped working at the scriptorium soon after his recommendation. There are a few documents listed in standard reference sources such as Takeuchi, et al. 1953 that record his name for dates after he was recommended for ordination. A few of these such as *DNK* 24:132 (*JK* 4:2-4) and 24:368 (*JK* 33:18) are simply misdated in *DNK*. This is a common occurrence, but the correct dating for these documents appears in the more recent *SMM*. The other post-8/1/745 documents, namely, *DNK* 9:382 (*SS* 41:2 verso), 24:341 (*ZZS* 26:6), simply record activities that Hitonari had performed in 744 and

pursue a monastic path, as we have a record of over thirty individuals requesting ordination in 748.[119] This is no accident, as scribal practice closely resembled monastic training in Nara Japan. An 11/734 edict sets the following standards for those wanting to become a monk or nun: the ability to recite the *Lotus* and *Golden Light Sutra*, knowledge of the proper means for performing Buddhist ritual services (*raibutsu* 禮佛), and a minimum of three years of pure conduct (*jōgyō* 淨行), a term that we will explore further below.[120] Hitonari's time at the Office of Sutra Transcription would have helped him meet these requirements.

A close examination of Hitonari's application for ordination shows that the practices he engaged in at the scriptorium contributed to his training. For one, Hitonari would have had access to a vast library of texts during his time at the Office of Sutra Transcription that would have enabled him to study scripture. His application lists several titles he could recite including the *Scripture on the Path to the Principle* (*Liqu jing* 理趣経), the *Scripture on the Medicine*

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early 745. The fact that his name is blackened out on the request may also be related to the approval of his application. We have one other example of a request where a significant portion of the document is blotted out, but the character pass (*gō* 合) appears in the margin. See *DNK* 24:299-300 (*ZZS* 34:1 verso).

[119] Of these, close to half had their recommendation approved. See *DNK* 3:78-81 (*ZS* 28:8). For studies of this document, see Inoue 1966, 417-420; Sakuma 1971; Kitō 1977, 115; and Horiike 1980, 1:573-575.

[120] *Shoku Nihongi* 11/20/734, *SNKTBT* 13:283; *Ruijū sandaikyaku* 2, *KT* 25:75-76. In the early Heian period, the requirements for ordination became increasingly scholastic. See *Ruijū kokushi* 4/15/798 (Enryaku 17), *KT* 6:313-14. This transition is discussed in detail in Sango 2007, 79-83.

Master, and the *Scripture on the One Who Observes the Sounds of the World* (*Guan shi yin jing* 觀世音經), which reveal a range of devotional commitments and learning.[121] These sutras simultaneously promised this-worldly benefits and liberation from suffering to those who uphold the text. They were also used in state rituals aimed at penance and securing peace in the realm. Hitonari may have been interested in the doctrinal content of Buddhist texts as well. This is implied in a note he wrote in the margins of his calligraphy practice described above. Just beside the first two couplets of the *Thousand-Character Essay*, Hitonari wrote: "One hears the three treatises [*sanron* 三論] and other [teachings] and surely believes" (*ZSBS* 48:4).[122] These pieces of evidence suggest that Hitonari was likely busy studying and memorizing Buddhist scriptures during whatever free time he may have had at the scriptorium.

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[121] Here, the *Liqu jing* most likely refers to chapter ten of the *Da bore boluomiduo jing*, T 220.7.986a-991b. See *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T 2154.55.651a, 662c. For the various translations of this text, their transmission to Japan, and their importance in the development of Japanese esotericism, see Abé 1999, 247-260. The *Yaoshi jing* is likely to be the single scroll version, whose full title is *Yaoshi liulíguang rulai benyuan gongde jing*, T 450.14.404-409. *Guan shi yin jing* refers to the Guanyin chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, which often circulated independently, see *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T 262.9.56c-58b. All of these sutras are common in applications by lay practitioners for monastic ordination (*ubasoku kōshin mon* 優婆塞貢進文). See Horiike 1980 2:406-413 and Yoshida 1988, 177-187.

[122] The three treatises refers to the three texts associated with the Madhyamaka or Three Treatise School (Ch. *sanlun zong*, Jp. *sanron shū* 三論宗), as it was known in Chinese and Japanese. The three treatises are the *Treatise of the Middle* (*Zhong lun* 中論, T 1564.30.1a-39c), the *Treatise of the Twelve Gates* (*Shier men lun* 十二門論, T 1568.30.159c-167c), and the *Treatise of a Hundred [Verses] (Bai lun* 百論, T 1569.30.168-182a).

Hitonari's application also cites his ability to chant at Buddhist ritual services (*shōrai* 唱禮), which was another requirement for ordination established in the 734 edict. In addition to the official requirements noted above, a tale from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* suggests that people particular skilled in performing these ritual services could be granted ordination. In this tale, a lay practitioner ties himself to a statue and conducts services. The statue responds by emitting a light. When the emperor hears of this, he immediately grants the practitioner full monastic ordination (*Nihon ryōiki* II.21, S*NKBT* 30:93-94; Nakamura 1973, 188-190). Hitonari would have had the chance to learn and cultivate the techniques for these ritual services while employed at the Office of Sutra Transcription. Labor records show that many scribes performed ritual services to the Buddha as part of their work responsibilities at the scriptorium (*DNK* 3:497 [*SS* 6:7]). Hitonari would have likely engaged in these ritual services as part of his scribal practice.

Most applications from this time contain a section that records the applicant's total number of years of "pure conduct." Hitonari, like other scribes who applied for monastic ordination, replaced the phrase "pure conduct" with "labor [*rō* 勞]" (*DNK* 24:297-298 [*ZZS* 37:9 verso]). In this way, scribal employment functioned as a substitute for pure conduct, which as

noted above can be defined as sexual abstinence and upholding the precepts.[123] At the Office of Sutra Transcription, Hitonari and other scribes were able to discipline their bodies to properly learn how to perform ritual services and uphold purity in a way that would enable them to pursue monastic careers. Although such practices may have been instituted as a means to empower the texts sponsored by patrons, they also served to prepare pious scribes for a religious vocation.[124]

Other activities that Hitonari engaged in at the scriptorium would have also helped him receive approval for ordination. Administrators occasionally recorded their notes on the monastic applications in a way that reveals their criteria for approval. One document lists

[123] The other scribal applications only list the number of years engaged in labor but do not list texts studied or other ritual abilities. This is true for all post-745 recommendation letters. Notably, Hitonari does not cite the *Lotus Sutra* or the *Golden Light Sutra* as texts he could recite, even though it was required by the 734 edict discussed above. This may be related to the fact that his application comes right at the point when the application was simplified and requirements for sutra recitation may have been dropped. Japanese scholars have studied this simplification of the recommendation process in detail. Increased demand for manpower for the construction of Tōdai-ji, changes in state policy, and institutional shifts in the place where these recommendations were processed all contributed to this change. Good introductions to the genre of monastic applications can be found in Horiike 1980, 1:566-582; Kitō 1977, 93-127; Nemoto 1974 and 1976; Nakabayashi 1993; Sakuma 1971; Satō 1993; and Yoshida 1988, 155-186.

[124] I should note than in pursuing a religious vocation, scribes would be furthering imperial interests, as performing rituals for the protection of the realm and the health of the emperor was a central feature of a monastic career. This is in line with the two senses of regime described in the introduction to this chapter.

"good voice and writing" above the name of a candidate (*DNK* 8:133 [*ZZS* 23:5]).[125] This suggests that skills in recitation and with a brush may have been a beneficial asset toward becoming a monk. Moreover, some letters list the candidate's ability to recite literary texts such as *Literary Selections*. (*DNK* 2:314-315 [*ZSBS* 47:3]). The presence of these non-canonical works in recommendation letters suggests that some people viewed literary skill as relevant for monastic appointment. As described above, Hitonari showed familiarity with literary texts including *Literary Selections*. Scribes in general would have had access to these manuscripts at the Office of Sutra Transcription. In this way, Hitonari's literary and calligraphic pursuits may have aided him in his quest for ordination.[126]

Scribes were also active in religious practice outside of their official duties at the scriptorium, which suggests that many scribes took interest in ritual and devotional activities independent of their work. In some cases, scribes copied sutras on their own (*DNK* 20:54 [*ZZS* 39:4 verso]). They also requested time off from work to engage in Buddhist rites such as

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[125] I have chosen to translate the term *sho* 書 neutrally as writing. My own reading is that this refers to calligraphy specifically, but the graph can also mean literary skills. Either way, Hitonari and other scribes would have had ample opportunities to develop their literary and calligraphic talents at the Office of Sutra Transcription. For more on the evaluative notes written by administrators, see Nakabayashi 1993, 67-68.

[126] Astute readers may notice that I have not discussed merit-making as a possible motivation for Hitonari. Although this may have driven some scribes, I do not see any evidence that scribes at the Office of Sutra Transcription saw their own work in terms of earning merit. I will discuss the issue of merit making in detail in the next chapter.

presenting oil to bodhisattvas, making offerings to the three treasures, performing penance rituals, and observing the six monthly days of purification.[127] Another document records a group of scribes joining together as a fellowship group to raise funds for a penance ritual (*keka* 悔過) dedicated to Amitābha (*DNK* 17:111-115 [*ZZS* 46:5]). Moreover, sutra copyists participated in private (*watakushi* 私) rites for local spirits including clan deities (*ujigami* 氏神) and regional gods such as Kamo Ōkami (a name that is transcribed in this document as 鴨大神) (*DNK* 6:171 [*ZS* 20:11 and 22]; 6:407 [*ZS* 20:20]; 17:572-573 [*ZZS* 39:2 verso]). Altogether nearly ten percent of requests for time off are related to conducting Buddhist or *kami* rites. This represents the third most common reason for requesting leave and points to scribes' active involvement in diverse religious activities.[128] The participation in *kami* affairs by scribes is not surprising, since purity was valued for those engaging in Buddhist and *kami* ritual. For example, an edict from 7/17/725 declares: "In venerating *kami* and honoring the Buddha, purity is paramount. Now, it is said that in the shrines of the various provinces, there is much stink and defilement...in worshipping the venerable *kami*, how can this do?" (*Shoku Nihongi* 7/17/725, *SNKBT* 13:160-161).

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[127] For offering oil to bodhisattvas, see *DNK*:17:557 (*ZZS* 29:1 verso) and 14:178 (*ZZS* 34:2 verso). For offerings to the three treasures, see *DNK* 17:598 (*ZZS* 29:2 verso). For penance rites, see *DNK* 17:588 (*ZZS* 39:2 verso). For abstinential rites, see *DNK* 15:90 (*ZZS* 3:4 verso) and 17:595 (*ZZS* 29:2 verso) and Ōkusa 2010.

[128] The most common reasons are requesting time off due to illness and after the completion of a set of scriptures. See Sakaehara 1985, 87.

The disciplinary practices of the scriptorium, therefore, prepared scribes for a wide range of religious pursuits.

Other employees of the Office of Sutra Transcription who applied for monastic ordination also appear to have been interested in Buddhist practice prior to their entry into the scriptorium. For example, Murayama no Muraji Obitomaro 村山連首麻呂, who worked as a proofreader, applied for monastic ordination in 748. A report that records his work activities notes that he performed services of worship to the Buddha (*kubu raibutsu* 共[供]奉禮佛) (*DNK* 3:286 [*ZSBS* 40 verso]). Sakaehara Towao, who has studied Obitomaro in detail, notes that not all scribes engaged in these services; Obitomaro likely took on such responsibilities from his personal convictions (Sakaehara 2008, 217-218). He was not alone—several other employees requesting ordination including Haruta no Muraji Iwamaro 治田連石麻呂, Manda no Muraji Emaro 茨田連兄麻呂 , Yamato no Fuhito Hitotari倭史人足, and Kume no Atai Kumataka 久米直熊鷹 all performed these services.

So why did Obitomaro become interested in Buddhist practice to begin with? Sakaehara points out that he came from the Sayama 狭山郷 village in the Tajihi district 丹比郡 of Kawachi province 河内國, a village where the eminent monk Gyōki was known to have been active. Sakaehara speculates that these activities may have planted the seeds of faith in a young Obitomaro or at least those around him. Another employee who requested ordination

named Kasuga no Mushimaro 春日虫麻呂 was from the Nishinari district 西成郡 in Settsu Province 摂津國, another area where Gyōki was active.[129] The background of other scribes reveals religious connections as well; Hata no Yanushi 秦家主 and Iwarebe no Kumataka 石村部熊鷹 spent time working at Nakatomi-dera as attendants (*toneri* 舎人) (*DNK* 9:325-326 [*ZZS* 23:5]). In this way, we can see that many scribes employed at the Office of Sutra Transcription had close connections to Buddhism.

Although we have already seen that some scribes outside of the Office of Sutra Transcription—at least as portrayed in narrative tales—may have been professional scriveners who had little interest in upholding Buddhist ideals, evidence from colophons of sutras copied by fellowship groups show that many scribes operating independently of the official scriptoria were engaged in Buddhist practice and aspired toward monastic ordination. Some of these groups were formed around shared cultic concerns, often based on devotion to a particular deity or text. In one case, a group joined together to copy the *Yogacara-bhumi*—a text that was intimately connected to Maitreyan worship.[130] The patron and scribes all called themselves

[129] I have used the relatively strict criteria established by Inoue Mitsusada and Sakaehara Towao for determining areas where Gyōki was active. See Sakaehara 2006, 94-98. At least two other employees come from areas that appear in the *Gyōki nenki*, but these sites cannot be reliably connected to Gyōki through comparison with other more reliable sources.

[130] For a study of this group, see Sonoda Kōyū 1972, 243-259. For colophons, see *NCS*, plates 15-16; *NI*, 614-615.

"disciples of Maitreya [*jishi deshi* 慈氏弟子]." Some scribes in this group were *upāsaka*, devout lay practitioners who in many cases upheld the five precepts and aspired to full ordination. Other members had monastic sounding names that they listed above their "original name [*honmyō* 本名]." This suggests that they may have been novice monks who had not received full ordination. Moreover, many scribes' names contain the character "Ji 慈" (compassion). This reflects their devotion to Maitreya, as "Ji" was used in Chinese translation of his name.

Other scribal names reveal similar religious commitments. A single scroll from a separate project to copy the *Yogacara-bhumi*, currently housed at Tōshōdai-ji 唐招提寺, gives the name of a patron and scribe who were likely associated with a larger fellowship group (*NCS*, plate 39; *NI*, 619). Both individuals used the character "Yu 瑜" in their names, which is the transliteration for the first sound of *Yogacara*. Moreover, they identified themselves as "bodhisattvas." The rather uneven hand suggests that the scribe was not a professional scrivener but rather a devotee to the sutra who cooperated with the group out of a sense of piety and perhaps as a form of Buddhist practice. The scribe for the "Fellowship of Intimate Servants of Yoga Practice" that we explored in the last chapter took the name Kanpō 觀法 (literally "Observe the Dharma"). This suggests he considered himself a practitioner and his name may have been connected to the meditation practices described in the text (*NI*, 621). For at least some fellowship groups, scribes were part of the community of devotees.

Other colophons illuminate the religious backgrounds of scribes in fellowship groups. In a copy of the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*, an unordained scribe with an excellent hand named Kawai no Kimi Mizomaro 川相君溝萬呂 referred to himself as a "friend of the Dharma [*hōyū* 法友]" (*NCS*, plate 17; *NI*, 613). In the fellowship led by the monk Dōgyō discussed in chapter one, one scribe identified himself an *upāsaka* and a second as a *śrāmaṇera* or novice monk (*NCS*, plates 56-57). Although some scribes employed by fellowship groups were surely just skilled calligraphers looking for work, the presence of *upāsaka* and novice monks in these groups implies that many viewed copying scripture as a form of religious practice that could prepare them for monastic ordination. Moreover, the fact that scribes in fellowships had names with cultic qualities suggests that they often joined these groups out of devotion to a deity or text. In other cases, scribes who started in fellowship groups later gained employment at the Office of Sutra Transcription. Some scribes forged careers dedicated to copying religious texts and may very well have viewed their labor in the scriptorium as a form of pious practice that they had first developed in a fellowship group (*NCS*, plate 7).

We should also note that some sutra copyists were able to advance in other spheres as well. For example, one scribe from the Office of Sutra Transcription named Heki no Miyatsuko Minomaro 日置造蓑麻呂 requested ordination but was denied his request. Despite this, he eventually achieved Senior Fifth Rank Lower and gained prominent positions including

Governor of Tanba (*Tanba no kami* 丹波守), Head of the Bureau of Books and Drawings (*Zusho no kami* 圖書頭), Head of the University (*Daigaku no kami* 大学頭), Tutor [to the Crown Prince] at the Eastern Palace (*Tōgū gakushi* 東宮学士), Chief of the Hokke-ji Construction Agency (*Zō Hokkeji no kami* 造法華寺長官), and Head of the Yin-Yang Bureau (*On'yō no kami* 陰陽頭).[131] It seems likely that the personal connections, literary skills, administrative experience, and exposure to ritual practice that Minomaro gained at the Office of Sutra Transcription would have helped him achieve these posts. Notably, many of these positions were connected to scholastic and religious institutions.

At the same time, we should not dwell on these "success" stories. Many scribes lived lives marked by tragedies of personal loss and slaved away for long hours of work with little chance of advancement.[132] For some scribes, the scriptorium provided a place to engage in religious training and gave sutra copyists the opportunity to perform devotional acts that they may have found appealing. For others, it offered little more than a means to get by.

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[131] For Minomaro's monastic application, see *DNK* 3:78 (*ZS* 28:8). For select documents that trace some of the milestones in Minomaro's career, see *NI* 2:616; *DNK* 15:130 (*ZZS* 46:5); *DNK* 4:395, *Shoku Nihongi* 1/9/762, *SNKTBT,* 14:403; 11/18/768, 15:223; 8/22/770, 15:301; 3/5/774, 15:425; 2/7/782, 16:233; 9/9/782, 16:251; and 1/4/783, 16:255. In post-777 sources, he appears as Sakai no Sukune Minomaro 榮井宿祢蓑麻呂, a name he was granted on 4/3/777.

[132] See Sakaehara 1987, 196-202 and 1991, 233-234. In English, see Farris 2007, 429.

Conclusions

This chapter has looked at the Office of Sutra Transcription through the eyes of Karakuni no Muraji Hitonari. We followed him through his economic, cultural, and religious practices. As noted in the introduction, Nara Buddhism is often described in terms of strong regulatory measures imposed on the clergy by the state. Most scholarship that challenges this model has focused on the state's ineffectiveness in regulating Buddhism and highlighted the activities of those working independently of official institutions. While recognizing the value of these recent revisions, the state's relationship to Buddhism cannot be dismissed altogether. It is necessary to reassess the regulation of Buddhism by understanding both its broader context and its specific effects.

For one, the regulation of scribal practices must not be reduced to secular control over Buddhist institutions. The tendency to see state regulation in terms of secular manipulation of religious establishments reveals more about modern assumptions regarding the separation of church and state than it does about premodern Japanese religiosity. Ritual and statecraft were inseparable in eighth-century Japan. The disciplinary regimes enforced at the scriptorium arose as a result of concerns over ensuring ritual efficacy. The scribes at the Office of Sutra Transcription were not ordained, so it is clear that the regulation of bodies was not limited to the clergy but extended broadly to all those engaged in ritual. In this way, the regulation of

Buddhism was perhaps less about demonstrating the effectiveness of the state's legal and administrative regime to the clergy than it was about ensuring an efficacious ritual system.

Second, efforts to uphold the ritual purity of scribes were by no means unique to the state, to Buddhism, or to the Nara period. Rather, patrons from diverse social and geographic settings, including the continent, aimed to maintain the ritual purity of lay scribes. In fact, the regulation of purity is common to many ritual systems in diverse cultural and temporal settings. Where the state was perhaps unique in comparison with provincial sutra copying projects was in its ability to secure a constant source of ritually efficacious labor. Since the idea of regulating purity was widely shared by so-called "popular" and state movements alike, it is misleading to consider efforts at regulation as a defining feature of state Buddhism.

A new understanding of Buddhist practice in the Nara period also calls for a closer examination of the particular effects power had in shaping the agency of scribes. Proponents of the state Buddhism model often assume that power is consciously instituted by elites above and passively consumed by the masses below. In place of this two-tiered model, I have asked how power, which I see as a contingent combination of forces, is enacted on the body through specific institutions such as the Office of Sutra Transcription. I have tried to show that while on the one hand scribes were disciplined to ensure the ritual efficacy of sutra copying, these same disciplinary practices produced and enabled certain modes of being. Through the bodily

practices outlined above, scribes were able to cultivate particular dispositions that allowed them to pursue a monastic path, more effectively engage in rites for local *kami*, and develop their literary and calligraphic talents. Rather than seeing discipline in a purely passive sense, this chapter has explored how scribes were able to cultivate themselves within the structures of the Office of Sutra Transcription and beyond. The disciplinary regimes were mutually beneficial to Hitonari and his patrons. This symbiotic relationship would continue after Hitonari and other scribes received ordination, as they would be expected to perform ritual labor on behalf of the state as a monk.

Chapter Three: Imagining Kingship and Cosmos

> *This doctrine is amongst all doctrines the most excellent. But it is hard to explain and hard to comprehend. Even the Duke of Zhou and Confucius had not attained knowledge of it. This doctrine can create religious merit and retribution without measure and without bounds, and so lead on to a full appreciation of the highest wisdom. Imagine a man in possession of treasures to his heart's content, so that he might satisfy all his wishes in proportion as he used them. Thus it is with the treasure of this wonderful doctrine. Every prayer is fulfilled and naught is wanting.*
>
> *-Chronicles of Japan*[1]

The above passage, said to be authored by a Paekche king, celebrates the transmission of Buddhism to Japan.[2] While praising the teachings of the Buddha as superior to any other, the king contends that its doctrines are nearly incomprehensible. Instead, it is Buddhism's ability to answer prayers (*kigan* 祈願) that makes it worthwhile. The promise of having one's

[1] *Nihon shoki* 10/552, *NKBT* 68:100. I have followed the translation by Aston [1896] 1972, 2:66 with some minor revisions.

[2] The authenticity of this passage is questionable. The text draws on quotations from a translation of the *Golden Light Sutra* by Yijing 義淨 (635-713) that postdates the transmission account by roughly 150 years. Based on this evidence, most scholars view the passage as a forgery authored by editors of the *Nihon shoki*. For the classic study, see Fujii 1925. A more recent and detailed discussion can be found in Yoshida 2010, 28-61. Sone Masato has argued that although the specific wording of the transmission account may contain some later accretions, the general content probably reflects an actual sixth-century source. See Sone 2007, 81-87. Although I have doubts about Sone's conclusions, the letter's authenticity is irrelevant to this dissertation; the fact that eighth-century compilers choose to represent the transmission of Buddhism in this way reflects upon their attitudes toward the religion.

wishes granted clearly attracted Japanese Buddhist patrons; people from diverse social backgrounds sponsored the composition of prayer texts (*ganmon* 願文) to accompany merit-making projects. These texts, which provide an unrivaled glimpse into eighth-century religious life, represent one of the most widely extant—and perhaps least studied—sources for Buddhist practice in eighth-century Japan.[3]

This chapter will ask a series of questions about the significance of prayer texts found in the colophons of sutra manuscripts. How did Buddhist patrons in eighth-century Japan conceive of the benefits accrued from copying scripture? In what ritual contexts were prayers performed? What were patrons' attitudes toward scripture? How did they conceive of the afterlife and kingship? Did authoring prayers transcend social divisions? How did diverse

[3] As valuable as these sources are, they are not without problems. The most prominent is that the authors and sponsors (*ganshu* 願主) are often different individuals. For this reason, it is difficult to assess how much prayers reflect the patrons' beliefs. This problem is easily averted by focusing on the performative aspects of prayer. The names of the authors have been for the most part lost to history and were perhaps even unknown to eighth-century audiences. What was recorded—and therefore what was likely valued by eighth-century patrons and audiences alike—is the name of the sponsor. Since Nara society paid more attention to the patron than the author, I similarly focus on the beliefs expressed under the authority of the sponsor's name and care less about the individual who composed the text, particularly since we have little knowledge of who those authors may have been. In short, I am more interested in public expression and authority than privatized belief. That said, in the Heian period, when prayers became anthologized in collected works of literary luminaries, the writer may, in some contexts, have been more esteemed than the patron. Here, my thinking is indebted to work on authorship by Michel Foucault and belief by Donald Lopez. See Foucault 1977 and Lopez 1998.

literary and religious traditions join together to shape the worldview of patrons in the Nara period? The chapter will be structured around these questions.

Prayer texts will be analyzed through the lens of what Jacque Le Goff has termed the *imaginaire*.[4] I use this term to refer to historically localized, idiosyncratic, and pluralistic representations of kingship and cosmos. My methodology, which focuses on the way individuals appropriated ideas in unique cultural contexts, promises a fresh perspective on Nara religiosity. While previous work has focused on the production of ideology by the state, we will look at cosmology from the perspective of a diverse group of patrons and treat it as a process of creative construction. An examination of prayers will reveal the way sponsors of pious works conceived of the cosmos and political order. Their descriptions of celestial realms and ideals of kingship were not limited to Buddhist allusions but drew from assorted literary and religious sources.

The expression of cosmology in prayers does not easily map onto individual traditions such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Shintō. In the past, scholars have often referred to these religions as totalistic systems adopted wholesale by their adherents. To this end, many authors

[4] See Le Goff 1988, esp. 1-7. In Buddhist studies, Steven Collins and Bernard Faure have advocated the term, although my usage differs slightly from Collins, who tends to see the *imaginaire* as relatively stable and cohesive. See Collins 1998, esp. 72-89 and Faure 1996, esp. 10-13 and 280-282. Eugene Wang's discussion of the "imaginary world" created by painters at Dunhuang has also helped me conceptualize this chapter. See Wang 2005, esp. xiii-xxiii.

writing on early Japanese religion have striven to uncover a single ideology that corresponds to a specific tradition. For example, William LaFleur (1983, 27) has described Buddhism as a theodicy that succeeded by providing a coherent and rational explanation of the world.[5] More recent scholarship on early Japan has tried to uncover how Daoist symbols and ritual defined royal authority, while others have suggested that a Confucian ideology dominated the discursive field in Nara.[6] In the texts under study in this chapter, worldviews seamlessly combine assorted images that are never labeled as corresponding to a single tradition.[7]

At the same time, the term *imaginaire* also suggests that concepts do not arise out of thin air. Imagination is not purely subjective; the verb "to imagine" requires an object. In

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[5] LaFleur himself admits that he does not believe "that the Buddhist component in medieval Japanese civilization was always structured, coherent, or unitary" (ix). Despite this caveat, most of his work seems to take the Buddhist worldview as hegemonic and highly structured.

[6] For Confucianism, see Holcombe 1997 and Abé 1999, 4-5, 21-23, and 310-322. For Daoism, see Bialock, 65-110 and Ooms 2009, esp. 132-153. I should note briefly that scholars advocating the "Daoist" influence generally employ a definition of Daoism that differs from the way Sinologists such as Anna Seidel, Michel Strickmann, and Robert Campany use the term—this issue has been capably addressed in Como 2009, xiv-xv. Although I have chosen to avoid using the category of Daoism as a broadly defined interpretive tool, both Ooms's and Bialock's emphasis on the hybridity of symbols used by the early court complements the findings of this chapter. For a trenchant critique of the Daoist boom in early Japanese religions, which focuses on much of the Japanese scholarship that Ooms and Bialock draw from, see Ishii 2010.

[7] This is not to say that there are no meaningful distinctions between traditions. For example, processes of canonization and the development of religious institutions surely contributed to differentiation, but the worldviews expressed by patrons on the ground were often composite. My thinking here has been influenced in part by the groundbreaking work of Zürcher 1980, 146. Also see Ebrey and Gregory 1993, 11-18.

prayers, patrons frequently allude to Chinese classics and Buddhist scripture. Without such sources, eighth-century sponsors could not have conceived of the world in the way they did. In this way, the chapter will suggest that the precise way the cosmos was imagined was mediated to a large extent by poetic traditions and genre conventions. At the same time, their interpretations did not mirror canonical sources. Patrons concocted cosmologies by liberally combining images from diverse traditions and adding original elements at their own discretion. The worldviews expressed in prayers did not emerge directly from canonical texts but developed in dialogue with these sources in highly individualized but genre bound ways.

Merit Making in the Buddhist Imaginaire

People appended prayers to colophons because they viewed sutra copying as an act that produced merit, which could be bestowed upon others at the discretion of the patron. This represents the basic logic of sutra transcription.[8] It will first be necessary to consider the way merit making was understood in premodern Japan and assess the ritual environment in which prayers were performed. These questions are central to understanding the way Buddhist patrons understood their universe and the practice of transcribing scripture.

[8] For a good overview, see Kieschnick 2003, 164-176.

In prayer texts, the dedication of merit is usually expressed in a sentence that follows a set structure.[9] A fairly typical example can be found in a prayer sponsored by the aristocrat Ishikawa no Toshitari: "with these merits [*kudoku* 功德], [Toshitari] will aid and benefit [*shiyaku* 資益] the spirit of the deceased [*bōrei* 亡靈]" (*NCS*, plate 19; Tanaka 1973, 38).[10] The basic syntax of Toshitari's prayer is typical, but patrons employ a rich vocabulary to describe the "merit" created by copying scripture. For example, patrons frequently refer to the "excellent acts [*zengō* 善業]" or "supreme goodness [*shizen* 至善]," which they in turn "rely on [*yoru*; transcribed as both 藉 and 憑]" to bless the beneficiaries of their prayers.[11] In some cases, patrons invoke notions of Buddhist causality; they refer to their transcription as "the superior cause [*shōin* 勝因]," "the excellent cause [*zen'in* 善因]," or "the superior condition [*shōen* 勝

[9] A similar structure is visible in Dunhuang manuscripts as well. See Teiser 2009, 227-234.

[10] In citing prayers that appear in colophons, I have tried to use photographic reproductions of manuscripts whenever possible. In most cases, I have drawn from the manuscripts that appear in *NCS* and will provide the relevant plate number in my footnotes. I will also provide citations from available print editions, of which Tanaka 1973 and *NI* are the most helpful. Tanaka is more exhaustive than *NI*, but it is poorly punctuated and contains frequent transcription errors. I will only give the page number in Tanaka for those colophons not found in *NI*. When significant transcription problems arise, I will note how my reading differs from published sources.

[11] For good acts, *NCS*, plate 5; *NI*, 611. For "supreme goodness," see *NCS*, plate 52; *NI*, 625. The language of reliance is common and found in numerous Nara period manuscripts, see *NCS*, plates 23-26, 33, and 45; *NI* 616, 618, and 622.

緣]," which produce effects such as this-worldly benefits or birth in the Pure Land.[12] In other cases, patrons employ plant metaphors noting how "good roots [*zengon* 善根]" planted through copying scripture bear "superior fruit [*shōka* 勝果]."[13] This language suggests that the patrons understood the world as following the laws of karma in which the performance of deeds considered virtuous in the Buddhist tradition leads to desirable outcomes.

This underlying logic of sutra copying, which maintains that pious acts engender commensurate rewards, appears to have been widely accepted in early Japan, but the precise way that merit-making functioned in the eighth-century *imaginaire* was by no means a simple mathematical equation. For one, merit, which according to many narrative tales was quantified and recorded on tablets (*fumita* 札) by officials in the underworld, was subject to accounting tricks, human error, and divine intervention.[14] In one tale from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*, King Yama asks a man what good deeds he performed while alive. The man replies that he only transcribed one set of the *Lotus Sutra*. The king first measures the number of scrolls copied by the man against his sins, but his evil actions

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[12] For superior cause, see *NCS,* plates 29 and 64; *NI,* 618 and 636-637. For excellent cause, see *NCS*, plate 1 and *SK* 1755; *NI,* 610 and 621. For superior conditions see *NCS*, plate 22; *NI*, 616.

[13] For good roots, see *NCS*, plate 5; *NI*, 611. Ishikawa no Toshitari's 738 prayer states, "[Toshitari] hopes to plant the fruit [that comes] from goods causes." See *NCS*, plate 18; *NI, 615*. In numerous other *ganmon* the term superior fruit, which refers to achieving Buddhahood, is used to express the desired outcome of the prayer.

[14] For the tablets, see *Nihon ryōiki* III.22-23, *SNKBT* 30:158-163; Nakamura 1973, 250-253.

outnumber the eight scrolls of the sutra. King Yama next weighs the man's transgressions against the 69,384 characters that were thought to compose the *Lotus Sutra*, but his sins even surpass this sum. In the end, even the most resourceful calculations proved futile; he is only saved by his relatives copying sutras on his behalf (*Nihon ryōiki* III.37, *SNKBT* 30:185-186; translated in Nakamura 1973, 274-275). For those who were not so fortunate to be saved by family members, bribery was another option; tales describe how unscrupulous gifts to demons can allow a sinner to escape death (*Nihon ryōiki* II.24-25, *SNKBT* 30 :97-101; translated in Nakamura 1973, 192-196).[15] These stories imply that the method for quantifying merit and executing justice can be likened to a marketplace where one's karmic record was always negotiable. Although the image of the balance in the underworld that weighs good deeds against bad ones gives the impression of scientific accuracy, the beings operating the scales are seldom portrayed as honest shopkeepers.[16] The rules of merit making followed the whims of King Yama and his henchmen—the value of noble action was not a fixed currency.

[15] For a recent discussion of these tales, see Como 2009, 48-53. Similar tales were common in medieval China as well; see Campany 2005.

[16] For a Dunhuang image of such a balance weighing scrolls sponsored by the person being judged, see P 4523. A description can be found in Teiser 1994, 174. In one Chinese tale, King Yama measures the number of sutras recited against a man's sins on this device. See *Hongzan fahua zhuan*, T 2067.51.42b.

Merit was also mediated through the compassion of the Buddha and bodhisattvas. A prayer commissioned by Kōmyōshi explicitly describes the need for divine aid, noting that the patron "reverently relies on the compassion [of the Buddha], [so that he] may fully develop his sympathetic response [*aikan* 哀感]."[17] Perhaps it is for this reason that Ishikawa no Toshitari and Kōmyōshi began four separate prayers with ritual prostrations (*wanan* 和南) to various buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sages. They aimed to invoke merciful deities to come to their aid. In fact, narrative tales show that bodhisattvas did respond to meritorious actions. In a story from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*, a man named Kashiwade no Omi Hirokuni 膳臣廣國 visits the underworld to see his wife and father suffering there. Hirokuni, who himself had committed no sin, is about to return to the human realm when he is told, "those who have entered may not leave." At this point a mysterious youth appears to rescue Hirokuni from his unjust imprisonment. The guards succumb to the boy and grant Hirokuni his release. When Hirokuni inquires about the youth's identity, he responds, "I am the *Scripture on the One Who Observes the Sound of the World* [Ch. *Guanshiyin jing* 觀世音經] that you copied when you were young" (*Nihon ryōiki* I.30, *SNKBT* 30 :44-47). This identification of the saving deity with the text shows how the sutra itself became a divine being—most likely its

[17] For Toshitari's prayers, see *NCS*, plates 18-20; *NI*, 615-616. For Kōmyōshi's, see *NCS* plates 31-32; *NI,* 618; also see Tokyo National Museum B 3083.

protagonist Avalokiteśvara—who is able to save Hirokuni from the underworld. These prayers and tales suggest that merit making depended in part upon invoking deities and praying for their compassionate responses.

Ritual actions surrounding the performance of the prayer also played a role in merit making practices. After completing a pious act such as sutra transcription, it was common to hold a dedication ceremony (*kuyō* 供養), where the merit would be directed to beneficiaries. Although it is difficult to piece together the exact nature of these rites, the basic structure likely began with an opening address (*hyōbyaku* or *hyōhyaku* 表百), followed by the reading of the prayer, and a lecture on the dharma (Tanaka 2006, 28).[18] Heian courtier diaries suggest that large-scale dedication ceremonies featured a total of seven officiants: a lecturer, a reader, a prayer-reader, a master of prostrations, a cantor, a flower-strewer, and a hall master (Blair 2008, 157-158). Nara period colophons, as well as a variety of later sources, reveal that ceremonies would often be accompanied by abstinential practices (Ch. *zhai* 齋), the reading of eulogies, and sutra recitation.[19] In many cases, the manuscripts copied were used in lectures;

[18] Monks appear to have spent a significant portion of their time composing texts to be used in dedication ceremonies. For example, Kūkai left behind numerous ritual texts compiled in the *Seireishū*. For research regarding Kūkai's ritual activities, see Katsumata 1981, 243-290. For monks writing texts for provincial rituals, see Suzuki 1994.

[19] Numerous colophons mention the performance of these activities. For example, see *NCS*, plate 22 and 72; *NI*, 616 and 638. National histories also record abstinential practices

according to Katsumata Shunkyō (1981, 285-286), the act of transcribing a sutra and then lecturing on it was considered the most effective means for transferring merit to the deceased.[20] Special structures were sometimes built on temple grounds to hold ceremonies and transcribed sutras were usually placed in temples following the dedication.[21]

Sutras, in narrative tales, actively desired dedication ceremonies.[22] In a story from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*, a woman of deep faith is summoned to the underworld because King Yama wished to hear her melodious recitations. On her way home, she meets three men in yellow robes who say they will meet her in the market in three days. She travels there in accord with their agreement, but the men do not appear. Instead, she finds a peddler hawking three scrolls. After purchasing them, she discovers that they were sutras she had copied previously. The scrolls had been stolen before she could dedicate them (*Nihon*

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accompanying dedication ceremonies. For example, see *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 10/29/886, *KT* 4:620. For stories, see *Nihon ryōiki* III.35, *SNKBT 30*, 183; Nakamura 1973, 271-273.

[20] A Shōsōin document also mentions holding a lecture at a mortuary ritual. See *DNK* 9:364 (*ZZS* 23:4 verso).

[21] For this, see Endō 2001. For a colophon that describes depositing a text in a temple, see *NCS*, plate 20; *NI*, 616. Also see the passage in the *Nihon kōki*, which records sutras being copied, recited, and then enshrined in provincial temples throughout the realm. *Nihon kōki* 1/18/808; *KT* 3:81.

[22] The fact that sutras themselves were thought to have needs and desires has been discussed in Eubanks 2011.

ryōiki II.19, *SNKBT* 30 :90-92; translated in Nakamura 1973, 186-187). Here, the sutras sought out their original owner, begging to be provided with a proper dedication.[23]

Dedication ceremonies also functioned to increase the merit made through copying scripture. For example, in one story from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan*, a wealthy loan shark named Osada no Toneri Ebisu 他田舎人蝦夷 suddenly dies and undergoes punishment in the underworld for having used differently weighted scales for making loans and collecting debts. After six days of torture, three monks appear who reveal that the man had transcribed the *Lotus Sutra* three times while alive. Notably, he had only dedicated two sets of the sutra; the dedicated sutras appear on gold tablets kept in the underworld, but the undedicated ones are recorded on iron (*Nihon ryōiki* III.22, *SNKBT* 30 :159-161; translated in Nakamura 1973, 250-251). The fact that gold, the heavier and more valuable metal, was used for dedicated sutras suggests that they were worth more than undedicated ones. Although using uneven balances to loan rice had brought Ebisu punishment, proper attention to Buddhist ritual tipped the karmic scales in his favor.

Patrons carefully selected the days to hold these ceremonies. Calendrics were central to the way sponsors of sutra copying projects conceived of merit. Close attention to the dates

[23] This trope of sutras compassionately responding is if they were bodhisattvas appears frequently in Chinese tales as well. See Campany 1991, 47-51.

found in colophons reveals the importance of calendrics to eighth-century patrons. These dates signify various acts including when the sponsor decided to commission the project, when the manuscript was actually copied, and when the dedication ceremony occurred. For example, Shōsōin documents show that transcription of the well-known 5/1 canon, which is called this because each manuscript contains the date 5/1/740, actually began as early as 733. Scribes simply appended the prayer with the 5/1/740 date to manuscripts copied earlier. Transcription also continued after 740, but the same date was inscribed in colophons of post-5/1/740 manuscripts. Here, the date likely refers to an event associated with the prayer itself—most likely a dedication ceremony.[24] In other cases, however, dates in the colophon mark the occasion when a patron vowed (*hotsugan* 發願) to initiate a project. For example, a prayer commissioned by Prince Nagaya notes that the vow was issued on 5/15/728 and that the six hundred scrolls were completed on 9/23/728 (*NCS*, plate 5; *NI*, 611).

The act of making a vow was viewed as having cosmic consequences. This is illustrated in the case of the monk Dōgyō—a figure discussed in previous chapters—who recounts the circumstances in which he decided to sponsor a project:

[24] For more on this, see Lowe 2011. The fact that all sutra copying temporarily stopped shortly before 5/1/740 further strengthens the claim that a dedication occurred at this time, as it is likely that the manuscripts themselves would have been used in such a ceremony. As we will see, the date 5/1 itself has significance in the Buddhist liturgical calendar.

> Alas at that time, clouds rose above the mountains and thunder roared within the valley. It echoed around and around in [all] four directions and struck violently with a bang. There was no way of knowing where one's hands and feet were placed, and life itself seemed impossible to preserve. My remaining thoughts were on what sin I must have committed to encounter this divine punishment. Thus, I vowed, 'This trifling and lowly fool is disheartened and fears death, not to mention my love of the state [*kokka* 國家]. [I] respectfully vow that the shrine may be peaceful and quiet and that thunder and lightning never jolt it. May the court be without incident and may the people be tranquil.[25] For this reason, [Dōgyō] reverently desires to copy the *Great Prajñā Scripture* in six hundred scrolls.' After finishing this vow, the thunder and lightning stopped rumbling.[26] (*NCS*, plate 56; Tanaka 1973, 63-64)

Here the power of a vow saves Dōgyō from the lightning storm. Similar auspicious occurrences appear in narrative tales, where an unfulfilled vow allows a potential sutra copyist to escape from the torments of the underworld; saves a miner from certain doom in a dark pit; and causes the appearance of a powerful statue that helps raise funds to carry out a sutra copying project.[27] Like dedication ceremonies, the act of making a vow generated a karmic response, and some patrons chose to record this date in colophons of sutras they commissioned.

Regardless of what specific act the colophon refers to, the dates themselves follow patterns that suggest patrons chose to perform actions such as making vows and sponsoring dedications on days and months deemed auspicious in the Buddhist liturgical calendar. Of the

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[25] Reading 定 as a scribal error for 之 .

[26] For a study of this prayer, see Endō 2008.

[27] See *Nihon ryōiki* III.8, 13, and 23, *SKNBT* 30:140, 147 and 162-163; Nakamura 1973, 232-233, 238-239, and 252-253. For a general discussion of the relationship between cosmic occurrences and vows in stories in the *Nihon ryōiki*, see Akiyoshi 2010.

ninety dates I have found listed in Nara period manuscripts (here defined as 710-794), thirty-six percent correspond to the first, eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-third of the month.[28] Moreover sixteen percent of Nara manuscripts date to the fifth month, the highest total by far. Similar trends emerge from the Dunhuang corpus. Paul Magnin (1987, 138-141) examined 677 Dunhuang manuscripts and found that thirty-one percent date to these same four days, and thirteen percent date to the fifth month. Another fourteen percent of all Nara manuscripts contain dates of the fourteenth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth.[29] When we look at a smaller and perhaps more significant set of data, the results are even more striking. In manuscripts that contain prayer texts, more than three quarters of all dated prayers fall on the above-mentioned days. Since prayers were likely read aloud at dedications, the dates in these manuscripts may mark such an occasion. On the other hand, the dates that appear in

[28] I have omitted two canon copying projects from my calculations: the Kōkaku project and the Zenkō seal project. In these cases, the dates on the manuscripts clearly refer to the day that the text was transcribed at a scriptorium that was constantly producing scrolls. Since there are a large number of these extant manuscripts, and they are random in character, their inclusion would significantly alter the findings advanced above. I also excluded dates that explicitly describe proofreading, as I have found little evidence that proofreading practices were at all ritualized. Otherwise, I have tried to be as inclusive as possible by incorporating any dates I found from colophons of sutras listed in *NCS, NI*, and Tanaka 1953 and 1973 into a database I created.

[29] This total is much higher than the Dunhuang manuscripts, of which only about six percent fall on the fourteenth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth.

colophons without prayers may simply refer to the day a text was copied at a busy scriptorium and do not necessarily hold significance.[30]

Day	# of occurrences in Nara manuscripts	% of occurrences in Nara manuscripts	# of occurrences in Dunhuang manuscripts	% of occurrences in Dunhuang manuscripts
15	9	10%	70	10.3%
8	8	8.9%	50	7.4%
23	8	8.9%	41	6.1%
1	7	7.8%	47	6.9%
30	5	5.6%	7	1%
29	4	4.4%	17	2.5%
14	4	4.4%	19	2.8%

The dates listed above correspond to abstinential periods (Ch. *zhai*, Jp. *sai* 齋). The individual days are likely connected to *poṣadha* (translated into Chinese as *zhai* and transliterated as *pusa* [Jp. *fusatsu*] 布薩) or possibly to the six abstinential days (Ch. *liu zhairi*; Jp.

[30] In addition, some dates found in colophons likely correspond to memorial rites performed on behalf of the deceased. For example, Kūkai authored a *ganmon* for a forty-nine day rite tied to a sutra copying project; see *Seireishū*, *NKBT* 71:347-348. Ishikawa no Toshitari also mentions a "taboo day" (*kinichi* 諱日), a term that refers to the anniversary of someone's death, in a prayer commissioned for an unidentified beneficiary. For this, see *NCS,* plate 18; *NI*, 615. In other cases, when the date of death is not mentioned, it is hard to determine whether the dedication would correspond to a memorial day or not. These two examples suggest that other patrons would have likely sponsored prayers as part of memorial services.

rokusainichi 六齋日).[31] The fifth month is significant because it was one of the three months of prolonged abstinence (Ch. *changzhai*, Jp. *chōsai* 長齋or Ch. *san changzhai yue*, Jp. *sanchōsaigatsu*

[31] The precise identity of which festival days Buddhist patrons had in mind is unclear. The four most popular days that appear in Dunhuang and Japanese manuscripts, namely, the first, eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-third, would later be defined as the "Four Abstinential Days" (Ch. *si zhai ri* 四齋日) in Chan texts. For example, see *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*, T 2025.48.1114b. Although this is a fourteenth-century Chinese text, it appears to have been based in part on an eighth-century source, which leaves open the possibility that these four dates had significance in eighth-century continental practice. The origins of this particular grouping could possibly derive from *vinaya* sources. For example, the *Mūla-sarvāstivāda* tradition, which admittedly had little influence in East Asia, considers the four abstinential days to be the eighth, fifteenth, twenty-third, and dark moon day (Ch. *yuejin ri* Jp. *gatsujinnichi* 月盡日). See *Genben shuoyiqie youbu pinaiye*, T 1442.23.815b. The dark moon day marks the end of the month but could be interpreted as falling on the twenty-ninth, thirtieth, or the day following the new moon, which would be the first. Records from Tōdai-ji note that Mahāyāna *poṣadha* (*daijō fusatsu* 大乘布薩) are to be held on the fourteenth and twenty-ninth of each month and that Hīnayāna *poṣadha* (*shōjō fusatsu* 小乘布薩) should be held on the fifteenth and thirtieth of each month. See *Tōdai-ji yōroku* 5, 122 and 9, 334-337. The inclusion of the twenty-ninth and thirtieth, which are less common than the first four days and statistically insignificant in Dunhuang materials, may also reflect a connection to the six abstinential days, which were particularly important in Japan. A ninth-century commentary on eighth-century Japanese legal codes defines the six abstinential days as the eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, twenty-third, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth. See *Ryō no gige* "*zatsuryō*"; *KT* 22:333. Early Buddhist texts such as the *Longer Āgama* list fortnightly dates of the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth (since the list is fortnightly, the next three days would fall upon the 23rd, 28th, and 30th in a full month); see *Chang ahan jing* T 1.1.134. The *Four-Part Vinaya* of the Dharmaguptaka tradition, which was the most influential *vinaya* in East Asia, has the first, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth; see *Sifen lü*, T 1428.22.998. The *Da zhi du lun* gives the first, eighth, fourteenth, sixteenth, twenty-third, and twenty-ninth; see T 1509.25.515a.

三長齋月).[32] During these days and months, people would confess sins, engage in abstinential practices, take on additional precepts, and invite monks to preach.[33]

These abstinential days and months were chosen for several reasons. According to the *Hongming ji* 弘明集—a sixth-century Chinese apologetic text that was extant in Nara Japan—observing abstinential periods could benefit others, such as the deceased:

> [abstinential periods are performed] for the sake of all who have passed away or who are still alive, for acquaintances and relatives, as well as for all sentient beings....[By observing these abstinential periods] they will forever avoid sin and suffering. Therefore, loyal and filial gentlemen exert themselves to the utmost [in observing abstinence] in order to do the meritorious work of helping all; it is not merely for his own sake. (T 2102.52.86b)[34]

This idea that holding *zhai* could save deceased family members would likely have been attractive to patrons; as we will see, sutra copying was often done on behalf of the dead. Etymological explanations in commentarial literature further reveal why patrons chose these days to perform merit-making acts. For example, Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) provides two definitions of *poṣadha* in his seminal commentary on the *Four Part Vinaya*: purity and increase

[32] The other prolonged periods of abstinence were the first and ninth months, but sutra copying does not seem to have increased in these months. For an overview on these months of abstinence, see Forte and May 1979, 392-407. For a recent discussion in English, see Ziegler 2001, 163-166.

[33] For the practice in China, see Hureau 2010, esp. 1213-1230 and Campany 2010 (unpublished presentation). For Japan, see Minowa 1999a and b and Ōkusa 2010, 78-92.

[34] I have for the most part followed the translation of Zürcher with minor revisions. See Zürcher 2007 [originally published in 1959], 165.

merit.[35] We have already seen how the ritual of sutra copying was intimately connected to purity.[36] The second etymology provides an additional reason for why patrons chose to perform dedications and make vows during abstinential periods; merit could be multiplied by performing pious acts on auspicious days.[37]

Before turning to the structure of prayer texts, two brief caveats regarding the discourse of merit and the geographic range of the practices described above are in order. In the vast majority of cases, merit created through copying scripture belonged primarily to the sponsor of the project and not to the copyist. For one, prayers extant in eighth-century colophons never name scribes or other laborers involved in the project as beneficiaries. Merit

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[35] *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao*, T 1804.40.34b. This commentary was likely read in Japan, as we have records of it being transcribed as an independent text. See *DNK* 10:377 (*ZZS* 16:1).

[36] For an overview of the meaning of *poṣadha* in early Buddhist texts that pays attention to the discourse of purity, see Nishino 1968 and Tatsuguchi 1997. In fact, Tatsuguchi offers the following definition of *poṣadha*, "To purely spend the *poṣadha* days [*fusatsunichi ni ha shōjō ni sugosu koto* 布薩日には清浄に過ごすこと]."

[37] This should help explain why many ritual practices, not just sutra copying dedications, took place on *poṣadha* days. In one fascinating recent publication, Sylvie Hureau has argued that sutra translations were dedicated on *poṣadha* days in China. See Hureau 2009. In Japan, numerous Buddhist rituals occurred on these days. For example, an imperial decree ordered the *Golden Light Sutra* to be recited at all provincial temples on the eighth of each month. See *Ruijū sandaikyaku* 3, KT 25:108; *Shoku nihongi* 3/24/741, *SNKBT* 13:390-391. The eye-opening ceremony at Tōdai-ji was also originally scheduled for 4/8/752 (a day that in addition to being a *poṣadha* was also the Buddha's birthday), although it actually took place on 4/9/752. The letter inviting Bodhisena to perform the ceremony notes that a "*zhai*" would be held to accompany the rite. See *Tōdai-ji yōroku* 2, 46. P*oṣadha* were also described as being merit-making practices in their own right; see *Da zhi du lun*, T 1509.25.159b.

is always offered under the authority of the patron. Narrative tales similarly focus on the benefits reaped by the sponsor and his ancestors with little mention of scribes outside of their ritual purity.[38] In this way, it appears that at least in the *imaginaire* of the patrons and authors of Buddhist tales, the merits promised in sutras belonged to the sponsor.[39]

Second, the practice of holding a rite to dedicate merit was widespread in Japan. Colophons from provincial sutras frequently correspond to abstinential periods. Moreover, numerous stories in *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* describe provincial dedication ceremonies.[40] At the same time, it is not clear whether provincials could easily find

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[38] There are a few Chinese stories where the sutra copyist receives merit. These tales generally portray scribes who are utterly without faith but are still saved for having been hired to copy the *Lotus Sutra*. The main premise of these stories is that the *Lotus Sutra* is so powerful that it can even aid the faithless. For two examples, see *Fahua zhuanji* T 2068.51.83c084b and 86a-b. Although these stories suggest that scribes received merit from copying sutras, the vast majority of cases imply that merit is dedicated at the sole discretion of the patron. This appears to be the case for Buddhist patronage overall, as sculptors and carpenters are seldom portrayed as making prayers based on their meritorious deeds. Of course, in many stories the copyist and the sponsor are the same person. In these cases, the copyist naturally receives merit.

[39] Although the fact that only the sponsor receives merit seems to contradict the repeated promises of blessings to those who *transcribe* the scripture, the discrepancy is partially a product of classical Chinese grammar, where the causative mode is often implied. The graph 寫 (Ch. *xie*, Jp. *utsusu)* can mean both to transcribe and to have someone else copy. Notably, some sutras specifically promise merits for "having someone copy a sutra." (Ch. *taren shi shu*; Jp. *tanin wo shite kakashimu* 他人使書). For example see the *Daoxing bore jing* T 224.8.436c-437c, which contains this phrase several times.

[40] For colophons, see *NCS*, plates 17, 35-36; *NI*, 613, 619. For stories, see *Nihon ryōiki* III.9-10, 13, 22, *SNKBT* 30:141-144, 146-148, and 159-161; Nakamura 1973, 233-236, 238-239, and 250-251.

officiants capable of performing such rites. Suzuki Keiji (1994) has argued that monks occasionally traveled from the capital to the provinces to perform ceremonies for local families, but it seems plausible that demand may have exceeded supply. In fact, one story from *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* implies that some patrons had difficulty finding reputable officiants. In this tale, a man from Iga Province 伊賀國 (present day Mie prefecture) copies the *Lotus Sutra* and wishes to hold a dedication. He sends out a servant to search for an available monk. The servant returns with a candidate from a nearby village. The would-be monk, however, turns out to be a drunkard who had had his head shaved by local hooligans (*Nihon ryōiki* II.15, *SNKTB* 30 :83-85; translated in Nakamura 1973, 180-181). In this case, the impostor is still able to save the deceased mother after receiving a revelation in a dream. Still, we can imagine that this story may contain a kernel of truth—some provincial patrons may have had difficulties securing virtuous monks, just as they had trouble finding upright scribes.[41] If this story is a reliable reflection of problems patrons faced, and in this case it seems reasonable to think it may be, elites in the capital would have likely had institutional and economic advantages that enabled them to better organize dedication ceremonies than their provincial peers.

[41] For a similar tale involving a monk invited by a family to recite scripture, see *Nihon ryōiki* I.10, *SNKBT* 30:22-24; Nakamura 1973, 120-121.

The Structure of Prayer

Now that we have thoroughly probed the notion of merit and the ritual context of dedication ceremonies in the eighth-century *imaginaire*, we are better able to appreciate the prayer texts themselves. Katsumata has outlined a five-part structure for *ganmon* based on his analysis of mortuary prayers written by Kūkai. According to Katsumata, prayers begin with the commissioner seeking refuge (*kie* 歸依) in the three treasures or other objects of worship. The next section discusses virtues of the departed. Here, prayers frequently invoke the language of debt, particularly toward parents and teachers. The third section turns to impermanence to reflect on the sudden passing of the deceased. The fourth section contains the formal prayer, where patrons pray that they may use the merit created from sponsoring Buddhist works to help the dead quickly attain Buddhahood. Finally, prayers conclude with a benediction for all sentient beings.[42]

Stephen F. Teiser has recently described a similar seven-part structure that commonly appears in Dunhuang healing liturgies.[43] Teiser adopts many of his categories from emic labels

[42] Katsumata 1981, 286-287.

[43] In discussing Teiser's model, I have mostly drawn upon an unpublished presentation delivered at the Collège de France in 2010. For a published Chinese language description of the structure of prayer texts, see Teiser 2007b, 299-306. This account subdivides the patient or beneficiary section into two parts, so there are eight elements altogether. For more on the structure and content of Dunhuang prayer texts, see Teiser 2007a and 2009.

found in Dunhuang manuscripts and justifies his use of etic categories based on linguistic evidence.[44] According to Teiser, prayers usually begin by "Praising [the Buddha's] Virtue [Ch. *tande* 嘆德]." As the title suggests, this section lauds the wondrous abilities of the Buddha. This is followed by a statement of ritual intent (Ch. *zhaiyi* 齋意). The third section, which Teiser calls "patient [Ch. *huanzhe* 患者]" in the context of the healing liturgies he has focused on, describes the person for whom the rite is commissioned. More generally, this section could be entitled "beneficiary." Next comes a section termed "ritual actions [Ch. *daochang* 道場]." This part records the acts being performed during the ritual, such as the burning of incense or the chanting of scripture. In the fifth section, which is sometimes referred to as ornamentation (Ch. *zhuangyan* 莊嚴), merit is transferred to the beneficiary. The formal prayer (Ch. *yuanwen* 願文) follows the ornamentation and describes the particular ways in which merit should be used. As is common throughout Buddhist liturgical texts, the final section concludes with a general benediction (Ch. *weiyu* 尾語).

The prayers attached to Nara manuscripts do not perfectly follow Teiser's or Katsumata's structural schemes. For example, patrons often omit sections, use different

[44] All of the following section titles, except for "patient" and "benediction," are used in Dunhuang manuscripts. The usage is not always uniform and other labels are also employed. The sections of "patient" and "benediction" consistently use distinct meter that sets them apart.

terminology, and frequently jumble the order.[45] Despite these differences, however, there is a significant overlap in terms of style, structure, and content between the *ganmon* that appear in Nara period sutra manuscripts and those studied by Teiser and Katsumata. Sections resembling Teiser's "praise" passage, which are structurally similar to Katsumata's "refuge," are common in Nara manuscripts. What I will call the mourning section roughly corresponds in style and intent to Katsumata's second and third subdivisions and to Teiser's "patient" category. As noted by Katsumata, this section often invokes a discourse of indebtedness (*on* 恩) and laments the passing of the deceased. Although the early sections are malleable in Nara examples, the structure of the latter half mirrors those described by Teiser and Katsumata; it contains a dedication, a prayer, and a benediction. Finally, prayers in Nara manuscripts use parallel prose in ways similar to those described by Teiser. The parts of the prayer that Teiser calls illocutionary—namely the dedication of merit and the description of ritual actions— are

[45] One key terminological difference is the paucity of the term "ornament" in Nara manuscripts. I have only found one occurrence where ornamentation is used to describe bestowing blessings. See *NCS,* plate 52; *NI* 625. A few other prayers note that the "ornamentation" has been complete, but the meaning is vague and could refer to any of the following three attested possibilities: 1) ornamentation in the sense of bestowing merit, 2) ornamentation in terms of assembling and possibly decorating sutras, and 3) adorning a ritual space with decorations prior to conducting a ritual. For other examples of the term, see *NCS*, plates 22-26, 64, and 71; *NI*, 616 and 637-638.

considerably more prosaic than the flowery sections of praise, mourning, and prayer, which all employ parallel prose.[46]

Praising the Virtues of Scripture

Prayers often begin by exalting the powers of scripture. This praise section shows how sponsors conceived of sacred texts. In some cases, patrons compare sutras to the essence of the Buddha. One prayer dated to 5/1/779 and appended to a manuscript of the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* exemplifies this tendency:

> Now, the *Great Vehicle of Prajñā* is precisely the heart and entrails of the various buddhas in the three times. It is the treasure repository of the tenth stage bodhisattva. So, of those who take refuge [in it], who will not eradicate disaster and obtain blessings? Of those that follow it, how could they not cut off delusion and bear witness to truth? (*NCS*, plate 75; *NI*, 639)

In likening scripture to the "heart and entrails" and "treasure repository" of exemplary practitioners, the prayer shows that scripture—in this case, wisdom literature—represents the most important aspect of the Buddhist tradition. Moreover, the re-titling of the sutra to the *Great Vehicle of Prajñā* shows that the patrons viewed it as a means to attain this-worldly

[46] Katsumata is less sensitive to these linguistic issues and in my mind conflates the ritual actions, dedication, and prayer sections, despite the fact that only the latter uses parallel prose in his sources.

benefits and soteriological success.[47] This praise section is by no means atypical; patrons from diverse backgrounds express similar attitudes toward Buddhist scripture.

For one, patrons often equate sutras with skillful means, the doctrine that advocates using expedient methods that accord with the capabilities of the intended audience rather than relying on rarified truths incomprehensible to most sentient beings. One prayer, on behalf of the eminent monk Gyōshin 行信 (n.d.), refers to scripture as an accessible form of transcendent objects:

> Truly, the dharma sea is deep and vast and [this scripture] can be likened to the blue waves. The wise sun is high and bright and [this scripture] can be equated with a numinous radiance. By upholding [this scripture] and raising it above one's head, the blessings and profits are without bound. By reciting and copying [this scripture], the superior karma is beyond measure. (*NCS*, plate 66; *NI*, 637)[48]

The prayer likens the wisdom of the Buddha to the distant sun and Buddhist truths to the imponderable ocean. In contrast, it compares sutras to the radiance of the sun and the waves of the sea, which can be understood as earthly manifestations. A low ranking official named Kurahashibe no Miyatsuko Maro 倉橋部造麻呂 uses similar language in a prayer appended to a manuscript of *Profound Praise of the Lotus Sutra* (Ch. *Fahua jing xuanzan* 法華經玄贊) dated

[47] The fact that this phrase refers to the title of the sutra is made explicit by a passage later in the prayer, which states "We humbly copied the *Great Vehicle of Prajñā* in one set of six hundred scrolls."

[48] The object of the verbs is never explicitly identified in the prayer, but the verbs uphold, recite, and copy strongly suggest that scripture is the implied object throughout.

8/8/731: "I say: the Dharma sea is deep and vast—how could one ever cross it without preparing a boat and scull? The other shore is tall and steep, how could one dare climb it without a walking stick and ladder?"[49] As in the Gyōshin prayer, Maro sees scripture as a tool that enables one to reach higher spiritual states. Just like seafaring and mountaineering equipment, sutras serve as skillful means toward liberation.[50]

Scripture's role as a soteriological aid is further outlined in a poetic prayer sponsored by Kasukabe no Hira 春日戸比良:

> Now, I have heard: from the non-dual dharma gate is hung a mirror of wisdom, which is perfected completely. From the non-singular precept raft is raised a torch of wisdom, which illuminates equally. Provisional and true are divine mechanisms that distantly cut off the realm of names and words. Skillful means are excellent techniques that deeply cover the space between existence and non-existence. What is sensed penetrates completely; even the bitter orange tree[51] does not fail to respond to this knowledge. The sagely teachings extend widely. They instruct the dust and sand in one flavor. The dharmic wisdom illuminates high above. It circulates throughout the great thousand dispersing with the shadows. The jade mirror hangs in the six paths and responds to the ten thousand capabilities in the dharma realm. Compassionate clouds cover the threefold world and save those of the four types of birth from the burning house. (*NCS*, plate 38; *NI*, 619)

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[49] *NCS*, plate 10; *NI*, 612-613. I follow the manuscript in reading the character I have translated as scull as a variant of 楫. *NCS* transcribes it this way, but other sources such as *NI* all transcribe this character as 接.

[50] The metaphor of a ladder and boat as skillful means is common in canonical literature. For a well-known and representative passage, see *Da zhi du lun*, T 1509.25.196a.

[51] *Karatachi* 枳 the fruit of this tree resembles a Mandarin orange but is sour and inedible. I take this sentence to imply that even a thorny orange tree could bear edible fruit as a sympathetic response, but it is admittedly opaque.

This prayer begins by poetically referring to perfect wisdom. Notably, it employs difficult concepts such as non-duality. The prayer contrasts these rarified truths with skillful means, which are portrayed as effective and widely applicable. The terms used to describe wisdom repeatedly suggest its distance. The jade mirror in the six paths and the compassionate clouds of the threefold world, on the other hand, appear accessible. These latter metaphors can be taken as referring to scripture—the prayer compares the perfected wisdom of the Buddha with the teachings he left behind.

A 7/23/755 prayer sponsored by Mutobe no Azumabito 六人部東人, the provincial doctor and organizer of a fellowship group in Echizen discussed in detail in chapter one, further describes scripture's role as an accessible means to enlightenment:

> Now, the single vehicle's wedge is removed [from in front of the wheel], giving chase [with] the subtle words of Deer Park. The six teachings' bridles are pulled to drive down different paths,[52] wielding the secret texts of the Dragon Palace. Accordingly, Mātaṅga entered Han and led them to the fountainhead [of the Buddha's teachings] and Kumārajīva traveled to the Jin and polished the core. From this time on, refuge and reverence [in Buddhism] truly flourished. [The teachings] can be called the superior traces that awaken us from delusion or the wise raft that saves us from drowning.[53] (*NCS*, plate 52; *NI*, 625)

[52] I follow manuscript to read the character I have translated as bridle as 鑣. Tanaka 1973 lists and *NI* gives 鏖.

[53] Note that *NI* incorrectly transcribes the final two lines by dropping the character 覚. It should read 可謂覚迷之逸軌、拯溺之慧筏者也.

Sutras—which literally traveled across Asia on chariots, or at least in the rucksacks of itinerants—represent the Buddha's "superior traces" that help awaken the unenlightened. Notably, the prayer focuses on two translators. Kāśyapa Mātaṅga represents the first person to translate Buddhist texts into Chinese. Kumārajīva, is celebrated as Buddhism's most famous translator. This commendation suggests that Azumabito valued the efforts of those who put transcendent ideas into comprehensible language. Azumabito may have seen himself playing a similar role in bringing Buddhist texts to the provinces.

This process of translation also brought about new understandings of Buddhist doctrine, as reflected in a description of skillful means found in a prayer attached to the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*. This 4/15/750 prayer, which was sponsored on behalf of Hozumi no Ason Oyu 穂積朝臣老, relies on Chinese cosmological notions such as *qi* 氣 and *yin yang* 陰陽 to explicate Buddhist teachings: "Verily, yin and yang are without form, so they can become myriad objects. Harmonious *qi* is transformation, so it can line up at the gate of singular emptiness. In this way, provisional means (*jahō* 借方) display no means. True means themselves use no means" (*SK* 1755; *NI*, 621). Skillful means are understood in accord with Chinese cosmology, which maintains that formless things such as *yin* and *yang* can become

myriad objects.[54] As we have seen, prayers frequently describe scripture as skillful means that translate the transcendent into ordinary language. Here, a continental worldview provides the basis for understanding how skillful means are even possible.

Patrons saw the Buddha's teachings as supremely liberating. This aspect is emphasized in the praise section of a prayer by Ishikawa no Toshitari:

> Verily, the dharma gate mobilizes the sages, displaying the immeasurable to strengthen veneration. The real aspect reveals the numinous, following the conditions to respond to [the capabilities of sentient] beings. Therefore, one can attain the broad transformation of the five roots, changing distant noise into harmonious sounds. One can achieve the perfected merits of the ten moments of mindfulness, lifting one's spirit off into the distance to the place of the next Buddha. (*NCS*, plate 18. *NI*, 615)

The teachings of the Buddha skillfully respond to the individualized needs of sentient beings and enable them to reach true perfection and harmony. This soteriological efficacy evokes words of praise in prayers.

Patrons also praise sutras for bringing this-worldly benefits. For example, a prayer sponsored by Prince Nagaya on 5/15/728 notes: "In this sutra, line after line forms flowering prose, and phrase after phrase[55] embodies deep meaning. Reading and reciting [this sutra], extricates falsehood[56] and eliminates evil. Unrolling and examining it, grants happiness and

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[54] Although it may be tempting to label this cosmology as non-Buddhist, it is important to remember that Buddhist and Chinese cosmology were already well integrated on the continent. See Bokenkamp 2004, Mollier 2008, and Zürcher 1980.

[55] Reading 勾 in manuscript as 句.

[56] Reading 耶 as 邪.

brings prosperity" (*NCS*, plate 5; *NI*, 611). Similarly, a prayer by Emperor Shōmu gives a concrete description of blessings he hopes to gain from sponsoring a canon-copying project: "When I have a break from my myriad tasks, I unroll and examine texts. For perfecting one's body, extending one's life, putting the people at ease, and preserving one's accomplishments, Śākya's teachings are the greatest of all the scripture and histories" (*NCS*, plate 14; *NI*, 614). In sum, praise sections point to scripture's efficacy in securing this-worldly and other-worldly benefits; we will see later in this chapter that attaining such blessings was one of the primary motivations driving patronage in eighth-century Japan.

Mourning the Dead

Many prayers on behalf of the deceased contain a eulogistic passage that corresponds structurally to Teiser's "patient" section in healing liturgies. This section often describes the grief of the mourner and laments the transient nature of the world. As a prayer sponsored by Ishikawa no Toshitari aptly notes, the death of a loved one leaves the mourner "forever separated from that loving face and vainly clinging to limitless grief."[57] Another prayer by Toshitari takes a more philosophical tone by interpreting the premature death of his son as lesson in impermanence:

[57] This line comes from a prayer by Ishikawa no Toshitari. *NCS*, plate 18. *NI*, 615.

> That which is gathered quickly meets an unfortunate dispersal. The grudge of a wounded spirit does not hold itself in the past. The grief of blindness continues on in the future. The loving sinews of the heart cannot be broken on their own. Only by relying on the help of the Dharma, can one's grief be even slightly comforted. (*NCS*, plate 19; Tanaka 1973, 38)

Although impermanence, a state in which all matter ultimately disperses, evokes sorrow, Toshitari also realizes that the Dharma can release him from sadness and save his deceased son. For one, the teachings of the Buddha help Toshitari understand transience—not in an abstract sense but manifested tangibly through the loss of a child.[58] Second, and perhaps more importantly, scripture provides a means to release the deceased from suffering in the next life. Michel Strickmann has referred to the text Toshitari selected, a part of the *Consecration Sutra* entitled the *Scripture on the Consecration of Birth [in a Pure Land] in Accord with Prayer*, as "one of the first Buddhist texts to contain directives for acquiring merit on behalf of deceased ancestors."[59] The contents of the text likely provided a sense of hope to Toshitari.

In prayers mourning the death of parents, patrons frequently employ filial language. One prayer, on behalf of the military upstart Sakanoue no Imiki Iwatate 坂上忌寸石楯, does

[58] Similarly, Stephen F. Teiser has described the style of Buddhism practiced by Dunhuang patrons as "interested in impermanence, a concept most readily taught by equipping people to deal with the passing of loved ones. It provides an all-encompassing world view in which to make sense of death." Teiser 1994, 157. This description is apt for Nara Buddhism as well.

[59] Strickmann 1990, 81. It is noteworthy that Toshitari commissioned a statue of Bhaiṣajyaguru (*Jp. yakushi* 薬師) and his attendants to be dedicated along with the text. As Strickmann notes, the *Consecration Sutra* is intimately connected with the cult of Bhaiṣajyaguru.

this in decidedly Buddhist terms by reflecting on the suffering undergone over past lifetimes: "Passing through births for kalpas piled upon kalpas,[60] pulverizing his body and sacrificing his life, how could we ever repay him?"[61] Although such Buddhist allusions appear occasionally in prayers, patrons more commonly draw on language from the Chinese literary canon. For example, Kōmyōshi poetically mourns her parents' passing:

> Filial piety and sincerity resonate quite strongly, but [our mother and father] whom we depended and relied on fell so quickly. We had the expectation that their steps would continue alternating for the four periods, but there is no hope of solemnly saving them for a thousand years. (*NCS*, plates 31-32; *NI*, 618)

Kōmyōshi employs metonymy to refer to her parents as "that which we relied and depended on [*koji* 怙恃]," a term that can be traced back to the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shi jing* 詩經).[62] The grief of losing one's parents is similarly expressed with reference to Chinese classics in a prayer by Kurahashibe no Miyatsuko Maro for his father: "The comfort of a kinsman suddenly ended**,** [even though I] fixed and inquired for him without delay. Wife and child pound their chests and stomp the earth [in grief]" (*NCS*, plate 10; *NI*, 612-613). Language such as "pound their

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[60] Reading 累却 as 累劫.

[61] *NCS*, plate 75; *NI*, 639. The figure of Iwatate is best known for bringing back the head of Fujiwara no Nakamaro, an act for which he was rewarded with a rapid increase in rank. In calling this a Buddhist trope, I by no means intend to suggest that these terms were never used in secular texts. Searches of databases of both the Buddhist and Chinese canon, however, suggest that the term "pulverize one's body" appears with far greater frequency in the Buddhist canon, where it is a relatively common term.

[62] The relevant passage reads: "Fatherless, who is there to rely on? Motherless, who is there to depend on?" *Shi jing,* "Liao e"; *SSJZS* 1:459.

chests and stomp the earth [*hekiyō* 擗踊]" and "fixed and inquired [*teisei* 定省]" derives from the *Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Classic of Rites*.[63] At the same time, Maro chose to transcribe Buddhist sutras with filial motifs—namely, the *Scripture on the Parinirvāṇa of King Pure Offerings* [*Śuddhodana*] and the *Mahāmāyā Sutra*, which describe the Buddha as an ideal son.[64]

Eulogies for sovereigns similarly draw upon the Chinese literary tradition. For example, Prince Nagaya mourns the death of Emperor Monmu 文武天皇: "The three radiances seemed wretched and the four seas were stopped and hushed"(*NCS*, plate 4; *NI*, 610).[65] Here, the entire

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[63] For "pound their chests and stomp the earth," see *Xiao jing* "Sang qin"; *SSJZS* 2:2561. For "fixed and inquired," see *Liji*, "Qu li shang"; *SSJZS* 1:1233.

[64] The *Scripture on the Parinirvāṇa of King Pure Offerings* [*Śuddhodana*] (Ch. *Jingfan wang ban niepan jing* 淨飯王般涅槃經) describes the Buddha as a filial son at his father's funeral and the *Mahāmāyā Sutra* (Ch. *Mohe moye jing* 摩訶摩耶經 depicts the Buddha visiting the Trāyastriṃśa heaven and preaching the dharma to his birth mother, who had died in childbirth. In addition to these sutras, Maro also commissioned sculptures of Maitreya and Bhaiṣajyaguru and transcribed the *Lotus Sutra*, commentaries, and the *Superlative Spell*. He inscribed this final spell on a pillar and erected it in a cemetery (*boin* 墓院). The *Superlative Spell* was believed to remove sins and was sometimes used in memorial rites. For this see Copp 2005, 283 and Stone 2007, 154.

[65] Some scholars have suggested that this prayer was really on behalf of Genmei, the present reigning Empress rather than the recently deceased Monmu. In this interpretation, the sutra was commissioned to restore order after the loss of Monmu. Those supporting this position note that the prayer does not mention rebirth in a Pure Land or heaven; the date does not correspond to an anniversary of Monmu's death; and the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* was not ordinarily copied for deceased sovereigns. See Inagi 2007 and Jōdai bunken wo yomu kai 2010b (the entry was written by Kuwabara Yūko). I see no reason to support these claims. We have already seen that days of abstinence were likely more significant than memorial days, so it is not unexpected that the date of the colophon corresponds to a period of the full moon rather than an anniversary of Monmu's death. The argument that the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* was never copied for deceased sovereigns is simply mistaken; Nagaya himself sponsored a copy of

universe joins the prince in mourning the loss of the sovereign. The underlying logic is that the body of the emperor is intimately connected with the cosmos; this discourse draws on traditional Chinese notions of kingship. As will be discussed in more detail below, the passage cites the death of the legendary Emperor Yao 堯 as described in the *Book of Documents*.

Many of the themes of mourning that we have explored so far—namely, filial piety, impermanence, and references to both Chinese classics and Buddhist texts—appear together in a prayer by Shanyi 善意, a Chinese monk residing in Japan, commemorating Genbō:

> Whenever [I] consider the teachings that you promoted, then in a moment [I realize] there is a nothing left. When I recall your words of kind nurture, then [I wonder] who is left to depend and rely on? Now, in order to repay your limitless virtuous favors [*on* 恩] from grinding your body and pulverizing your bones, [I] have exhaustively used my personal resources and relied on *prajñā*, so that I can transcribe [this text] and offer it to aid your spirit. (*NCS*, plate 40; *NI*, 620)

First, we should note the connection between Shanyi's realization of transience and his remembrance of Genbō's teachings. Here, the monk surely heard Genbō preach on the topic of

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the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* that includes prayers for deceased emperors' birth in the Pure Land in 728. Finally, while it is true that the colophon does not contain a prayer explicitly mentioning rebirth in the Pure Land, it also does not contain a prayer for state protection, which is what Inagi and Kuwabara argue the colophon is really about. The poetic language used is clearly connected to mortuary ritual. In fact, the Nagaya colophon was quoted almost directly—including the sections used by Kuwabara and Inagi as evidence of state protection—by Kurahashibe no Miyatsuko Maro in a prayer explicitly offered on behalf of his deceased father. The fact that eighth-century patrons themselves viewed Nagaya's colophon as a source of inspiration for their own prayers used in mourning rituals suggests that my reading is closer to the way the prayer would have been understood in eighth-century Japan than the revisionist version offered by Kuwabara and Inagi.

impermanence, but the lesson is made more tangible through physical absence. Although Genbō was not his parent, Shanyi uses familiar filial language of "dependence and reliance" to describe his teacher. The prayer combines these classical phrases with the canonical Buddhist trope of pulverizing one's body that we encountered earlier. Finally, it concludes with the discourse of debt repayment—a topic we will explore more fully in the next section. From these examples, we can see that although the salvation of the deceased occurred through a ritual based on the Buddhist discourse of merit, mourners expressed their feelings in an original hybrid language that drew upon Buddhist and Chinese textual traditions, heavily favoring the latter.

Dedicating Merit and Repaying Debts

Almost all prayers contain a formal dedication, where merit is bestowed on the beneficiary.[66] The beneficiaries of prayers—commonly parents, the sovereign, and one's teacher—were often viewed as engendering relations of indebtedness. The character that I have translated as debt (*on* 恩) has a range of meanings. Early Chinese texts commonly use the

[66] In some cases, such as the 6/29/738 prayer by Ishikawa no Toshitari, there is no formal mention of a dedication of merit in the colophon, although such a dedication could have occurred orally at a ceremony. See *NCS*, plate 18; *NI*, 615.

term to describe the kindness of one's parents, particularly the father.[67] Similarly, in Buddhist canonical texts, the character appears in a compound meaning "beloved" or "affections [Skt. *priya*, Jp. *on'ai* 恩愛]," often in the context of familial relations. Meanings related to debt derive heavily from Buddhist sources, where the character was also used to translate the word "favor [Skt. *upakāra*]." Moreover, it appears in numerous words derived from the Sanskrit *kṛta*, the past passive participle of the verb "to do." Some examples include recognizing what was done for you (Skt. *kṛtajñatā*, Jp. *chion* 知恩) and repaying it (Skt. *kṛta-vedin*, Jp. *hōon* 報恩). This final compound was also used to translate the Sanskrit *pratikāra*, which literally means requital.[68] Three lessons can be taken from this philological analysis: first, the term "*on*" emphasizes human relationships, particularly, parental ones; second, it is associated with receiving favors

[67] For example, *Mengzi* contains a passage that describes "*on*" (Ch. *en*) as the ruling principle governing father and son relationships. See *Mengzi* "Gong sun chou xia"; *SSJZS* 2:2694. Michihata has analyzed the use of the discourse of "debt" (Ch. "en") in the *Liji* and other early Chinese texts. He argues that there are significant similarities between early Chinese ideas of "debt" and Buddhist canonical definitions. See Michihata 1979, 133-148.

[68] In assessing the Sanskrit origins of these terms, I have drawn heavily on Nakamura 1979, 3-7 and Kumoi 1979, 59-86. For a brief overview in English, see Mibu 1966. Not all meanings are positive. Texts often advise individuals to seek separation from their "affections" (Skt. *priya*). Moreover, the character "*on*" was also used to translate thirst or craving (Skt. *tṛṣṇā*, Jp. *on'ai* 恩愛), which was considered one of the twelve links that lead to suffering. These nuances, however, appear to have been ignored by eighth-century Japanese patrons, who generally use the term with positive connotations.

that evoke feelings of indebtedness; third, it has a normative and moralistic sense—texts call upon people to recognize and repay their debts.[69]

Canonical texts and eighth-century patrons alike commonly list "four debts [*shion* 四恩]." For example, a fellowship group from Ebara village prayed: "in offering this single hair of goodness, we [aim to] completely repay the heaviness of our four debts" (*NI*, 623).[70] The Yakushi-ji monk Ganshun 願俊 asked that "the four debts be distantly cut off from pregnancy and birth and [for them] to be sent far away into the [Land of] Ease and Nourishment" (*NI, 620).* Numerous other patrons dedicate merit to the four debts; in fact, some people left no other historical records behind other than a short colophon stating that they copied scripture "on behalf of the four debts."[71]

The exact definition of the four debts varies from text to text. Sources that were extant in the Nara period offer two distinct lists: mother, father, Tathāgata, and preachers of the Dharma; or ruler, parents, monastic teacher, and donor (Jp. *dan'otsu* 檀越).[72] In later texts,

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[69] Daoshi collects numerous tales that encourage the repayment of debts in a chapter on the topic in his encyclopedic *Fayuan zhulin*. See T 2122.53.663b-667c.

[70] The manuscripts recording this prayer were lost to flooding in 1953. For a study, see Gorai 1956.

[71]For other examples, see Kyoto National Museum B kō 63; *NCS*, plates 30 and 50, 52, and 66; *NI*, 618 and 624, 625, and 637; and Tanaka 1973, 79.

[72] For the first list, see *Zhengfa nianchu jing* T 721.17.359b. For the second list, see *Sifenlü xingshi chao zichiji* T 1805.40.235b. A list of debts owed to the parents, ruler, sentient beings, and the three treasures came to be the most influential. This grouping is found in the *Da sheng bensheng*

sentient beings and the three treasures are often included, as well. It is possible that other lists circulated in texts that are no longer extant.[73]

In addition to copying scripture on behalf of all four debts, numerous prayers single out individual relationships. Although prayers on behalf of teachers and the sovereign are common, dedications of merit to one's parents are particularly numerous. In East Asian Buddhism, parental debts were viewed as especially deep; one ninth-century Japanese text notes that they are the most difficult to repay of all four (*Tōdai-ji fuju monkō*, line 85). Patrons who could not repay the material debts owed to their parents hoped to provide them with

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xindi guan jing, a text that dates to the late eighth century and did not enter Japan until the Heian period. See T 159.3.297a. For an overview, see Okabe 1979; Katsumata 1981, 209-218; and Kumazawa 1994. For the four debts in early Japanese sources, see Naitō 1954 and Nakabayashi 2007, 40-54. Even in the works of Kūkai, the four debts have multiple referents; see Katsumata 1981, 219-235 for an exhaustive study of Kūkai's use of four debts discourse. In English, Ruppert has explored the issue of the four debts in medieval Japanese sources. See Ruppert 2000, 41-42 and 72-73 and 2001. Part of the motivation for offering prayers on behalf of the four debts can perhaps be found in the *Zhengfa nianchu jing*, which notes, "If there is a person who makes offerings to these four types of person [mother, father, Tathāgata, and preachers of the dharma], then he will attain immeasurable blessings. In the present [world], he will be the object of praise. In the future world, he will be able to achieve Bodhi." See T 721.17.359b.

[73] The term also appears in other sources such as the *Nihon ryōiki* and inscriptions. For the *Nihon ryōiki*, see tales I.35 and II.6, *SNKBT* 30:52-53 and 68-69; Nakamura 1973, 150-151 and 166-167. The frequency of this term and its use in various genres suggests it was particularly important in early Japanese Buddhist practice. Also, some patrons mention four relationships from the above list without explicitly using the term four debts. For example, Nishiki no Osa Omi Omomaro 錦日佐使主麿 notes that he copied sutras to repay his debt to the Buddha, the ruler, all sentient beings, and his ancestors. See *NI*, 638.

spiritual requital. For example, Mutobe no Azumabito notes his fortune in securing a post as a provincial doctor but laments, "the little that was left of my small salary never reached my honorable parents" (*NCS*, plate 52; *NI*, 625). Although the son could not provide financial support, he is able to copy scripture to repay his parents with merit and provide them with post-mortem salvation.

Stories from the *Records of the Numinous and Strange from Japan* provide further evidence that offering prayers to one's parents was perceived in terms of debt repayment in early Japanese Buddhism. In one story, a man travels to the underworld and witnesses his father being beaten with an iron rod while nailed to a hot copper pillar. Shocked at this scene, the son returns to earth and "constructs [an image] of the Buddha, copies sutras, and makes offerings to the three treasures to repay the debts to his father and atone for his sins" (*Nihon ryōiki*, I.30, *SNKBT* 30 :44-47). On the other hand, unfilial children are punished. In one tale, a man called Miyasu 瞻保 turns his mother into a debtor by loaning her rice and demanding speedy repayment. His friends criticize him, saying:

> Good man, why do you disobey filiality? Some people build temples, erect pagodas, construct [images] of the Buddha, copy sutras, and invite monks to engage in retreats on behalf of their mothers and fathers. Your house is wealthy and you are fortunate to have much rice to lend. Why do you go against what you have studied to be unfilial to your own mother?

The son dismisses these criticisms, but the mother pleads with her son, baring her breast and

exclaiming:

> When I raised you, I did not rest night or day. I see other children repaying their debts [to their parents]. I thought I could rely on you like these others, but instead you have shamed me and proven me mistaken. You even try to collect rice payments from me, so I too want to collect on milk debts. From today I cut off our relationship as mother and son. (*Nihon ryōiki*, I.23, *SNKBT* 30 :36-37)

Miyasu's failure to balance his karmic debts results in him losing all his possessions and finally dying of hunger. As the narrator notes at the conclusion of the story, "Sentient beings who are unfilial surely go to hell. Those who are filial are born in the Pure Land."[74]

In many cases, the beneficiary is not limited to parents; ancestors are frequently included as well. Inscriptions and colophons commonly mention the "seven generations of mothers and fathers," a term that appears in the earliest extant manuscript from Japan.[75] Seven generations of mothers and fathers usually refers to one's ancestors in this life but can also mean mothers and fathers of past life times. In other cases, prayers extend to the six

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[74] The milk debt invoked in this passage appears to be obligatory for both parties. Another story describes how a mother suffers in hell for being lecherous and failing to provide milk to her children. Fortunately, the children remain filial and sponsor sutra transcription and Buddhist images on her behalf, thus saving her from further suffering. See *Nihon ryōiki* III.16, *SNKBT* 30:151-152; Nakamura 1973, 242-243.

[75] For an overview of the usage of "seven generations of mothers and fathers" in early Japan and China, see Takeda 1950. More recent scholarship has emphasized how the term is common in Chinese and Korean inscriptions for both Buddhist and Daoist images. See Yoshida 2005, 67-68 and Masuo 1999, 208-218. Also see Jōdai bunken wo yomu kai 2010a, 35 for a discussion of the meaning of the term in early Japanese sutra colophons. For the colophon itself, see *NCS*, plate 1; *NI*, 610. The phrase also appears in early inscriptions; for one example see *NI*, 963.

relations of kin (*rokushin kenzoku* 六新眷属)—a term that indicates one's blood relatives.

The practice of making offerings on behalf of both living and deceased ancestors can be traced back to Indian Buddhism. As scholars such as John Strong (1983), Gregory Schopen (1997, 56-71), and Xing Guang (2005) have noted, sutras from the Pali canon emphasize filial piety, and Indian and Ceylonese inscriptions show that patrons commonly dedicated merit to their parents. In China, Buddhism encountered indigenous concepts of filial piety and memorial ritual. Within this context, it developed new notions of ritual practice as a means to offer ancestors salvation.[76] These continental discourses on ancestor worship would further adapt to indigenous clan structures in Japan likely spawning new practices and patterns of thought (Takeda 1957).[77]

[76] This topic has received significant attention in English. See Ch'en 1968; Teiser 1988; Cole 1998; and Ng 2007, 109-115 and 203-209.

[77] The extent to which an indigenous discourse on ancestors existed in Japan remains a subject of debate. Tanaka Hisao has argued that the concept of ancestors was brought to Japan by immigrant groups and suggests that the early Japanese notion of *so* 祖 (usually translated as ancestors) originally referred to those of close parental relations, especially mothers in Japan. In response to Tanaka, Yoshie Akiko has questioned the degree to which the veneration of ancestors was imported from the continent. Both sides of the exchange appear in Ishikawa et al. 1988, 199-263. The Buddhist discourse on ancestors and motherhood in particular would continue to develop throughout the medieval period in response to changing social structures; see Glassman 2001.

Prayers: Other-worldly Benefits

The next three sections will examine the prayer proper, which begins with the set expression "[I] pray that [*negawaku ha* 願]."[78] It most often follows the dedication and can be distinguished from the preceding section by a shift to parallel prose. Prayers commonly ask for otherworldly benefits: namely, rebirth in heavens (*ten* 天) or pure lands (*jōdo* 浄土). In most cases, such supplications are offered on behalf of the deceased.[79] Memorial ritual played a central role in early Japanese Buddhism; in the first few centuries following the religion's introduction to Japan, the faithful constructed hundreds of temples, commissioned countless statues, and transcribed thousands of scrolls for the dead.[80] Although these acts are decidedly

[78] In many cases, humble terms such as (*fushite negawaku ha* 伏願) and (*aogi negawaku ha* 仰願) are used. For an analysis of these terms in Nara and Heian sources, see Jōdai bunken wo yomu kai 2010a , 38.

[79] From the Heian period, patrons would increasingly pray for their own birth in Pure Lands, but Pure Land practice in the Nara period was predominantly connected to mortuary ritual. For this, see Inoue 1956, 15-27; Hayami 1978, 60-68; Fujishima 1984; Nara 2002, 8-14; and Rhodes 2006, 10-12. Taira Masayuki has made the intriguing claim that praying for one's own salvation would have been tantamount to praying for one's own death, since birth in the Pure Land was mediated by death. See Taira 1992, 65. That said, at least one prayer by the monk Senshaku 仙釋 asked to "overcome the three worlds to travel to the treasured continent." The prayer does not name a beneficiary, so it is likely that Senshaku prayed for his own rebirth into Amitābha's realm. See *NCS*, plate 45; *NI*, 622. Some scholars have suggested that by the late Nara period, individuals may have prayed for their own birth in the Pure Land. See Itō 1995, 347-349. The work of monks such as Chikō 智光 (709?-780?) may have played a small role in this transition, although the extent of his influence beyond the walls of the monastery is still not fully understood. For these issues, see Kakehashi 2008, 61-66.

[80] For temple construction as memorial ritual, see Meeks 2008, 249.

Buddhist, a close examination of prayers reveals a composite worldview that is indebted to canonical sutras but by no means bound to their imagery.[81]

Authors of prayers employ various terms to refer to the deceased. In some cases, they use vocabulary with close links to the Buddhist tradition. Examples of such phrases include "those in the spirit path [*konro* 魂路]" or "spirit-consciousness [*jinshiki* 神識]."[82] The first term was rarely used in translations of Indic materials but can be found in Buddhist texts composed in China.[83] The term spirit-consciousness is common throughout the Buddhist canon and refers to the part of a person that continues after death.[84] More commonly, however, patrons

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[81] In calling these practices Buddhist, I mean primarily that they are all connected to a ritual structure centered on the logic of merit making. In addition, the texts copied were part of a Buddhist canon; the images commissioned fit within an originally Indic pantheon, although some Sinitic elements had been incorporated; and the temples followed architectural patterns unique to Buddhist institutions.

[82] For example, see *NCS*, plates 31-32 and 38; *NI*, 618-619.

[83] The only occurrence of this term in translated literature is the early eighth-century Chinese language *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinayakṣudrakavastu* (Ch. *Genben shuoyiqie youbu pinaiye zashi* 根本説一切有部毘奈耶雜事), T 1451.24.398a. Notably, it can be found in Dunhuang liturgical texts and in sutra copying tales. For example, see *Huixiang wen,* T 2848.85.1299 (S 1164) and *Hongzan fahua zhuan* T 2067.51.44c respectively. The term does not seem to appear in secular texts, although it can be found in a Tang period Daoist petition. See *Chisong zi zhangli*, *DZ* 615, 11:22c-223a. Notably, this is a "Petition for Acquittal from Indictment" (Ch. *jie zhe zhang* 解謫章), which was used in Daoist rites to save the deceased from suffering. See Verellen 2004, esp. 331-332 and Nickerson 1997 for this text. In citing the Daoist canon, I will give the text number in accord with Schipper and Verellen 2004 followed by the volume, page, and register in the Shanghai edition of the Daoist canon.

[84] This term does appear occasionally in non-Buddhist sources as well, but most of these examples post-date the introduction of Buddhism to China.

describe the departed as spirits, using characters such as *shin/tamashihi/kami* 神, *rei/ryō/tama* 靈, and *shinrei* 神靈.[85]

Prayers, therefore, describe the deceased with a diverse vocabulary; some terms are exclusively Buddhist, while others are common to several traditions. In the end, scholars should be careful in assuming that conceptions of post-mortem existence correspond to a single religion.[86] As Robert Sharf (2002, esp. 1-2) has noted, the very act of translating Buddhist texts into Chinese put "Buddhist" concepts in Chinese terms. In Japan, where Chinese logographs can be pronounced in multiple ways, each with its own connotations, characters denoting a spirit would have held numerous potential meanings stemming from continental

[85] For an example of each, see *NCS*, plates 5, 22, and 31-32; *NI*, 610 616, and 618. These terms are also common in inscriptions from Northern China; see Hou 1998, 159. The final term could be rendered as a compound noun meaning spirit or as an adjective-noun phrase "divine spirit." It appears frequently in Chinese classics but is also found in translations of sutras and myths composed in Japan. For example, a scene in the *Nihon shoki* describes how the "spirit" (*shinrei*) of Emperor Chūai's father, Yamato Takeru, had transformed into a white bird. *Nihon shoki* 8, *NKBT* 67:321; Aston [1896] 1972, 1:217-218.

[86] Here, my view differs from influential scholars such as Shinkawa Tokio, Ōyama Seiichi, and Masuo Shin'ichirō, who see language regarding spirits in a prayer by Prince Nagaya as reflecting Daoist influence. For this, see Shinkawa 1986, 284-296; Masuo 1995, 204-210; and Ōyama 1998, 96-98. Shinkawa's views have been challenged recently by Inagi 2007, Ishii 2010, 10-14; and Inagawa 2010, 406-407. Like Shinkawa's critics, I feel that the language in Nagaya's prayer does not have any uniquely Daoistic overtones but rather reflects standard continental poetic language used when referring to the deceased and to the throne.

(including, of course, Buddhist texts translated into Chinese) and indigenous traditions.[87] In short, patrons had a fair amount of freedom in choosing terms to describe the deceased, and the meaning of these terms was not fixed, even when put in writing.

When we turn to post-mortem destinations, it is clear that patrons drew from both canonical and non-canonical sources to envision celestial and otherworldly realms. In some cases, patrons prayed that the deceased be born in a specific locale derived from Buddhist scripture. Prayers often mention the "Realm of Tranquility and Nourishment [*An'yōkai* 安養界]," the "Land of Tranquility and Bliss [*Anraku kokudo* 安樂國土]," or simply "Supreme Bliss [*Gokuraku* 極樂]," which all refer to Amitābha's realm.[88] Other prayers ask for birth in a Pure Land in broad terms that are not tied to a specific destination. For example, Kasugabe no Suguri Hirota 春日戸村主廣田 copied the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* on behalf of

[87] I should note that I use the term indigenous in full recognition of the fact that the "native" tradition in Japan was in part constructed by immigrant groups from the continent. In this dissertation, I am less interested in the historical conditions that lead to the construction of an indigenous tradition than I am in the way that texts such as the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* describe certain practices and cosmologies as constituting an age-old belief system. The strong role played by continental traditions and immigrants in framing Japan's myths has been ably explored by Michael Como and Herman Ooms. See Como 2008 and 2009 and Ooms 2009, 86-104.

[88] For example, *NCS,* plates 31-32 and 38 and *SK* 1755; *NI*, 618, 619, and 621. The term "Land of Tranquility and Bliss" appears in the *Wuliang shou jing* T 360.12.278a, which is one of the three central scriptures for Pure Land thought. Although the exact phrase *An'yōkai* (Ch. *Anyang jie*) or "Realm of Tranquility and Nourishment" does not appear in translated literature, it can be found in several commentaries. The similar phrase *An'yōkoku* (Ch. *Anyang guo* 安養國) can be found in the *Wuliang shou jing*, T 360.12.273a.

his parents and prayed for them to be born upon lotus pedestals (*renge dai* 蓮華臺) in the Pure Lands of the Ten Directions (*NCS*, plate 33, *NI* 618). "Ten directions [*jippō* 十方]" refers to the eight cardinal and ordinal directions as well as the zenith and nadir. "Lotus pedestal" designates the seat of buddhas and bodhisattvas. Hirota's prayer, therefore, reveals a generalized goal for birth in the Pure Land that was not explicitly connected to a single cult.[89]

Maitreya's Tuṣita heaven (*tosotsuten* 兜率天 or *toshitaten* 覩史多天) represents the most commonly named destination in eighth-century prayers. As numerous scholars have pointed out, Maitreya surpassed Amitābha in popularity for much of the eighth century.[90] The *Yogacara-bhumi*, which was one of the most frequently transcribed texts in the Nara period, was intimately connected to the Maitreyan cult. Many believed it to have been preached by Maitreya in Tuṣita Heaven.[91] Other patrons transcribed the *Scripture on Maitreya's Ascension*, a

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[89] In many cases, sutras name the buddhas of each direction, but these lists are far from uniform. In other cases, it is just a general designation for buddhas in all directions.

[90] Important early studies of Maitreya in early Japan include Hiraoka 1977 and Hayami 1971 and 1984. In English, see Goodwin 1977, 26-73. For the transition from Maitreya to Amitābha worship, see Inoue 1956, 6-9; Ōno 1972, 105; Nara 2002, 14-21; and Kudō 2008, 126-159. The Korean peninsula and northern China were also sites of intense Maitreya devotion. For Silla, see McBride 2008, 33-61. For an overview of Maitreyan worship throughout Asia in both premodern and modern contexts, see Sponberg and Hardacre 1988.

[91] Some colophons in manuscripts of the *Yogacara-bhumi* explicitly invoke Maitreyan imagery. For example, a prayer by Kenshō, which will be discussed below, mentions the three assemblies and bodhisattvas associated with Maitreya. See *NCS*, plate 6; *NI*, 611. Nishiki no Osa Omi Omomaro copied the *Yogacara-bhumi* so that his ancestors could be born in Tuṣita. See *NI*, 638. In another case, the sutra was copied by a Maitreyan devotee association, see *NCS*, plates

text that preaches the means to achieve rebirth in Tuṣita (*NCS*, plate 18, *NI*, 615).[92] Moreover, patrons drew upon imagery found in canonical texts by referring to celestial sites such as Maitreya's maṇi palace (*maniden* 摩尼殿).[93]

Most patrons saw heavens and Pure Lands as places where the deceased could encounter bodhisattvas and buddhas, hear them preach, and gain liberation.[94] The earliest extant manuscript in Japan, which was sponsored by a fellowship group from Kawachi province, succinctly summarizes this sentiment, "based on these excellent causes, may [our ancestors and all sentient beings] be born in a pure land and at last achieve true awakening" (*NCS*, plate 1; *NI*, 610). Another prayer, which was probably sponsored by Ishikawa no Toshitari, envisions Tuṣita Heaven as a place where one can "hear the true dharma, ascend to the path of awakening, and finally achieve *bodhi*" (*NI*, 612).

15-16; *NI*, 614-615. This group has been studied by Sonoda Kōyū in depth. See Sonoda 1972, 249-258 and 1976, 384-388. Also see Nakai 1973, 186-190. Stories that describe Asaṅga—the reputed author of the *Yogacara-bhumi*—going to Tuṣita to hear Maitreya preach can be found in various sources. For example, see Xuanzang's *Da Tang xi yu ji*, T 2087.51.896b and *Posoubandou fashi zhuan*, T 2049.50.188c. Narrative tales from the Nara period also connect Maitreya worship with Yogacara texts; in one tale, Maitreya descends from Tuṣita to appear on the branch of a bush to help a man raise funds to copy the *Yogacara-bhumi*. See *Nihon ryōiki* III.8, *SNKBT* 30:140; Nakamura 1973, 232-233.

[92] For the texts' description of the means to enter Tuṣita Heaven, see *Guan Mile pusa shangsheng doushuotian jing*, T 452.14.420b.

[93] For example, see *NCS*, plates 31-32 and 75; *NI* 618 and 639. The canonical description of Maitreya's *maṇi* palace can be found in T 452.14.419a-c.

[94] This was also the case in fifth- and sixth-century China; see Hou 1998, 161-173 and 190-196.

Although the examples cited so far suggest that patrons' views corresponded to canonical cosmology and soteriology, sponsors of prayers freely created original narratives. Some differences were minor. For example, Nishiki no Osa Omomaro 錦曰佐使主麿 prayed, "May [my ancestors, the ruler, and all sentient beings] be born in the *pure land* of Tuṣita heaven and be able to encounter the bodhisattva Maitreya [emphasis mine]" (*NI*, 638). Technically, Maitreya's realm is classified as a heaven that exists in our defiled world system and is not a Pure Land in a strict sense.

Other texts reveal combinatory visions of the Pure Land, where the beneficiaries of the prayer can travel to multiple celestial realms to meet the deities that reside there.[95] In fact, people commonly prayed that the deceased would be able to encounter both Amitābha and Maitreya. For example, the family of Sakanoue no Imiki Iwatate prayed:

> May these merits first be used to aid our late father in the spirit path. May the boat of *prajñā*, venture into the sea of suffering and quickly reach the Treasured City of Supreme Bliss [*gokuraku no hōjō* 極樂之寶城]. May the torch of the Great Vehicle shine on the gates of dread and quickly ascend to the Jade Palace of *Maṇi* [*mani no*

[95] This trend continued at least through the first half of the Heian period. See Kudō 2008, 137-147 and Nara 2002, 21. For more on these hybrid visions in the Nara period, see Ōno 1972, 112-113; Inoue 1956, 10-13; and Hiraoka 1977 89-105. Hou Xudong has examined statue inscriptions to show how patrons in fifth- and sixth-century China also prayed to visit both realms. See Hou 1998, 182-185, 202. The monk Kyōkai similarly believed it was possible to visit both realms, as he concludes his third and final preface to the *Nihon ryōiki* with the sentence, "I hope that we can all leave behind this earth to be born in Supreme Bliss in the west and that we may together abandon our abodes to reside together in the Jeweled Hall of the heaven above." See *Nihon ryōiki* III. jo, *SNKBT* 30:129; Nakamura 1973, 222.

> *gyokuden* 摩尼之玉殿]. May [he] forever awaken from the dream of the three realms and long rest upon the bed of singular thusness. (*NCS*, plate 75; *NI*, 639)

Notably, the phrases "Treasured City of Supreme Bliss" and "Jade Palace of Maṇi" are unique to this prayer, further showing how patrons combined poetic language with canonical references to creatively re-imagine post-mortem destinations. The final section of a prayer by the monk Dōgyō similarly reveals composite visions:

> Next, [we] pray for our parents and relatives: may ten thousand blessings be renewed each day and may happiness continue for a thousand months. After a hundred years, on the eve when they withdraw from the world, may their spirits journey to Tuṣita Heaven and rise up to Maitreya's incense stand. May their conceptions roost in the [Land of] Supreme Bliss and step toward the flowered throne of Guanyin. (*NCS*, plate 56; Tanaka 1973, 63-64)

First, Dōgyō asked that his relatives may live long and happy lives. As we will see, prayers for this-worldly benefits are common in Nara period manuscripts. Upon death, however, Dōgyō envisions his ancestors to divide into "spirits [神]" and "conceptions [*omoi* or *sō* 想]." The former journeys to Tuṣita Heaven to gaze upon Maitreya. The latter ventures to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, where it encounters Avalokiteśvara. Here, Dōgyō focuses on a deity who is commonly portrayed as an attendant of Amitābha rather than the central Buddha of the Pure Land.[96] He employs several non-standard ideas: the deceased could travel to multiple realms; the post-mortem state is divided between "spirit" and "conception"; and Avalokiteśvara represents the central deity in Amitābha's Pure Land.

[96] For Guanyin's presence in Amitābha's Pure Land, see *Wuliang shou jing* T 360.12.273b.

The Dōgyō and Iwatate prayers bridge spatial divisions, but others view the post-mortem state as transcending temporal boundaries. In a prayer appended to the *Scripture on Maitreya's Ascension*, Ishikawa no Toshitari prayed:

> [May the deceased] encounter the path of the One Capable of Being Humane. May he ascend frolicking to true awakening. Beneath the Bodhi branches, may he hear the perfect sounds of the fine Dharma. In Tuṣita Heaven, [may he] obtain the superior fruit of the highest truth. (*NCS*, plate 18; *NI*, 615)

The structure of the prayer features alternating couplets. The first and third lines point to Śakyamuni, the most recent Buddha, by referring to him by the Chinese translation of his name, "the One Capable of Being Humane [Ch. *nengren*; Jp. *nōnin* 能仁]," and mentioning his preaching under the Bodhi Tree. The second and fourth lines describe the patron's desire for the dead to be reborn in the realm of Maitreya, the future Buddha. This effect is achieved through the verb "to ascend [*noboru* 登]," an explicit reference to Tuṣita Heaven, where Maitreya resides. For Toshitari, the deceased can witness the preaching of the former Buddha of the past and also visit the heavenly palace of the future Buddha.

The notion that one ascends to post-mortem destinations frequently appears in medieval Chinese inscriptions and may derive from pre-existing conceptions of "transcendents [Ch. *xian* 仙]" (Hou 1998, 160-162). In Japan, patrons such as Ishikawa no Toshitari and others crafted original descriptions of the way the ascension would take place. For example, in the prayer for his deceased son cited earlier, Toshitari prayed:

> May golden flowers support his steps as he ascends into the five pure heavens high above. May jade leaves be spread out before his appearance as he meets the fruit of the three illuminations in the distance. (*NCS,* plate 19; Tanaka 1973, 38)

Some ideas such as the five pure heavens (*gojō no ten* 五浄之天) and the fruit of the three illuminations (Ch. *sanmyō no ka* 三明之果) derive from canonical sources.[97] Other images such as the ascent on golden flowers and a carpet of jade leaves are foreign to traditional Buddhist cosmology.

Similarly, a prayer by Kōmyōshi describes ascension in a courtly vehicle: "May they encounter true thusness and be driven to Supreme Bliss in a purple palanquin. May they be perfumed in the sun of wisdom and bathed with sweet dew in the pools of virtue" (*NCS*, plates 31-32; *NI*, 616). Kōmyōshi's vehicle of choice, a purple palanquin (*shikiyo* 紫輿), does not appear in any canonical texts.[98] Although the ascent itself occurs through unorthodox means, once in the Pure Land, the deceased encounter a canonical topography. They bathe in "pools of virtue

[97] The five Pure Heavens refers to the non-afflicted heaven, the not-hot heaven, the skillful manifestation heaven, the skillful seeing heaven, and the heaven of ultimate form. The three kinds of wisdom represent three of the six supernatural powers: namely, the power to see past lives, the power of divine vision, and the power of uncontaminated awareness.

[98] The term does appear in several texts in the Daoist canon. For example, see *Dongzhen taishang zidu yanguang shenyuan bianjing*, DZ 1332, 33:564. It is possible that Kōmyōshi is referring to an actual vehicle that was used at court. The *Shoku Nihongi* relates the case of a priestess traveling to Tōdai-ji in a purple colored palanquin with Shōmu, Kōmyōshi, and Kōken. See *Shoku Nihongi* 12/27/749; *SNKBT*, 14:96-97.

[*tokuchi* 徳池]" and are perfumed by the sun of wisdom—two features derived directly from scriptural sources.[99]

Although prayers most commonly describe ascensions, one sponsored by the Asuka-dera monk Kenshō 賢證 (n.d.) depicts Maitreya's descent in highly original language:

> [Kenshō] reverently prays that [his ancestors, the ruler, and all sentient being] may have their present bodies stay at the grove of a thousand autumns. May their spirit-minds remain at the garden of ten thousand springs.[100] May the swift boats of the six perfections be moored at the ford of the three assemblies. May the rudders of the four immeasurable [states of mind] steer through the awakenings of the eight disciples.[101] May the divisions of the eightfold path be the left and right oarsmen. May the Wheel of the Dharma Sound and Great and Subtle Aspects take the helm. With these two bodhisattvas as the ship's captain, may it cross the sea of fragmentary life and death. (*NCS,* plate 6; *NI*, 611)

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[99] The phrase pools of virtue likely refers to the waters with eight attributes (namely, sweetness, freshness, softness, lightness, purity, scentlessness, cleansing, and nourishing) found in Amitābha's Pure Land. See *Wuliang shou jing*, T 360.12.271a; *Guan wuliang shou jing*, T 365.12.342b; and *Amituo jing,* T 366.12.347a. For sun of wisdom, see T 360.12.272c-274b.

[100] All published sources transcribe this character as 團 (meaning round or group), but a close examination of the photographic reproduction with a magnifying glass reveals that the character should be 園 (meaning garden). There also seems to be a scribal error in this section, as the conjunction 而 in the phrase 万春而 園 is grammatically awkward and breaks up the parallel prose. The fact that the 而 appears on the next two lines in a similar position may suggest transplacement by the scribe. I have assumed the text should read 万春〈之〉園, as that would maintain the semantic and syntactic parallelism with the previous sentence.

[101] I have followed the manuscript in reading this as 八第人覚. Jōdai bunken wo yomu kai suggests that 第 (disciple) may be a scribal error for the homophonous character 大 (great). Although their reading of the phrase as "eight great awakenings" is perhaps more typical and an extremely likely candidate, I have preserved the original transcription in the manuscript of "awakenings of the eight disciples," since it is perfectly understandable as is. Jōdai bunken wo yomu kai 2010c, 40.

The prayer proper, appended to a copy of the *Yogacara-bhumi*, begins by asking that the beneficiaries may have long lifetimes in paradisiacal gardens as they wait for Maitreya's arrival. It continues with a reference to the "Three Assemblies [*san'e* 三會]," which are supposed to occur when Maitreya descends to preach. The remainder of the prayer uses an elaborate seafaring metaphor that has no precedent in canonical sources but draws upon assorted Buddhist vocabulary such as "the four immeasurable [states of mind] [*shimuryō* 四無量]," "the eightfold path [*hasshō dōbun* 八正道分]," and "the six perfections [*rokudo* 六度]." The prayer also incorporates imagery of the bodhisattvas Wheel of the Dharma Sound (*Hōonrin* 法音輪) and Great and Subtle Aspects (*Daimyōsō* 大妙相), who appear to be connected to the Maitreyan cult. It is of note that these bodhisattvas have artistic precedents in early Japan, but it is unlikely that they appeared in any textual sources that Kenshō would have been aware of.[102] The colophon also notes that Kenshō sponsored seven scrolls out of the hundred-scroll text (only scroll number twenty-one is extant), so it is reasonable to assume that he was part of a

[102] The only textual reference I have found to these bodhisattvas is the *Unkyadaya giki*, T 1251.21.245. This text is attributed to Vajrabodhi but is likely an apocryphal text composed in Japan by the Tendai monk Son'i 尊意 (866-940). See *Mikkyō daijiten*, 130. The bodhisattvas can be found in a Maitreya triad in the lecture hall at Yakushi-ji that may date as early as the Hakuhō period (late seventh through early eighth centuries). Bodhisattva attendants with similar names appear in several later sources, but I have yet to find any references in sources that would have been extant in the Nara period. They also appear together in *Nihon ryōiki* III.17, *SNKBT* 30:54; Nakamura 1973, 245. Similarly named bodhisattvas also appear in the *Fahua zhuanji*, T 2068.51.78c.

fellowship group. As we saw in chapters one and two, many fellowship groups in early Japan were connected to cults surrounding Maitreya.

Most of the above prayers can be described as creative descriptions of essentially Buddhist realms, but a prayer commissioned by Empress Kōken/Shōtoku for Emperor Junnin shows a largely original and literary version of the afterlife that uses Buddhist imagery sparingly:

> May the phoenix carriage of Mount Qiaoshan approach the Place of the Lotus while sounding its imperial bells. May the team of dragons of the Fen River float atop the fragrant seas and leave their traces behind. May [the deceased] forever uncover the immeasurable complete meaning and eternally bear witness to the pervasively soaring dharma body.[103]

The prayer seamlessly blends imagery derived from the Chinese classics with occasional Buddhist allusions. Kōken/Shōtoku uses imperial metaphors such as Mount Qiaoshan 橋山, the supposed site of the tomb of the mythical Yellow Emperor, and the Phoenix Carriage (*hōro* 鳳輅), an imperial vehicle.[104] At the same time, the realm is described as the Place of the Lotus (*renjō* 蓮場)—a term that does not appear in the Buddhist canon but suggests Pure Land

[103] There are multiple extant manuscripts containing this vow. There are minor variations between them, but I have referred to the prayer partially reproduced in *NCS*, plate 71. Also see *NI*, 638.

[104] For Mount Qiaoshan as the site of the tomb of the Yellow Emperor, see *Shiji* 1, p. 10. I assume the Phoenix Carriage refers to the emperor's palanquin, as similar terms such as *hōgai* 鳳蓋 and *hōsha* 鳳車 have that meaning.

imagery.[105] Moreover, it is a place where one can witness the Dharma Body of an enlightened being. The allusion to the Fen River is particularly poignant, as it likely refers to a story in the *Zhuangzi.* In this episode, Emperor Yao visits four masters north of the Fen River. He is so taken by what he witnesses that he can no longer think about governance when he returns to his capital. This image, which is used frequently in reference to past emperors, suggests that Kōken/Shōtoku views the emperor's death as taking him to a land more captivating than anything he could witness on earth.[106] Kōken/Shōtoku imagines the celestial realm as a pastiche of Chinese poetic and cultic images alongside more explicitly but by no means canonical Buddhist topographies.[107]

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[105] While the image of the Lotus has strong Buddhist associations, it was also employed widely in East Asian funerary culture. The most notable example of this motif for early Japan is the *Tenjukoku shūchō* 天壽國繡帳. As Maria Pradel has argued, this famous but fragmentary tapestry does not depict a specific Buddhist pure land or heaven as once thought but instead draws upon funerary motifs commonly found in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese burial mounds. The lotus imagery in this tapestry, and possibly in Shōtoku's prayer as well, should be considered a part of this broader mortuary culture. See Pradel 1997, 142-168.

[106] *Zhuangzi jishi* 1 *"Xiao yao you,"* p. 31. Although the *Zhuangzi* is often considered a "Daoist" text, it was valued widely for its literary and philosophical qualities and was not attached to a specific religious tradition. For other early Japanese references to this scene in the context of the death of an emperor, see *Seireishū*, *NKBT* 71:288; *Honchō monzui* 2, *SNKBT* 27:169; *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 4/18/850, *KT* 4:25.

[107] I have emphasized the non-Buddhist properties, but the prayer concludes with a hymn (*ju* 頌) that uses more explicitly Buddhist language. I tentatively translate the final verse section as "If there were not the One Capable of Being Humane/Who could illuminate the true Dharma?/Yes, I [the Emperor] look upwards in yearning/And cultivate wise action/May the provisional approach be used widely, so to cut off suffering/May strength and knowledge be

Prayers: This-worldly Benefits

Patrons also commonly prayed for this-worldly benefits (*genze riyaku* 現世利益). As scholars such as Ian Reader and George Tanabe have noted, securing practical benefits in this lifetime represents a central pillar of Japanese religious practice that can be traced back to ancient times and continues to the present day. According to Reader and Tanabe, there are essentially two overlapping types of this-worldly benefits: those that prevent external danger (*yakuyoke* 厄除) and those that bring good fortune (*kaiun* 開運).[108] Both types of prayers are common in eighth-century Japan, where patrons frequently copied scriptures as a means to ensure stable rule, achieve longevity, and avoid disasters.

Patrons prayed for various kinds of this-worldly benefits, but many prayers are tied to what both traditional sources and modern scholars refer to as "state protection [*gokoku* 護國 or *chingo kokka* 鎭護國家]." "*Kokka"* is generally translated as state and indeed was adopted as a translation of this occidental term in modern Japanese, but it has a subtly different meaning in classical sources. The compound is composed of two characters that literally denote a walled city and the family, terms that in early Chinese sources likely referred to the realms of feudal

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used finely, so that we may reach the other shore/I dare to face the passing years and months/Alas, there are no limits to the words of praise I could leave behind."

[108] In addition to being a central feature of Japanese religion, Tanabe and Reader correctly point out how securing this-worldly benefits is important throughout the Buddhist tradition. See Tanabe and Reader 1998, 45-47 and 73-82.

lords and the households of nobles (Lewis 2006, 80-81). Although this etymology suggests fragmentation, the compound came to take on meanings of centralization and solidarity. *Kokka* represented the geographic territory and political organization that connected individual families and domains into a singular conceptual and administrative framework.[109] Since the center of this social order in both China and Japan was the imperial personage, it is unsurprising that the compound also referred metonymically to the emperor himself and was glossed as *mikado* (sovereign) in early Japanese sources. In fact, these collective and individualized metaphors are intimately related; as Allan Grapard (1999, 528-531) has argued, rituals aimed at protecting the social order, whether taking place at shrines or temples, were usually centered on the emperor's body, and when he fell ill, rituals were held on behalf of realm as a whole. The emperor's body came to symbolize the body politic.

Eighth-century prayers show that some sponsors conceived the *kokka* in this way. For example, a prayer by Mutobe no Azumabito is dedicated to the *kokka* but clearly points to Empress Kōken/Shōtoku:

> [Mutobe no Azumabito] humbly prays that by relying on this supreme goodness [of copying the scripture], [he] will adorn the *kokka*. May her ability to tame surpass the precedent of the three [sovereigns] and five [emperors]. May her sagely lifespan exceed the outer limit of ten thousands and hundred thousands [years]. (*NCS*, plate 52; *NI*, 625)

[109] For example, see article four of Prince Shōtoku's Seventeen Article Constitution; *Nihon shoki* 4/3/604, *NKBT* 68:182-183; Aston [1896] 1972, 2:129-130.

The reference to a long life span and allusions to the legendary founding emperors of China suggest that *kokka* referred to the imperial personage.[110] This reading is further strengthened when we pay attention to the manuscript, which leaves an empty space before *kokka*. Such spaces are used to designate respect to social superiors. For Azumabito, the *kokka* was the emperor herself. The prayer then likens Kōken/Shōtoku to the sage rulers of the past by alluding to a passage in the *Records of the Great Historian*. The relevant phrase *junka* (Ch. *chunhua* 淳化), which I have translated tentatively as to tame (literally meaning to transform to innocence or obedience), is used in the *Records of the Great Historian* to describe the Yellow Emperor's ability to tame wild beasts, birds, insects, and reptiles.[111] The Yellow Emperor is traditionally included in the lists of the mythical three sovereigns and five emperors of Chinese antiquity whom Azumabito prayed Kōken/Shōtoku would surpass. In fact, the Yellow Emperor is the first ruler to appear in the *Records of the Great Historian*, the text that Azumabito alludes to. In this way, Azumabito prayed for the Empress's ability to pacify the realm to surpass that of even the earliest of the five emperors.

Azumabito makes allusions to pre-Buddhist Chinese notions of kingship to describe the *kokka*. This stands in contrast to his praise section we examined earlier, which relied heavily on

[110] The exact identity of the three sovereigns and five emperors varies from text to text, but most versions begin with Fu Xi 伏羲 and end with Shun 舜.
[111] *Shi ji*, 1:6.

Buddhist metaphors and references to monastic figures. Azumabito was by no means alone in using continental tropes in this-worldly prayers for the emperor. For example, the monk Dōgyō prayed: "As for the sagely lord of the divine court, may his lifespan rival the Southern Mountain, [just as] heaven is eternal and the earth enduring" (*NCS*, plate 56; Tanaka 1973, 63-64). Similarly, a gate guardsman named Kasugabe no Hira offers a prayer for the emperor, whom he refers to as "the sagely court"—a common designation for the sovereign:

> May his body be as hard as the Southern Mountain and may His Majesty be as stable as the northern pole[star]. May his heavenly illuminations carry widely, as he competes for years with the great camellia tree. May the years of his calendar [span] a long period, as his lifetime equals that of a kalpa stone. (*NCS*, plate 38; *NI*, 619)

Dōgyō and Hira drew upon the cultic landscape of China by borrowing the well-used poetic trope of the Southern Mountain (*Nanzan* 南山) and directly quoting *Laozi*. These references to southern mounts, pole stars, and *Laozi* should not be taken as evidence of Daoism in early Japan but instead reflect general modes of continental learning that were being adopted by the early Japanese court.[112] Moreover, Hira's prayer combines Buddhist allusion to the *kalpa* stone

[112] The repeated references to the southern mountain probably point to a poem in the *Shi jing,* which reads, "Like the lifespan of the Southern Mountain, never waning, never crumbling." *Shi jing*, "Tian bao"; *SSJZS* 1:412. The phrase "heaven is eternal and the earth enduring" comes directly from *Laozi*. See *Laozi dao de jing* 7. Here my view differs from Masuo Shin'ichiro, who sees such language as "Daoistic" (*Dōkyōteki* 道教的); see Masuo 1995, 204-210. There is nothing uniquely Daoist about images of pole stars or southern mountains; they are simply literary tropes from pre-Daoist China that both Buddhists and Daoists drew upon in developing their traditions on the continent. For more on pole stars, see Mollier 2008, 134-173.

with these Chinese images of longevity, reflecting a combinatory vision not bound to a single tradition.[113]

Although the texts we have examined so far have focused on the longevity of the emperor, prayers referring to the *kokka* also ask for stability and tranquility of the realm as a whole. As we saw earlier, when Dōgyō was faced with a life-threatening thunderstorm, he vowed to copy the text, noting his love for the *kokka* and his desire that "the court be without incident and the people be tranquil" (*NCS*, plate 56; Tanaka 1973, 63-64). Prayers that ask for both the longevity of the ruler and the stability of the realm are not unusual, as we saw earlier the two are intimately connected. A prayer by the monk Genbō from 7/15/741 mentions both:

> Relying on these superior causes, [Genbō] humbly prays for the Emperor, his majesty and royal highness, and the queen, her majesty. May their brightness equal that of the sun and moon and may their virtue match that of heaven and earth. May their sagely lifespans continue for eternity and may their great blessings be inexhaustible. May her majesty, the crown prince, and all the other various princes, all the officials of the hundred military and civil bureaus, and the great masses of people in the realm all be aided in being converted and led [on the Buddhist path] and may each be loyal and filial to the utmost. (*NCS*, plate 29; *NI*, 618)

In this case, Genbō asked for longevity of the monarchs, virtuous rule, and loyalty throughout the realm. The Queen Consort Kōmyōshi, another imperial consort named Fujiwara no Bunin,

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[113] A classic description of a kalpa stone can be found in the *Da zhi du lun*. Here, it is described as the time taken to wear away a stone measuring 4,000 (or 40 depending on the manuscript) *li* across using a piece of fine cloth that passes by once every one thousand years. See T 1509.25.100c. Endō Keita has suggested that patrons combine metaphors from diverse sources without distinguishing between them and that seems to be the case here. See Endō 2008, 35.

and Shōmu himself all similarly prayed that the emperor may enjoy a long reign and that the social order could be preserved through the loyalty of government officials and the populace at large.[114]

The prayers for the stability of the realm by these figures all cite generic continental virtues such as loyalty (Jp. *chū*; Ch. *zhong* 忠) and filiality (Jp. *kō*; Ch. *xiao* 孝). Some patrons, however, employed explicitly Buddhist metaphors to describe the ideal form of governance. For example, the disciples of the acclaimed monk Gyōshin sponsored a prayer for the sagely court: "may the transformation of the golden wheel [turning king], not move with heaven and earth. May his life span of great distance compete with a *kalpa* stone in its length." Other than the phrase heaven and earth (Ch. *qiankun*, Jp. *kenkon* 乾坤), which repeats the first two chapters of the *Classic of Changes* (*Yi jing* 易經), the language of the prayer draws upon *cakravatin* ideals. This reliance on Buddhist imagery may be partially understood in the context of Empress Kōken/Shōtoku. Gyōshin's group was closely associated with the Empress, who herself appears to have held an interest in Buddhist notions of kingship (Inagi 2007, 123-126;

[114] See *NCS,* plates 14 and 22-26; *NI*, 614 and 616. Ogura Shigeji has noted that these prayers may have been stimulated by political unrest due to the impending Fujiwara no Hirotsugu rebellion, but his claims are fairly speculative. See Ogura 2003, 85-95.

Katsuura 2000, 220-280).[115] To a large extent, however, Buddhist metaphors of statecraft were exceptional; as Inagi Masami (2007) has argued in depth, early prayers more commonly liken sovereigns to the sage rulers of China's antiquity than to Buddhist wheel-turning kings.[116]

Although the vast majority of this-worldly benefits sought in prayers were directed toward the *kokka*, we should note that patrons prayed for others to receive good fortune and long lifespans as well. Fujiwara no Bunin hoped for the prosperity of her living mother: "May her mind and spirit be bright and wise and may her blessings and fortune be without bound" (*NCS*, plate 22; *NI*, 616).[117] Similarly, Ishikawa no Toshitari prayed: "By these merits, may felicitous goodness [be brought] with each new day. May [his/her/my] lifespan extend as long as a stone kalpa. May [his/her/my] longevity stretch as far as the sands of the Ganges" (*NCS*, plate 20; *NI*, 616). Although the exact identity of the beneficiary is unnamed, it is likely that

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[115] Although Inagi and Katsuura are correct in pointing out Shōtoku's interest in Buddhist models of kingship, it is clear that she employed diverse ideological frameworks to justify her rule. See Bender 2010.

[116] Imagery related to wheel-turning kings would increase from the tenth century. Despite the growing importance of wheel-turning king imagery in Heian sources, however, traditional Chinese notions of sagely rule and models such as Yao and Shun continued to be used alongside wheel-turning king discourse. Heian ideology did not represent a complete shift from a Confucian mode to a Buddhist one as scholars such as Ryūichi Abé have suggested. For more on the way kingship was envisioned in prayer literature in later periods, see Kudō 2008, 19-44, 77-109, and 251-318.

[117] I follow Nakai Shinkō in identifying the beneficiary of the prayer as Fujiwara no Bunin's mother, Muro no Ōkimi 牟漏女王. See Nakai 1981 and Sakaehara 2000, 307.

Ishikawa no Toshitari, who at this point would have been at the relatively late age of fifty-one, is praying for his own longevity—perhaps his prayers worked, as he lived for another thirty-three years.[118]

It should be emphasized that in using categories such as this-worldly and otherworldly prayers, the two are by no means mutually exclusive. Patrons would commonly pray for the post-mortem salvation of their loved ones while simultaneously asking for this-worldly favors such as a stable rule and long lifespan. For example, before beseeching for his relatives to be born in a Pure Land, Dōgyō implored that "ten thousand days of blessings be renewed and a thousand years of happiness be granted."[119] In this case, we can see how patrons could pray for blessings in both this world and the next. In fact, the two could reinforce one another, as is the case in a prayer authored by Prince Nagaya:

> Next, these good roots shall graciously assist the present reigning[120] emperor and the emperors reigning generation after generation from the beginning of time. May they be protected by the three treasures, as if [the treasures] covered them. May they be guarded by the hundred spirits as if [those spirits] shadowed them. For the living [emperor] may his prosperity compete in the five peaks and may his lifespan last a thousand years. For the ascendant sages, may they be born in a pure realm and ascend

[118] Practices aimed at longevity should by no means be considered "Daoist." This point is most succinctly made in Campany 2002, 6-9 and 2009, 35.

[119] *NCS*, plate 56; Tanaka 1973, 63-64.

[120] I follow Tanaka 1973 in reading the manuscript's character as a variant of 宇. *NCS* transcribes it as 寓 and *NI* lists it as 禹.

> to the heavens above. May they hear the dharma and awaken to the Way. May they cultivate[121] goodness and achieve awakening. (*NCS*, plate 5; *NI* 611)

Here Nagaya's prayers for the present emperor and the deceased emperors of the past, whom he refers to as "ascendant sages"—a common euphemism for the dead. Other sources suggest that the spirits of past emperors were believed to protect the realm.[122] In this context, it is possible to view Nagaya's prayer as aimed at transforming the deceased into benevolent spirits capable of watching over the kingdom.

A final this-worldly benefit sought by patrons was the curing of illness. A short prayer dated to 5/4/739 appended to the colophon of a copy of the *Superlative Dhāraṇī of the Buddha's Crown* notes, "By imperial decree. For the illness of Genbō. Reverently copied one thousand scrolls of this sutra" (*NCS*, plate 21; *NI*, 615). In another case, the *Lotus Sutra* was copied so that "the illness of Kuwabara no Imiki Hirabito 桑原忌寸比良人 may be dispelled" (*NI*, 622).[123] The fact that the dedications are short and contain none of the stylized features we see in other prayer texts may suggest that these projects were completed in haste and there was not

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[121] 脩 is being used as a variant for 修.

[122] For example, in a prayer that accompanied the foundation of the provincial temple system (*kokubunji* 國分寺), Shōmu asked that the spirits of the deceased at once ascend to the Pure Land and forever protect the court. *Ruijū sandai kyaku* 3, *KT* 25:108. In another edict, Kōken noted how the sprits of the past emperors protected the throne against the treasonous plots of Tachibana no Naramaro. *Shoku Nihongi* 7/12/757; *SNKBT* 14:216-217. For a discussion of the latter, see Bender 2010, 228.

[123] There are no other records of Kuwabara no Imiki Hirabito.

sufficient time to compose elaborate prayers. Shōsōin records also document several projects connected to healing.[124] The extent that scriptures were copied as a means to cure illness is relatively unknown, but it is clear that some individuals transcribed sutras to heal loved ones. At the same time, extant evidence suggests that such prayers were less common than those tied to post-mortem ritual and state protection.[125]

Other Prayers: Becoming a Bodhisattva and Awakening the Kami

Other prayers describe acts that are not easily categorized as this- or other-worldly. Some patrons prayed that they themselves may become buddhas or bodhisattvas. For example, the imperial consort Fujiwara no Bunin wished that she "may surely achieve the superior fruit"—a common metaphor for Buddhahood (*NCS*, plate 22; *NI*, 616). Kōmyōshi's 5/1 prayer includes a bodhisattva vow: "Next, Kōmyōshi herself utters this vow to broadly save those

[124] For example when Kōmyōshi fell ill in early 760, all sutra copying activities at the Office of Sutra Transcription turned to curing her. See Sakaehara 2003, 201-252.

[125] The relative lack of prayer texts in sutra colophons related to healing may reflect the fact that sutra copying required time and resources that would have made other practices such as chanting scripture more practical responses to illnesses, which often progressed quickly. In some cases, we know that projects that initially began as healing rites were transformed to memorial projects upon the death of the beneficiary. Dunhuang liturgies suggest that patrons frequently sponsored prayers intended to heal the deceased. Many monks in Japan also engaged in healing rituals, although the precise nature of these practices in Japan is still poorly understood. For Dunhuang, see Teiser 2010.

sinking [in the sea of suffering], to diligently remove afflictive hindrances, to subtly investigate all dharmas, and to quickly achieve *bodhi*."[126] As I have argued in detail elsewhere, Kōmyōshi marks this passage as a vow (*chikau* 誓) rather than a prayer and patterns her language after the four universal [bodhisattva] vows (Ch. *si hong seiyuan*, Jp. *shiguzeigan* 四弘誓願).[127] Similarly, the monk Kōken 興顯, noting that he "values inner realization [*naishō* 内證]," [128] asked that he may quickly "become a true son of the Buddha [*shinbusshi* 真仏子]," a term that refers to those who have entered the bodhisattva path (*NCS*, plate 67; *NI*, 637).[129] For the monk Kōken, sutra transcription represented bodhisattva practice. Although other patrons

[126] 5/1 manuscripts are exceedingly common. There are 750 scrolls in the Shōgozō collection as well as numerous copies in collections throughout the world. In the United States, Princeton and Harvard both have manuscripts that I have consulted. For a published print version, see *NI*, 616.

[127] The exact wording of the bodhisattva vows varies from text to text but can be summarized as vows to 1) save all sentient beings, 2) end all afflictions, 3) learn all the teachings, and 4) become a Buddha. Kōmyōshi's vow is not a direct quotation from any canonical sutra but uses original language composed in the pattern of the four universal bodhisattva vows. I have explored this section of Kōmyōshi's prayer in detail elsewhere, see Lowe 2011, 20-22. For some classic and influential examples of the four universal vows, see *Dasheng bensheng xindi guan jing*, T 159.3.325b and *Mohe zhiguan*, T 1911.46.56a.

[128] I follow the transcription of *NI* here. The manuscript is almost impossible to read and *NCS* leaves this character blank as undecipherable.

[129] The cursive script used to transcribe this commentary is uncharacteristic of professional scribes, suggesting that the monk Kōken copied the text himself for personal study. It is also noteworthy that he attached the prayer to the *Huayan wenyi gangmu* 華嚴經文義綱目, a scholastic commentary by Fazang 法藏 (643-712); Kōken clearly viewed the reproduction of commentaries as accruing merit.

did not explicitly express these aspirations, we should remember that even commissioning works on behalf of others fits within the broad Mahāyāna framework of actions to benefit others (*ritagyō* 利他行)—a central characteristic of bodhisattva conduct.[130]

A final, albeit uncommon, prayer that does not easily map onto any of the above categories is copying scripture to save *kami* from suffering.[131] A set of scriptures transcribed by a fellowship group affiliated with the monk Dōgyō contains two colophons dedicated to *kami*.[132] The first, from scroll number fifty, reads: "Offered on behalf of the great *kami*, the transcendent of the divine wind [*shinpū sen no daijin* 神風仙大神]"—a name that may refer to the *kami* of Ise.[133] The second dedication, found in scroll ninety-one, notes that "[the sutra was]

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[130] This point is made by Nagaoka Ryūsaku (2010, 334-335) in his study of inscriptions in early Japan.

[131] Dedicating merit on behalf of *kami*, who were viewed to be suffering sentient beings, represents one of the one of the earliest ways that indigenous deities were subsumed within a Buddhist interpretive framework. For the classic study, see Tsuji 1983 (originally published in 1907), 1:48-63. Also see Nakai 1995, esp. 101-107. In English, see Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003, 9-13.

[132] Three manuscripts from the present collection housed at Jōrakuji contain colophons that date to the Nara period. See *NCS*, plates 55-57; Tanaka 1973, 63-64. There is some debate over reliability of these colophons, but Takemoto Akira and Endō Keita have used linguistic and codicological analysis to convincingly date these manuscripts to the Nara or very early Heian period. See Takemoto 2008 and Endō 2008. For overviews of this text as an early example of *kami*-Buddhist relations, see Tanaka 1952; Ōnishi 1956, esp. 37-38; Takatori 1982, 186-197; Tanaka 1995, 137-144; and Endō 2008, esp. 34.

[133] This was first indicated by Tanaka Kaidō who based his claim on the second more explicit colophon found in scroll number ninety-one; see Tanaka 1952. Tanaka Takashi supports this claim by noting how the phrase "the divine wind of Ise" appears in other Nara sources; see

offered on behalf of the great *kami* of Ise." The intention of the patron is made more explicit in the prayer proper of scroll ninety-one: "May the shrines[134] of the myriad great *kami* be covered in the awesome light of *prajñā* and may they quickly ascend to the rank of great sage [*daishō* 大聖; i.e. a Buddha or bodhisattva]" (*NCS*, plate 56; Tanaka 1973, 63-64). One of the purposes of Dōgyō's project, therefore, was to transform *kami* into enlightened buddhas. Although it may be tempting to see the offering of Buddhist prayers to indigenous deities as a uniquely Japanese development, it should be noted that Chinese stories also describe the transcription of Buddhist sutras on behalf of local spirits.[135]

The Poetics of Prayer

The above discussion has focused primarily on ritual contexts, cosmological systems, and soteriological aspirations–namely, the aspects of prayer that could be described as religious. The poetic qualities of the prayers, however, should not be overlooked. In fact, later

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Tanaka 1995, 140-141. At the same time, Takemoto's codicological evidence suggests that the second colophon may date from a few years later than scroll number fifty; if this is the case, it may undermine the reading that sees the dedication as referring to a deity from Ise; see Takemoto 2008, 11.

[134]Reading 社 as 社.

[135] For example, see *Fahua zhuanji*, T 2068.51.80c. The performance of Buddhist merit-making acts on behalf of local deities in China has been studied in a series of articles by Yoshida Kazuhiko. See Yoshida 1996; 2005, esp. 69-70; and 2006, esp. 155-157.

anthologists would esteem *ganmon* as literary masterpieces. Figures such as Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845-903) and Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041-1111), who are known as poetic luminaries from the Heian period, composed numerous prayers on behalf of royals and other aristocratic patrons. Prayers authored by these figures were included in their collected works.[136] Other anthologies of exemplary Chinese language literature such as the *Literary Essences of Our Court* (*Honchō monzui* 本朝文粋) and the *Continued Literary Essences of Our Court* (*Honchō zoku monzui* 本朝続文粋) similarly contained collections of *ganmon*, which were often authored by graduates of the State Academy's School of Letters or *Kidendō* 紀伝道 (Steininger 2010, 29).

The style of eighth-century prayers, which generally follows the rules of parallel prose, reveals that authors exerted significant attention to the poetry of their compositions. Parallel prose, dubbed *pianwen* (Jp. *benbun* 駢文) by later Chinese scholars, is composed of couplets with lines of matching meter and syntactic structure. This style of writing flourished in medieval China and greatly influenced Japanese literary works from the Nara and Heian periods.[137] It most commonly uses four or six characters per line—hence its name "four-six

[136] Over thirty *ganmon* appear in Michizane's *Kanke bunsō* 菅家文草 and 120 *ganmon* are collected in Masafusa's *Gōtotoku nagon ganmonshū* 江都督納言願文集. Kūkai's *ganmon* were also esteemed for their literary value; thirty-one examples can be found in his *Seireishū* 性靈集.
[137] For an overview of the style of writing, see Nienhauser 1986, 656-660 and Hightower 1959.

prose [Ch. *siliu wen* 四六文]" in contemporaneous sources.[138] In addition, fairly parallel tonal patterns were esteemed but not required.

Teiser (2010) has noted how parallelisms are limited to certain sections of prayers. Nara period texts support Teiser's claims; in most cases, only the sections of praise, mourning, and the prayer proper employ parallel structures. Although a full examination of poetics is outside the scope of this study, a few examples can illuminate the importance of style in early Japanese prayers. Let us begin with a couplet found in a eulogy of Sakanoue no Imiki Iwatate:

> 撫育之慈、高踰須彌
> 擁護之悲、深過大海
> The mercy of his tender upbringing is of a height that exceeds Sumeru.
> The compassion of his loving support is of a depth that surpasses the Great Sea. (*NCS*, plate 75; *NI*, 639)

The structure in each line can be diagramed as follows:

> Topic {adj. + verb functioning as noun + possessive marker + noun} +
> Predicate {adj. functioning as noun + verb + binomial proper noun}

The lines are written in four character phrasing and reveal perfect semantic parallelism throughout: tender/loving; upbringing/support; mercy/compassion; height/depth; exceed/surpass; Sumeru/Great Sea. Finally, the tonal structure (xxoo+oooo and xxoo+ooxx)

[138] Although this is the most common meter, I should note that other line lengths appear in both Chinese texts and eighth-century Japanese *ganmon*.

follows a nearly but not perfectly parallel use of level (Ch. *ping*; Jp. *hyō* 平) and unlevel (Ch. *ze*; Jp. *soku* 仄) tones.[139] The only non-parallel section is the transliterated Sanskrit word Sumeru.

These basic patterns of syntactical and metrical symmetry in individualized couplets often continue for line after line. For example, the praise section of a prayer by Ishikawa no Toshitari can be diagrammed as follows:

> 蓋聞、
> Introductory phrase
> 無色無聲、方廣之功自遠。
> 常有常淨、圓朗之照不窮。
> Subj. { adj. + noun, adj. + noun} + Pred. {adv. + adj. + possessive + noun + adv. + adj.}
> 崇慧業以致真如。
> 積芳因而成聖果。
> {verb + adj + noun (obj.) + conjunction + verb + adj. + noun (obj.)
> 引四海於法鏡、則慾海澄氣。
> 導六識於禪門、則邪雲巻翳。
> {verb + number+ noun + preposition+ adj + noun + conjunction + adj. + noun + verb + noun}

A translation would read:

> Verily, without form or sound, the merits of true vastness are naturally distant. Constantly existent and constantly pure, the radiance of perfect clarity is inexhaustible. By revering wise action, one reaches true thusness. By accumulating fragrant causes, one achieves the fruit of sagehood. When the four seas are guided to the dharma mirror, the mist clears from the sea of desire. When the six consciousnesses are lead to the *dhyāna* gate, the shadow rolls away from the clouds of falsity. (*NCS*, plate 19; Tanaka 1973, 38)

[139] It is unclear what language these prayers would have been read in and if tones would have been voiced. At the very least, they may have been esteemed for their literary value, although overall tonal consistency plays a minimal role in eighth-century prayers composed in Japan.

Again, the author took great care to use parallel syntactical structures for couplet pairs throughout. He employed different line lengths for each couplet and did not limit himself to four or six character phrasing. Although this prayer, like most I have examined, does not maintain strict tonal consistency, the second couplet uses a mirror tonal structure (oxxxxoo; xooooxx) that is common in Chinese poetry and parallel prose.[140]

Another central feature of both parallel prose and East Asian literary practices in general is allusion to and direct quotation of classic texts—a practice that has been cited in passing throughout this chapter. As mentioned above, Prince Nagaya's 712 prayer contains the phrase the "four seas were stopped and hushed," which is an allusion to a passage in the *Book of History*. The original passage describes the death of the legendary Emperor Yao: "Within the four seas all the eight kinds of instruments of music were stopped and hushed" (*Shang shu* "Shun dian"; *SSJZS* 1:29). Others such as Dōgyō referred to *Literary Selections*. Kasugabe no Hira frequently made allusions to early texts such as the *Classic of Poetry,* the *Book* of *History*, and *Zhuangzi*.[141]

Of course, not all allusions were from Chinese classics. As noted above, much of the cosmology found in prayers draws from Buddhist texts and references to *kalpa* stones and

[140] It is unclear if these prayers would have been read aloud, but tonal structures would have likely been appreciated for their literary quality in writing, even if the texts were not vocalized.
[141] For the Dōgyō prayer and the *Wenxuan*, see Endō 2008, 35-36.

"pulverizing the body" derive from canonical sources. Other patrons such as the sponsors of the prayer on behalf of Sakanoue no Imiki Iwatate allude to parables such as that of the four snakes (*shija* 四蛇) and the two rats (*niso* 二鼠) or to famous sites from the life of the Buddha such as the Nairañjanā River (*renga* 連河) and the Twin Trees (*sōju* 雙樹) (*NCS,* plate 75; *NI*, 639).[142] At the same time, this prayer contains references to traditional Chinese images of the Queen Mother of the West.[143] Similarly, the disciples of Gyōshin, skillfully employed both classical Chinese and Buddhist allusions to describe transient nature of human existence:

> A provisional body [*ketai* 假體] is like a floating cloud. Grasslike life [*sōmyō* 草命] resembles a flash of lighting. [As a result, Gyōshin] did not complete this matter [of copying the scripture], as he swallowed jade and followed transformation. His disciples, Kōnin and others, [with grief that is] not even surpassed by the scar of a windblown tree [*fūju* 風樹], humbly carried out the vow he made previously. (*NCS*, plate 66; *NI*, 637)

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[142] The four snakes and two rats appear in a famous Buddhist parable about a man trapped in a well. In this story, a man climbs down a well to flee a stampeding elephant. In the well are two rats that gnaw at the vine and four poisonous snakes that want to bite him, as well as other assorted dangers. The two rats are said to represent day and night and the four snakes stand for the four elements. See *Piyu jing* 譬喻經, T 217.4.801b-c. The image is common in Buddhist canonical texts and early Japanese literature; see Masuo 1995, 219-220. The Nairañjanā River (more fully translated as *nirenzen ga* 尼連禪河) refers to the site of the Buddha's enlightenment and the twin trees mark the site where he entered nirvana.

[143] For a discussion of this prayer that focuses on the image of the Queen Mother to the West, see Masuo 1995, 211-228. Masuo sees this reference as Daoistic, but I follow Como in seeing it as a part of the continental cultic tradition connected to spirit pacification. See Como 2009, 93-107.

The metaphor of likening the impermanence of the body to a floating cloud and a flash of lighting is common in Buddhist scripture.[144] On the other hand, "swallowing jade" is a traditional Chinese term for death appearing in the *Rites of Zhou* and the "scar of the windblown tree" originates from a tale in the *Outward Commentary on the Han Odes* (*Hanshi waizhuan* 漢詩外傳) that describes a son lamenting his unfilial ways.[145]

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the meaning of prayer in early Japanese Buddhism through close readings of *ganmon* appended to eighth-century manuscripts. These texts suggest that although sutra copying followed a ritual structure based on Buddhist notions of karma and the repayment of debt, cosmological interpretations were never bound to canonical traditions. Patrons blended diverse political ideologies, religious frameworks, and poetic allusions to creatively express their this- and other-worldly aspirations.

The findings of this chapter contribute to the larger goal of the dissertation, which aims to evaluate the utility of the "state Buddhism model." Eighth-century prayers show that

[144] For an overview of these metaphors, see Mori 1987, 260-261 and 528-532.
[145] The windblown tree was a well-used metaphor in Chinese literary texts. For the source text, see *Hanshi waizhuan* 9.3; Hightower 1952, 292. Kūkai also uses the term in a prayer for deceased parents; see *Seireishū*, *NKBT* 71:330-331. For swallowing jade, see the *Zhouli zhushu* "Tianguan zhongzai"; *SSJZS* 1:651.

religiosity was far more diverse than simple state protection—in particular, mortuary ritual played a large role. Moreover, patrons aspired toward Buddhahood, prayed for the longevity and healing of loved ones, and strove to enlighten the *kami.* None of these features can be accounted for in the "state Buddhism" rubric.[146] Second, most scholars working in the "state Buddhism" framework characterize the ideology of the period as Buddhist, but prayers in this chapter suggest that patrons more commonly turned to classical Chinese discourses on statecraft than to Indic ideals of wheel turning kings. State protection in this context was mediated by Buddhist ritual—in the sense that sutra copying was based on a logic of merit-making—but the ideology expressed in prayers can better be described as a pastiche assembled predominantly of Chinese parts. Moreover, each patron freely drew on continental and Buddhist sources in original and highly idiosyncratic ways; there was no single ideology in the Nara period. Finally, the discourse of "state protection" appears to have been more widespread than Inoue anticipated. For Inoue, a central pillar of state Buddhism is that the primary sponsors were the imperial family. Instead, our survey of prayers suggests that a broad segment of eighth-century Japanese society—and much of the East Asian Buddhist world—was interested in performing rituals to bring stability and prosperity to the realm and to the

[146] I should note that Inoue Mitsusada, the most influential explicator of the state Buddhism thesis, recognized these other features, but many later scholars focused exclusively on ideology and regulation through legal codes.

imperial family. We should not, however, see this as a passive acceptance of ideology; patrons would have sought stability both out of genuine concern and as a means to forge pragmatic alliances that could bring them political and economic benefits.

The evidence presented in this chapter shows that patrons across diverse social and geographic backgrounds shared similar religious aspirations and ritual practices. At the same time, we must be careful not to flatten the social sphere and view prayers as a "popular" practice that transcended all social divisions. Many of the poetic devices used in prayers would have been inaccessible to certain segments of the population. Practices such as sutra copying may have helped create a shared religious culture across the archipelago, but it simultaneously contributed to setting some groups—namely, those able to sponsor literary prayers in parallel prose—apart from others. While sutra copying may have contributed to social stratification to the extent that elite courtiers and high-ranking monks residing in the capital were more capable of composing stylized texts than low-ranking bureaucrats and provincials, we cannot forget that figures from diverse social and geographic backgrounds including Kurahashibe no Miyatsuko Maro, Dōgyō, Mutobe no Azumabito, Kasugabe no Hira, and the family of Sakanoue no Imiki Iwatate all sponsored literary and erudite prayers. Facile divisions of "state" versus "folk" are surely inadequate for capturing the complicated way that prayers functioned in eighth-century society.

Chapter Four: Haunted by Demons, Watched by Kings

> *After I [the Buddha] pass away, in the evil world of the five corruptions, if there are evil devils and myriad malefic ways of venom that rob people of their vitality, seek to shorten their lives, and violently come to kill them, Ānanda, you must wholeheartedly propagate this scripture and make all sentient beings in this evil world be without illness, suffering, and untimely death and make the myriad malefic ways of venom all completely disappear.*
>
> *-Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*[1]

The future depicted in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* (Ch. *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經) is bleak. Murderous demons haunt the realm threatening to violently end people's lives. Sorcerers abound, banditry flourishes, and disasters erupt with unusual frequency. While the description of the world presented in the text is grim, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* promises a means to escape these misfortunes. It

[1] *Jiuhu shenming jing*, Nanatsu-dera lines 4-8 (T 2865.85.1325a). All translations are based on the Nanatsu-dera manuscript (late Heian) unless otherwise noted. In referring to this text, I will give both the Taishō reference and the line number in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript. I have also referred to three Dunhuang editions: P 2340 (mid-tenth century?), BD 646 (seventh or eighth century), and Moriya 247 (Tang). The Taishō edition is based on P 2340. I have been unable to find a reproduction of the Moriya manuscript or examine the original, which is housed in the Kyoto National Museum. I have consulted the catalog for the Moriya collection and also referred to the variant readings listed in the Nanatsu-dera critical edition, which uses the Moriya manuscript as one of its sources. In addition, there are a number of extant Korean printed editions dating to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For the various manuscripts, see Masuo 1996, 822-824. I have completed a translation of the entire text based on the Nanatsu-dera manuscript that can be found in appendix two.

claims that those who propagate the sutra will be spared sufferings at the hands of malefic demons and will be saved from disasters such as floods and fires. The text, in fact, circulated throughout East Asia, even though many medieval Chinese bibliographers considered it to be of dubious authenticity. This chapter will focus on one such propagation effort: the transcription of one hundred copies of the text at the behest of Queen Consort Kōmyōshi in 748.

We will use this particular sutra copying project and others that were closely related to it to assess the relationship between religion and the state in Nara Japan. In recent years, scholars of Japanese history and religion have frequently borrowed theatrical metaphors derived from Geertz to describe the way rulers used Buddhist ritual as a stage from which they could display their political authority. The political function of Buddhism, according to Geertzian scholars of Japanese history, was the "demonstration" of power and the "authentication" of the social order through religious practice.[2] The theater-state model has become the paradigmatic way of understanding the relationship between religion and state in premodern Japan.[3] It has gained particular credence as a tool for historical studies on the Nara

[2] For example Joan Piggott uses these terms; see Piggott 1997, esp. 277-278.

[3] In addition to Joan Piggott's work, also see Moerman 2005,139-180 and Bauer 2010 and 2011. Piggott follows the language of Geertz in describing a theater state (or more precisely a "theatre state" for Geertz); Moerman and Bauer discuss a "theater of state" and "theaters of the state" respectively. The precise reasons for inserting the preposition "of" in between

period. According to Joan Piggott, the theater-state method of kingship reached a pinnacle under Emperor Shōmu, the very figure who served as the sovereign in 748 when the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was transcribed in one hundred copies.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the relationship between Buddhism and the state from an alternative perspective. I should emphasize that it is not my intention to reject the idea that Buddhism was used to justify imperial rule. I take this feature of Buddhism as a matter of course. To eighth-century Japanese Buddhists, there was nothing unnatural about religion appearing in a "secular" sphere. I should also stress that scholars such as Joan Piggott and Max Moerman, who rely on the theater-state model, have illuminated previously ignored features of Japanese religions and laid a foundation upon which future research can be built. In seeking an alternative narrative, I do not intend to downplay their contributions. My goal is to show that, at least in the case of copying the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, the discursive effects of sutra copying did not merely provide theatrical justification of political authority. This chapter will argue that Buddhist patronage placed rulers within a cosmological framework in which they were constantly haunted by ghosts and demons and observed by warrior gods capable of unleashing punishment at any time.

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theater and state is not made explicit, although both Moerman and Bauer cite Geertz (and Tambiah for Moerman) as influences.

For one, we will see that the transcription of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* served as a reminder that the rulers were haunted by demons of their own making. The world of the eighth-century court in many ways mirrors the "age of wild ghosts" described in Eric Mueggler's (2001, 3) vivid ethnography of a minority community in twentieth-century China: "Life in this era was inflected by eruptions into the present of unreconciled fragments of the past, often personified as the ghosts of people (or spirits) who had met bad ends and who frequently possessed or killed their descendants." Mueggler attributes these eruptions to the violence of the state, which had sterilized the women of the community and robbed them of their traditional forms of social organization. What we will see in this chapter, however, is a different type of haunting. The rulers were themselves pursued by demons, created as a result of the past misdeeds and present inadequacies of the sovereign. In the context of eighth-century Japanese politics, we must view the propagation of a demon quelling text such as the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* as a response to perceived threats. Moreover, since such demons were thought to arise from a lack of imperial virtue, the tacit acceptance of these beings' existence by the rulers served as a public acknowledgement of their own vices and fragility. Rather than justifying the authority of the imperial clan, the transcription of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* displayed their shortcomings and highlighted the contingency of their rule.

The discursive framework in which this text existed also placed the ruler under the judgment of a higher authority. We will see that by invoking guardian deities to protect the realm from disaster, eighth-century kings also participated in a system where their actions were observed by heavenly beings who were capable of punishing the sovereign at any time. This system of regular observation and potential punishment established a set of norms that the kings were obligated to follow. These norms included activities such as the commissioning of temples, statues, and sutras; regular performance of penance rites, periodic abstinence from meat and other vices, and the ceremonial release of living animals; and vows to follow the bodhisattva path and receive the bodhisattva precepts. These were all activities that eighth-century rulers engaged in. The system of punishment by divine beings that was a part of the broader cultic world in which the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was understood shaped the behavior of the rulers. It forced them to succumb to a heavenly source of authority that established a set of rules that the sovereigns had not written. Buddhism was not merely an instrumental tool used to justify political authority. Buddhist ideas were themselves an authoritative force that shaped codes of conduct in early Japan.

I will first explain my decision to focus on the 748 project to transcribe the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, an apocryphal scripture composed in China that has received no sustained attention in English. I will then outline the contents of this text. The next task

will be to trace its transcription through a detailed analysis of documents from the Tōdai-ji scriptorium where the sutra was copied. This examination will allow us to identify the patron and date the origins of the project. We will then look at other activities at the scriptorium in 748 to see what texts were copied contemporaneously and explore the way human and material resources were allocated at the Office of Sutra Transcription. Through this analysis, we will see that it is necessary to view the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* as part of a set of scriptures including the *Golden Light Sutra* and the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets* (*Fantian shen ce jing* 梵天神策經) that were copied in close temporal proximity to one another. The chapter will continue by highlighting the political events leading up to the transcription of these three texts. This historical context is vital for understanding the purpose of the transcription. The final sections of the chapter will analyze central themes from the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* as well as the two other texts copied at roughly the same time against the political and religious context of 748 to reassess the relationship between Buddhism and state in early Japan.

Why this sutra copying project?

This chapter follows the method for studying Shōsōin documents pioneered by Sakaehara Towao, the foremost authority of this corpus in the world.[4] The Shōsōin scrolls are a collection of over ten thousand handwritten documents all dating to the eighth-century. For about one thousand years the documents remained in a storehouse at the temple Tōdai-ji until they were rediscovered in the nineteenth century by a nativist scholar named Hoida Tadatomo 穂井田忠友 (1791-1847). Hoida and the other scholars who managed the Shōsōin documents over the next several decades cut them into pieces and glued them into new scrolls based on their idiosyncratic interests. According to Sakaehara, the job of Shōsōin scholars today is to reconstruct the original configuration of these documents—only by doing so can we understand the historical context in which the current fragments functioned. The method employed by Sakaehara and most other Shōsōin scholars writing in Japanese over the last thirty years has been to gather all of the documents related to a single sutra copying project

[4] For the best and most recent overview, see Sakaehara 2011, 21-162.

and analyze them in relation to one another.[5] This chapter will be the first study in English to follow Sakaehara's approach to Shōsōin research.[6]

I have chosen to focus on the 748 project to transcribe one hundred copies of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* for several reasons.[7] For one, it has received no attention in any language.[8] Second, there are a number of documents related to this project in

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[5] For some important and representative examples of this type of scholarship in Japanese, see Endō 2001; Haruna 1993; Ōsumi 1999; Sakaehara 2003, 2005b, and 2009; Watanabe 1998; and Yamamoto 2002. Sonoda Kōyū (1974, 37-48) has compiled a helpful catalog of these individual projects.

[6] Although I follow the basic approach outlined by Sakaehara, my own background in religious studies influences my emphasis. Most Shōsōin scholars, who are trained as historians, usually focus on the economic and institutional issues related to a single sutra copying project. I am more concerned with the content of the text and the religious and political context in which it was copied.

[7] This is project number 106 in Sonoda's catalog.

[8] The reception of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* in early Japan has been studied by Masuo 1996, esp. 824-833 and 840-846. He uses Shōsōin documents in his analysis but does not appear to understand the nature of the collection as a set of fragments that were reconfigured in the Edo and Meiji periods. Instead, he seems to have simply used Kimoto's 1989 index of sutra titles found in the Shōsōin corpus and randomly listed all of the documents containing the title of our text. I have found Masuo's discussion helpful for contextualizing some of the ideas in the sutra within Nara period belief and practice and will return to his analysis when I discuss the issue of sorcery. His use of Shōsōin documents, however, should be approached with caution. He provides a very brief overview of the text in English in Masuo 2000, 833-834. Here, he cites the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* as evidence of the importance of Daoist ideas and texts in early Japan. His analysis, however, suggests that it was originally a Buddhist scripture and was only later adopted by the Daoist Lingbao school. I confess that I do not fully follow his argument that the existence of a Buddhist scripture in Japan that was only later adopted by Chinese Daoists provides evidence of the presence of

the Shōsōin, so it is possible to trace the process of its transcription in detail. Third, other texts, including an important project to transcribe one hundred volumes of the *Golden Light Sutra*, were copied alongside the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*.[9] When read as a set, the texts copied together reveal common concerns regarding periods of decline, demonic forces, and potential threats to the throne. Fourth, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* stands out in the Shōsōin corpus, because it was never again copied in large numbers, perhaps because it was suspected of being a forgery.[10] The fact that the patron chose this particular text as opposed to some better known and less contested sutras implies that she and her advisers carefully selected it as uniquely appropriate to this particular historical moment. I will argue that the unusual narrative of the text, which centers upon protection from demons and sorcerers, would have been particularly attractive to Kōmyōshi in 748.

Daoism in Nara Japan. As discussed in chapter three, Masuo's views on Daoism in Japan have been very influential in English scholarship in recent years.

[9] In this chapter, I will use the title the *Golden Light Sutra* to refer to Yijing's ten-scroll translation. The full title of this text is the *Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經 (T no. 665). This was the most important translation of the sutra in the Nara period and beyond. More importantly, it was the version that was copied in one hundred volumes in 748.

[10] I have found one other instance of this sutra being transcribed outside of canon copying projects. This was likely a "private" project dated to 751 and sponsored by Tanabe no Mabito 田邊真人, an administrator at the Tōdai-ji Construction Agency. It has yet to be studied in any language, but I have found five relevant documents related to this project. See *DNK* 3:528 (*ZSBS* 10) and 11:46 (*ZZS* 14:8), 258 (*JK* 21), 330-331 (*ZZS* 37:9), and 426 (*ZZS* 28:13). For more on "private" projects in general, see chapter one.

The Contents of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*

The contents of the text can roughly be divided into three parts.[11] In the first section, the Buddha notes that after his passing, in a period known as the Evil Age of the Five Corruptions (Ch. *wuzhuo eshi* 五濁惡世), demons and sorcerers will haunt all sentient beings and try to steal their vitality.[12] He promises that those who propagate this scripture will be protected from these evils. They will also be spared from disasters such as floods and fires. This section ends with the Buddha providing the names of the Seven Buddhas of the Past and the Six Spirits (Nanatsu-dera, lines 1-34; T 2865.85.1325a-b).[13] He advocates the recitation of these

[11] In dividing the text into three parts, I follow Suwa 1996 and Masuo 1996, 819-820.

[12] The term I have translated as "five corruptions" is commonly rendered "five impurities" or "five defilements." While there is nothing wrong with these translations, I have avoided them in this dissertation, because there is no strong semantic connection between the character I have translated as corruption, which literally means muddied, and the notions of purity and defilement discourse discussed in chapter two. Other scholars have translated this phrase as "five decays" and "five turbidities." Luis Gomez has used "five corruptions" as have several other scholars proficient in Sanskrit and Chinese. See Gomez 1996, 292.

[13] This reference to the six spirits is likely apocryphal. Their names are written using Chinese characters phonetically to give the illusion that they are derived from Sanskrit, but the deities do not appear in any other canonical texts. Practices related to the recitation of the names of the six spirits may derive from the *Scripture on the Spirit Spells of the Names of the Six Spirits* (Ch. *Liu shen ming shen zhou jing*六神名神呪經. This text appears in several medieval Chinese catalogs but is no longer extant. The title suggests it would describe similar practices. The topic of the Six Spirits in medieval Chinese Buddhism warrants further study.

names as a means to protect oneself from illness and "evil vapors [Ch. *eqi* 惡氣]" (Nanatsu-dera, line 33).[14]

In the second section, various divine beings pledge their protection to those who uphold the sutra (Nanatsu-dera, lines 35-74; T 2865.85.1325b-c). First, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī promises to lead a group of twenty-five bodhisattvas to guard against attacks from apparitions. Mañjuśrī is followed by the Four Heavenly Kings, who vow that they and their entourage will protect those devoted to the sutra wherever they may be. Finally, five of the eight kinds of beings (Ch. *ba bu zhong*八部衆), who serve as protectors of the dharma in Mahāyāna texts, promise that they and their followers will fly in the sky above those who promulgate the scripture and protect them from demons, fires, floods, bandits, and legal punishment.

In the final section, the Buddha describes the power of the scripture and again urges people to propagate it (Nanatsu-dera, lines 75-103; T 2865.85.1325c-1326a). This repeated encouragement to spread the teachings is a common feature of Buddhist texts, but the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* adds a new twist. The Buddha explicitly states that it is best to use fine paper and ink (Ch. *hao zhi hao mo* 好紙好墨) and to take care to avoid even the smallest mistakes (Nanatsu-dera, lines 84-86; T 2865.85.1326a). This concern with the quality of the paper is unusual in the sutra literature and is a feature that we will return to in

[14] The Taishō edition has "evil malefic vapors." See T 2865.85.1325b.

the 748 project.[15] The Buddha then instructs his disciple Ānanda to be sure that all sentient beings learn of this scripture, and Ānanda promises to do so. The scripture concludes with a series of verses summarizing the teachings of the text.

The Canonicity of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*

Although the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* portrays itself as a translation from a Sanskrit original, modern scholars suspect that the text was composed in China in the sixth-century (Masuo 1996, 823).[16] The authenticity of this scripture has been questioned for roughly 1,500 years. For example, Fajing's 法鏡 (n.d.) *Catalog of Myriad Scriptures* (Ch. *Zhongjing mulu* 衆経目録) from 594 includes the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* in its list of dubious (Ch. *yihuo* 疑惑) texts (T 2146.55.138b).[17] Later versions of the *Catalog of Myriad Scriptures* would repeat this classification (T 2147.55.173a and T 2148.55.212a). In contrast to these catalogs, the *Record of the Three Treasures through Successive Generations* (Ch.

[15] The only other sutra I have found that mentions "fine paper" is the *Azhapoju guishen dajiang shang fo tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 阿吒婆拘鬼神大將上佛陀羅尼神呪經. See T 1237.21.178a. The entry in the *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* stresses the Indic origins of this text despite some Sinitic elements. See Ono 1974, 1:16. Although the origins of this scripture require additional research, the fact that it mentions fine paper suggests that it is a composite text at the very least.

[16] The title of the text first appears in a catalog in 594, so we know it was composed prior to 594. I will discuss the catalogs in detail below.

[17] The following discussion on the text's appearance in catalogs has relied primarily on Suwa 1996, 530-534 and Masuo 1996, 816-818. For Chinese catalogs more generally, see Tokuno 1990.

Lidai sanbao ji 歷代三宝紀) from 597 credits the translation of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* to the fourth century Central Asian monk known in Chinese as Zhu Tanwulan 竺曇無蘭 (n.d.) (T 2034.49.70a-b).[18] There is reason to be skeptical of this claim; it is well known that the *Record of the Three Treasures through Successive Generations* made numerous questionable attributions as a means to respond to suspicions over the authenticity of the Buddhist canon as a whole (Tokuno 1990, 46-47). Regardless, the attribution to Zhu Tanwulan influenced several later catalogs, which accepted the claim. These include the *Record of Translated Scriptures Past and Present* (Ch. *Gujin yijing tuji* 古今譯經圖記, 645), *Record of Inner Books from the Great Tang* (*Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐内典錄, 664), and the *Catalog of Myriad Scriptures Authorized by the Great Zhou* (*Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu*大周刊定衆經目錄, 695).[19] In this way, the status of our text was controversial through the mid-Tang with some catalogs viewing it suspiciously and others asserting its Indic origins.

The uncertainty regarding the status of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* is reflected in the *Record of Śākyamuni's Teachings [compiled during] the Kaiyuan Era* (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄; hereafter *Kaiyuan Catalog*) of 730, which quickly became the standard for

[18] I have kept Zhu Tanwulan's name in Chinese, because the Sanskrit version of his name is uncertain and contested. Sanskrit candidates include Dharmarājan, Dharmarakṣa, and Dharmaratna. For an overview, see Van Put 2008.

[19] See *Gujin yijing tuji* T 2151.55.356a-b, *Da Tang neidian lu* T 2149.55.245c-246b, *Da Zhou Kanding zhongjing mulu* T 2153.55.411c.

determining canonicity in both Tang China and Nara Japan. The *Kaiyuan Catalog* placed the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* in a section entitled, "Record of Dubious [Texts] to be Further Scrutinized [Ch. *Yihuo zaixiang lu* 疑惑再詳録]." In this section, Zhisheng, the compiler, notes:

> Cataloguers include [certain texts] in [their listings of authentic scriptures] simply based on what they hear, without inquiring in detail about their doctrinal purports and principles. Some [of the texts] included in those [listings] are dubious. Now I am afraid that the genuine and the spurious interlace and the authentic and inauthentic intertwine. For this reason, I have compiled this separate listing as a lesson for future [generations]. Acknowledging this principle [that the Buddha said we should not accept those teaching of which there is doubt], we must review whether they are authentic or unauthentic. [If no conclusion can be made,] then we will wait for all the learned ones to scrutinize together whether they are genuine or spurious. (T 2154.55.671c) [20]

The position Zhisheng advocates here is one of caution. Although he was willing to admit that future scholars may determine the text to be authentic, he was not convinced enough to include it within his list of canonical works. He was explicit about this, as the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* appears in a list of non-canonical (Ch. *bu ru zang* 不入藏) items that was appended to the end of his catalog. In theory, this banishment from the official canon should have functioned as a virtual death sentence for the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*.

[20] I have followed Kyoko Tokuno's excellent translation of this passage; Tokuno 1990, 53-54.

In Nara Japan, this obviously did not happen, as it was copied one hundred times in one project alone. In fact, the text entered the 5/1 canon, which had ostensibly adopted the *Kaiyuan Catalog* as its basis for canonicity (*DNK* 7:89 [*ZZS* 16:8]). The inclusion of our text was unlikely a simple oversight.[21] Rather, it represents a conscious decision made by administrators to alter the shape of the canon to allow for this particular text to be copied. The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was one of several that appeared in the 5/1 canon despite the fact that they did not accord with the *Kaiyuan Catalog*'s standards for canonicity.

This apparent contradiction can be understood by considering the structure of the 5/1 canon, a topic that Yamashita Yumi has studied in detail. The basic policy at the scriptorium was to organize the 5/1 canon around the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. For example, a document written in

[21] The picture is slightly more complicated. The text was actually copied twice as part of the 5/1 canon. The first time was in the early years of the canon copying project, which pre-dates the period when Genbō had imported the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. See *DNK* 7:12 (*ZZS* 12:3). As Yamashita Yumi has shown, the document mentioning this initial transcription likely records the earliest efforts of what would later become the 5/1 canon. See Yamashita 1999c, 403-408. Here, the sutra is counted as a Hīnayāna text in the tally of texts copied, but a memo over this label marks it as a Mahāyāna scripture. It is debatable if we can call the presence of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* here in the canon an "oversight," as the *Kaiyuan Catalog* had not yet been imported. It would be anachronistic to use the *Kaiyuan Catalog* as the standard of authenticity in this case. The text was then copied a second time after Genbō imported the *Kaiyuan Catalog*; in this second transcription, the exemplar used belonged to Genbō. As Yamashita has shown, most of the earlier manuscripts were abandoned and the project restarted with Genbō's recently imported sutra manuscripts. This was likely the case for the *Scripture on Protecting Body and Life* as well.

737, two years after the monk Genbō returned to Japan with the *Kaiyuan Catalog*, tallies the total number of scrolls copied for the 5/1 canon against the 5,048 scrolls of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* (*DNK* 17:51-52 [*ZZS* 1:6]).[22] From this source, it is clear that scriptorium administrators began comparing the 5/1 canon with the *Kaiyuan Catalog* soon after it was imported. In future years, scriptorium employees continued to assemble these tally sheets calculating the number of texts they had copied against the totals listed in the *Kaiyuan Catalog* (*DNK* 2:157-158 and 7:485-486 [both *ZZS* 17:3]). The scriptorium employees judged their progress on the 5/1 canon in terms of the titles deemed canonical by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*.

Another document listing each text copied for the 5/1 canon reveals the influence the *Kaiyuan Catalog* had in structuring canons and organizing knowledge. The order of the texts appearing in this document follows that of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* (*DNK* 12:99-147 [*ZZS* 13:1]).[23] The only difference is that the document skips over those works listed in the *Kaiyuan Catalog* that were not copied for the 5/1 canon; it is likely that these texts were not available in Nara Japan or had yet to be copied. The fact that the organization of this document mirrors that of the *Kaiyuan Catalog* shows that the administrators carefully referred to the Chinese bibliographic work in structuring the 5/1 canon. Moreover, there is evidence that the 5/1 canon compilers

[22] This document is discussed in Yamashita 1999c, 404-409.

[23] For more on this document, see Yamashita 1999a, 49.

chose not to include many texts that were available but deemed apocryphal by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*. In this way it is possible to claim that the 5/1 canon was created primarily in accord with the standards and methods of the *Kaiyuan Catalog.*

While the *Kaiyuan Catalog* was clearly important in shaping the 5/1 canon, other evidence suggests that administrators did not follow it to the letter For example, excerpted sections of larger canonical sutras (Ch. *biesheng*, Jp. *besshō* 別生) and duplicates—those texts with different titles but identical content—were copied whenever they were available. Yamashita (2000, 47-49) suggests that these additions were intended to make the canon as complete as possible even when the *Kaiyuan Catalog* deemed such texts unnecessarily repetitive. In short, any version of the authentic words of the Buddha (Skt. *buddhavacana*) was included. But our text was neither an excerpt nor a duplicate. Did the 5/1 canon take the same inclusive attitude with texts deemed dubious by the *Kaiyuan Catalog*?

The answer to this question is complex, but for the most part documentary evidence suggests that canon compilers were cautious when dealing with potential apocrypha after the *Kaiyuan Catalog* was imported by the monk Genbō. According to Yamashita, the governing principle at the scriptorium was to exclude suspicious texts from the canon, even when these

texts were readily available in temple libraries in the capital.[24] The fact that our text appeared in the 5/1 canon, therefore, is an anomaly. But it was not the only text of questionable authenticity that scriptorium administrators allowed to enter the 5/1 canon, so it is clear that the general policy toward excluding apocrypha had some flexibility built into it. It is impossible to know the precise reason why the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* became a part of the 5/1 canon while other texts were excluded, but we can speculate as to a few possibilities. For one, we have seen how there was some debate in different catalogs regarding the canonical status of this text. It is possible that the editors of the 5/1 canon chose to include it to see if later generations of scholars might be better able to determine its authenticity. We know from other sources that the compilers of the 5/1 canon occasionally took this approach (Yamashita 1999a, 49-55; 1999b, 34-36). Second, the exemplar of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* used in the 5/1 canon was a manuscript imported directly by Genbō, a monk who had considerable influence at court (*DNK* 7:89 [*ZZS* 16:8]). It is possible that the individual authority and charisma of Genbō trumped that of the Chinese catalogs. Finally, the contents of the text would have been attractive and easily comprehended

[24] Yamashita has shown that, for the most part, compilers of the 5/1 canon avoided copying non-canonical texts, even in cases where manuscripts were extant and readily available. Yamashita 2000, 49. The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was available in several temple and official libraries outside of the copy directly imported by Genbō. See *DNK* 7:487 (*ZZS* 14:1), 7:500 (*ZZS* 14:7), and 13:186 (*ZZS* 12:7).

by patrons at the Nara court. As we will see, the project to copy it in 748 responded to a specific political situation that had been developing over a period of two decades and fit within the cultic milieu of the age. It seems likely that the sutra made its way into the canon because monks like Genbō saw it as a useful text for combating the demons and black magic that plagued the Nara court. The fact that it was included in the 5/1 canon at all, however, is significant for our project to transcribe one hundred copies of the text in 748. Had it not entered the 5/1 canon, it is unlikely that it would have been transcribed in large quantities at the scriptorium. The idiosyncratic nature of the 5/1 canon, which largely followed the *Kaiyuan Catalog* but contained some texts that had been proscribed from it, enabled certain texts to spread and thus shaped the discursive possibilities of early Japanese Buddhism.

The 748 Project to Transcribe the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*

Altogether, I have found seventeen documents related to the project to copy the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* in 748. This paper trail makes it possible to identify the patron, explore connections to other texts copied contemporaneously, and provide a precise political context for analyzing the significance of this particular project. The first document was originally part of a long scroll known as the "Register for Receipt of Paper for Individual Projects" (*kanshi nōchō* 間紙納帳), which records paper received for various

projects from the years 746-749.[25] The scroll has been cut into several pieces after the Shōsōin documents were discovered in the nineteenth century, but the section that records the paper related to our project appears toward the end of the original scroll (*DNK* 10:268-269 ([*ZZS* 37:4]). It notes that on 6/26/748, eighty-nine sheets of colored paper were received along with ten sheets of "pine stained paper" (*matsusome gami* 松染紙) to be used as the cover sheets for one hundred scrolls of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. "Pine stained paper" only appears in this document, so it was clearly a special material that was perhaps made with a pine cone-based dye. On 7/2, more paper was received including 370 sheets of hemp paper and forty sheets of yellow paper for transcription, as well as forty-five additional sheets of paper for covers. From other documents, we know that the yellow paper and forty-five cover sheets came from leftover materials from Shōmu's "Initially Transcribed Canon" project, which had just been completed the same year. The remaining 469 sheets all came from Kōmyōshi's Queen Consort Palace Agency, a fact that suggests she had a heavy hand in commissioning this project.[26] It is significant that the paper she sent was all special: it included colored paper,

[25] The original configuration of this document would have been as follows beginning from the start of the scroll: *DNK* 9:64-69, 450-451, 12:222-223, and 9:453-453 (all *ZZS* 37:2); 3:484 (*SS* 1:6:2 verso), 11:544 (*ZZS* 37:9), 3:484-485 (*SS* 1:6:1 verso), 10:267-271 (*ZZS* 37:4). This is a key document for identifying other projects from the late 740s.

[26] The origins of the other sheets of paper is made more explicit in *DNK* 9:376-378 (*SS* 42:1:3 verso), which records that eighty-six sheets came from the "Initially Transcribed Canon" and other sheets were all from the Queen Consort's Palace Agency. This document was originally

pine-stained paper, and hemp paper, which contrasted with the plain yellow paper (likely made from paper-mulberry) that was borrowed from the leftover supplies of Shōmu's canon project. The fact that Kōmyōshi donated much of the paper, including all of the rare and expensive sheets, suggests that she was the primary sponsor behind this project.[27] At the very least, she played a major role in supporting it. It is likely that these special materials were chosen because the sutra explicitly states that it should be copied on fine paper. The use of such expensive materials also implies that Kōmyōshi viewed it as an important undertaking.

Between the donated paper and the leftover materials, the scriptorium officials had sufficient supplies to copy the one hundred scrolls of the text. Each was made up of five sheets of paper and would have required a half sheet for the cover. Since fifty-five sheets were supplied with the explicit purpose of being used for covers, there would have been five cover sheets leftover. In addition, 499 sheets of paper were supplied for transcription—this would have been one short, but it seems possible that one of the five extra cover sheets could have

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part of a larger scroll of final reports that record how paper was used. The relevant section of the report dates to 7/16/748.

[27] The fact that leftover paper from Shōmu's canon project was used does not imply his involvement, as extra paper from large projects was often borrowed freely at the scriptorium when available. The paper from Kōmyōshi, on the other hand, was sent directly for the purpose of this particular project.

been used.[28] Although the first shipment of paper was received on 6/26, the order to begin copying was not issued until a day later on 6/27/748. The order was sent by Saeki no Imaemishi, who was an administrator at the Tōdai-ji Construction Agency at this time. This represents the chain of command—the order would have been initially issued from the royal patron to the Construction Agency. It would have then been forwarded to the scriptorium, which was a subset of the Construction Agency. As noted above, it is highly likely that Kōmyōshi was responsible for vowing the sutra that Imaemishi ordered. [29] The fact that paper had already been received prior to the order being issued implies that she had begun conceiving of the project even earlier.

After the scriptorium received the paper, it was immediately given to Noto no Oshihito 能登忍人, an assembler who was one of the mainstays at the scriptorium for much of its history. He glued the individual sheets together into scrolls of five sheets per scroll, lined the

[28] It is unclear why eighty-nine sheets of colored paper were donated; since each scroll contained five sheets, we would expect a number evenly divisible by five, if the plan was to have some scrolls composed exclusively of colored paper. I expect that the pine-stained paper would serve as covers for the scrolls made of colored paper, as these were sent together, but this is speculative. This discrepancy may also be related to the fact that a total of 499 sheets were supplied even though the project required five hundred sheets of paper.

[29] Masuo suggests that Saeki no Imaemishi sponsored the transcription of this text several times in the Nara period. He is wrong on two counts. For one, he conflates the administration with the patron and also appears to assume that the numerous extant documents are all from separate projects, when in fact most refer to this single project that was initiated on 6/27/748.

paper, and affixed temporary rollers and cover sheets that would be removed and replaced when the transcription was complete. Following this initial assembly, the paper was then given to the scribes, as is recorded in a document known as the "Register for Issuing Paper for Individual Projects" (*kanshi jūchō* 間紙充帳). This document is now in fragments, but it was originally a long scroll that recorded the distribution of paper for projects completed between 745 and 755.[30] From this and other documents, we know that fourteen scribes worked on this project and began transcribing the text right away.[31]

The scribes received 495 sheets of paper. This is five sheets, or one scroll, short of the total five hundred sheets required for the project. It is highly unlikely that this discrepancy arose from a transcription error in the document. The total of 495 listed in the "Register for Issuing Paper for Individual Projects," which was written by an administrator named Osada no

[30] It is impossible to definitively piece together the original scroll until additional volumes of the *Shōsōin monjo mokuroku* are published. Available data suggests the following arrangement: *DNK* 8:560-564 (*SS* 2:2 verso), 8:573-575 (*SS* 25:4 verso), 24:342-353 (*ZSBS* 45:5 verso), 24:353 (*ZZS* 37:9), 9:332-337 (*SS* 21:2 verso, 21:1 verso, 27:6 verso, 4:1 verso), 2:718-719 (*SS* 4:6 verso), 24:419-421 (*SS* 4:4 verso and 1:10 verso), 3:32-34 (*ZS* 7:5 verso), 3:104-105 (*SS* 18:3 verso), 10:554-555 (*ZZS* 34:6), 10:651-652 (*SS* 42:2 verso), 10:556-588 (*ZZS* 34:6).

[31] The relevant section from the above register is *DNK* 3:104-105 (*SS* 18:3 verso). The document records the date 6/27/748 for the beginning of transcription, but this was likely recorded a few days later, as most of the paper did not arrive until 7/2/748. The 6/27 date was probably used to represent the date when the project was ordered. I thank Sakaehara Towao for this suggestion. Another possibility is that the administrators began planning the distribution of paper from the day the order was issued.

Mizunushi 他田水主, corresponds to numerous other sources including the sum of total sheets written in self-reports (*shujitsu* 手実) made by scribes.[32] The fact that these different sources agree suggests that scribes really did only copy 495 sheets. But what happened to the final five sheets that would have composed the hundredth scroll pledged by Kōmyōshi? Were they simply forgotten? This does not seem to have been the case: proofreading and assembling reports show that all five hundred sheets were corrected and assembled at the scriptorium.[33] For this reason, it is likely that one scroll was copied elsewhere and then returned for

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[32] See *DNK* 24:517 (*SS* 12:4 verso) and 10:312 (*ZZS* 23:4). These documents are now two separate pieces, but they were originally joined together into a single document. This is the main source for breaking down the totals copied by each scribe for this project. This document is different from most self-reports in that multiple names appear on each sheet. Usually, each scribe would write his own slip, and an administrator would join them together. Although it is impossible to judge hands definitively, it does *appear* that the names were written by different individuals. It is possible, however, that the document was written by a single administrator to compile all of the self-reports. A separate memo appended in the middle of a different document about copying a canon also records total sheets transcribed for the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* project when it was about halfway complete. See *DNK* 24:345-346 (*ZZS* 26:6). It is unclear why this memo appears in the middle of a document about a canon copying project, but since it is related to the transcription of our sutra, I list it here. From the date of the main text, which predates our project by a few months, it seems likely that an administrator was referring to it for another purpose and needed to jot down a memo. The relevant section was labeled as "non-canon" (*issai gai* 一切外), which was likely written for the administrator to remind himself that this memo was distinct from the other parts of the document.

[33] The proofreading report actually lists a total of one thousand sheets in two hundred scrolls. Since proofreading was performed twice on each scroll, the project itself totaled five hundred sheets in one hundred scrolls. For the proofreading, see *DNK* 10:313 (*ZZS* 23:4), as well as 9:638 (*ZZS* 26:10) and 11:17 (*ZZS* 26:7).

proofreading and final assembly. I suspect it may have been transcribed by Kōmyōshi herself or possibly Princess Abe, but this is admittedly speculative.

The above documents also show that transcription began almost immediately after the order was issued. For example, Kaya no Tanushi 賀陽田主 had already copied one hundred sheets by 7/13/748. Since it took the average scribe around twelve days to copy this total, it is highly likely that Tanushi would have begun copying soon after the paper was prepared. The other major project that was taking place at this time was the transcription of one hundred copies of the *Golden Light Sutra*. We will later see how the two projects were related, but a careful study of the activities of scribes suggests that the sutra copyists transcribing the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* either stopped working on the *Golden Light Sutra* momentarily or did not begin the *Golden Light Sutra* until they finished their work on the other project. For example, the scribe Yamabe no Morkimi 山邊諸公 copied fifty-five sheets of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and did not receive exemplars for the *Golden Light Sutra* during the period between 7/1 and 7/14. Similarly, Wanibe no Shimamori 丸部嶋守 did not receive exemplars for the *Golden Light Sutra* for the entire period between 7/1 and 7/15, but he transcribed the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* at this time. By 7/16, all the work had been finished; the proofreaders had submitted their final reports, and Osada no Mizunushi had completed a write-up as part of his "Register of Inspection and Use of Paper for

Individual Projects [*kanshi kentei narabi ni bin'yō chō* 間紙撿定并便用帳]."[34] It is clear from the pace of the project and dedication of manpower that the transcription of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was viewed as a priority. This suggests that the timing of the transcription was significant, a fact that encourages a careful examination of the contemporaneous context at the scriptorium and in the political sphere.[35]

[34] The "Register of Inspection and Use of Paper for Individual Projects" was originally a lengthy scroll that was cut apart in the modern period. The eighth-century scroll was composed as follows: *DNK* 9:367-380 (*ZZS* 28:7, *SS* 42:1:3 verso, *SS* 42:1:2 verso, *SS* 42:1:1 verso, *SS* 43:3 verso), 11:364-366 (*ZZS* 37:4), 11:156-169 (*ZZS* 37:4). The relevant section appears in *DNK* 9:377-378 (*SS* 42:1:2 verso). Earlier in the same register, a report for this project also appears, but it is circled in ink, which indicates deletion. For the relevant proofreading reports, see *DNK* 10:313 (*ZZS* 23:4) and 9:638 (*ZZS* 26:10).

[35] I have cited seven of the seventeen documents pertaining to this project. The other ten documents are all requests for payment for the scriptorium employees. These requests were issued multiple times over a period of several years. Unpacking these payment requests would require an extended discussion that would take us far a field. Here, I will just state my conclusions. There appear to be four different sets with different groups of individual projects listed in each set (the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* appears in each set) and corrections made in red and black between sets marking the changes made in the texts listed and number of scrolls copied between each version. The first set contains *DNK* 10:588-592 (*ZZS* 41:5, sheets 1-3) and 10:612-614 (*ZZS* 6:1 verso). The second set consists of *DNK* 10:592-597 (*ZZS* 41:5, sheets 4-5) and 10:609-612 (*ZZS* 41:5 verso, sheets 13-11). The third set is composed of *DNK* 3:471-472 (*ZSBS* 15:2) and 10:602-604 (*ZZS* 41:5 verso, sheets 8-6). For each of these sets, one document was preserved and the other was later reused on the other side. The final set contains four documents *DNK* 10:597-601 (*ZZS* 41:5, sheets 6-8), 10:604-608 (*ZZS* 41:5, sheets 9-13), 3:478-483 (*ZSBS* 14), and 11:477-482 (*ZZS* 13:4 verso, sheets 3-1). For this set only one document was reused (*DNK* 11:477-482) and one appears to have been an official copy (*utsushi* 寫) of the final version that was sent out (*DNK* 10:604-608).

The Context at the Scriptorium

The purpose of the above discussion was to pinpoint the date when the project started, identify the patron, and get a sense of the pacing and allocation of resources. This information will be useful to contextualize the project, both in terms of determining the political significance of 6/27/748—the date the project was ordered to begin—and to identify what other sutras were being copied at this time and for what purposes.[36] In this section, we will exhaustively examine the other sutra copying projects that took place in 748 to see if any are related to the project to copy the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. We will begin by eliminating several projects that seem unrelated before turning to two that appear to have close connections temporally and thematically to the scripture under study in this chapter.

In the first half of 748, many of the canon copying projects described in chapter one were winding down. The 5/1 canon took a temporary break beginning in early 748; the "break" was actually intended to mark the completion of the project, but copying resumed a few years later as more texts were added (Yamashita 1999c, 416-432). The transcription of the two

[36] The following overview of activities in 748 has benefited from Nojiri Tadashi's catalog of documents from this year. I have also referred to numerous studies of individual projects that will be cited below. For the catalog, see Nojiri 2002. Unfortunately, Nojiri's catalog is primarily limited to documents that begin in 748—many documents that record projects copied in 748 are part of larger multi-year registers, so it is necessary to use Nojiri's catalog with awareness of its shortcomings. For this reason, much of the following section is supplemented with my own research into documents from this year.

canons vowed by Shōmu were both finished in the first half of 748 as well (Haruna 1995; Yamashita 1999c, 439-446). In this way, the period when our text was transcribed comes right at the end of three large canon-copying projects, which had consumed much of the human and material resources at the scriptorium up to that point.

There were several non-canon sutra copying projects carried out in 748 as well. The largest was the transcription of one thousand copies of the Lotus Sutra.[37] This project started in the first month of 748 in response to the Retired Empress Genshō's 元正 (680-748) illness, which first appeared in the historical records on 12/14/747 (*Shoku Nihongi*, *SNKBT* 14:50-51). Emperor Shōmu likely commissioned this project, although Kōmyōshi and Princess Abe provided some material assistance as well. Despite the efforts of the sponsors and sutra copyists to heal the Retired Empress Genshō through transcription, she died on 4/21/748, at which point the project was temporarily put on hold (*Shoku Nihongi*, *SNKBT* 14:56-57). Transcription resumed in the ninth month, but at this point it was transformed into a memorial for the deceased former Empress Genshō. Although the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* could have conceivably been used for healing rites, the fact that the transcription post-dates the death of Genshō suggests it was not vowed for the purpose of curing her. There is little to suggest that a scripture on prolonging lifespan and protecting

[37] For an exhaustive overview of this project, see Sakaehara 2005b and 2009.

from disaster would have been used in a memorial context. We will see that the Retired Empress Genshō's death, which was perhaps the most significant event to occur in 748, is important for understanding the project to copy the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. There is little reason, however, to connect it with the transcription of one thousand copies of the *Lotus Sutra*.

Another major endeavor from 748 was the transcription of twenty copies of the sixty-scroll version of the *Flower Garland Sutra*. This project originally began in 747, but copying continued right up to the time of Genshō's death. According to Watanabe Akihiro (1998, 103-104), the monk Rōben likely sponsored this project to pray for the successful casting of the Great Buddha at Tōdai-ji. Interest in the *Flower Garland Sutra* was growing in the late 740s, as there was another project that began in the ninth month of 748 to copy commentaries related to the sixty- and eighty-scroll Chinese translations of the *Flower Garland Sutra* (*DNK* 10:82-109 [*ZZS* 6:1]). These commentaries were used by monks to prepare for lectures on the *Flower Garland Sutra*.[38] The transcription of the *Flower Garland Sutra* and its commentaries, although important for the history of doctrinal studies in early Japan, does not appear to have any connection to the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*.

[38] The Kegon lectures began in 740, but these commentaries were first copied in 748. See Miyazaki 2006, 201-239.

Another significant undertaking from 748 was a project to transcribe one copy of the *Heart Sutra* for every day of the year. This was a regular occurrence at the court that first appears in documentary records from 746. There is some evidence that a similar project was completed in 748, but most of the documents in the scriptorium dating to 748 actually record preparations for a 749 project (Miyazaki 2006, 59-86).[39] This obsession with prayers for the health of Shōmu and the stability of the realm that inspired these repeated transcriptions of the *Heart Sutra* may indeed have had some bearing on our project; as we will see Shōmu's illness in the 740s and the constant threat of political discord with regard to succession may have played an indirect role in the reasons to commission the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. While there may be some general overlap in intention, the *Heart Sutra* projects were a fairly regular occurrence at court while the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was only copied in large numbers on this one occasion. This suggests that it would be imprudent to view the two projects as closely connected to one another.

The above projects have all received attention by Japanese scholars working on the Shōsōin corpus, but a number of other projects from 748 remain unstudied. For example, 196

[39] Ueno Ryōko, a Ph.D. candidate at Osaka City University, is currently doing additional research on these projects to transcribe a copy of the *Heart Sutra* for every day of the year. Her research promises to shed additional light on this phenomenon in early Japan.

scrolls of the *Scripture on the Medicine Master* were copied between 2/11 and 4/13/748.[40] The project was initiated through an order issued by Agata no Inukai no Sukune Yae 県犬養宿禰八重, a female courtier close to Kōmyōshi. As with the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, it used colored paper for some of the scrolls. This connection in material goods, however, appears to be the only link between the two. Based on the timing of the transcription of the *Scripture on the Medicine Master* and the content of the text, it was likely commissioned to help cure Empress Genshō's illness. As we have seen, there is little reason to think that the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, which was commissioned after Genshō's death, would be related to healing rites for the retired empress.

[40] I have found nine documents directly related to this project. The first requests supplies and records the allocation of materials to the employees at the scriptorium. This document was originally composed of *DNK* 3:58 and 143-146 (*SS* 18:9, 18:5, and 18:2:2, all verso). The second requests brushes and ink; see *DNK* 3:52 (*SS* 18:4). The third is part of the "Register for Issuing Paper for Individual Projects" and the fourth was originally part of the "Register of Inspection and Use of Paper for Individual Projects," both discussed above; see *DNK* 3:104-105 (*SS* 18:3 verso) and 9:376 (*SS* 42:1:3 verso). The fifth records the supplies used and the total number of sheets copied by the sixteen scribes working on the project; see *DNK* 10:263-264 (*SS* 39:3:2) and 3:73-75 (*SS* 18:2:2 verso). The sixth is a series of self-reports (*shujitsu* 手実) by scribes and proofreaders recording the total number of sheets they copied and proofread; see *DNK* 10:162-166 (*ZZS* 1:4:2:2). The seventh is a payment request; see *DNK* 10:456-458 (*SS* 26:5 verso) and 24:523-524 (*SS* 26:6 verso). There are also two documents related to distributing paper to scribes, but it is impossible to trace the original structure of these documents until the *Shōsōin monjo mokuroku* more fully catalogs *ZZS*; see *DNK* 10:118-120 (*ZZS* 10:24 verso) and 24:475-476 (*ZZS* 8:6). The project is also mentioned indirectly numerous times in other documents, particularly those related to the *Flower Garland Sutra* transcription described above.

In the tenth and eleventh months of 748, Rōben ordered several sutras to be copied including eleven scrolls of the *Scripture on the Eleven-faced* [*Bodhisattva*] (Ch. *Shiyi mian jing* 十一面經), one scroll of the *Scripture on the Path to the Principle* (*Liqu jing* 理趣経 [here likely referring to chapter ten of the *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經]), and two scrolls each on the *Scripture on the Merits of Rightward Circumambulation of a Stupa of the Buddha* (Ch. *Yourao fota gongde jing* 右遶佛塔功德經), the *Scripture on the Merits of Washing Images* (Ch. *Yu xiang gongde jing* 浴像功德經), the *Scripture on the Bathhouse* (*Wenshi jing* 温室經), and the *Scripture on Ulambana* (Ch. *Yulanpen jing* 盂蘭盆經) (*DNK* 3:471-472 [*ZSBS* 15] and 10:270 [*ZZS* 37:4]). These projects warrant further study individually, but many of them are related to specific merit making practices and do not appear to have any direct connection to the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. Another minor project was sponsored by a nun and used paper from the palace. This project, which was carried out from 11/12/748, transcribed a copy of a commentary on Buddhist logic.[41] These projects postdate the completion of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* by several months and do not

[41] For the transcription and proofreading, see *DNK* 9:379 (*SS* 42 verso), 10:270 (*ZZS* 37:4), 10:555 (*ZZS* 34:6), 11:18 (*ZZS* 26:7). The most promising connection between this project and the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* is that it was sponsored by a nun who may have commissioned a divination text that I will discuss below. This similarity probably has more to do with the fact that the nun was close to Kōmyōshi and thus had access to the scriptorium's resources than with any doctrinal, cultic, or political connection between the projects to copy the divination text and the treatise on logic.

to have any direct thematic connection. While they warrant further study, there is little reason to suspect that they would be related to the project at the center of this chapter.[42]

There are, however, two other projects from 748 that satisfy our criterion of being both temporally and doctrinally close to the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. The first is a project to transcribe one hundred copies of the *Golden Light Sutra*.[43] The "Register for Receipt of Paper for Individual Projects" that was analyzed earlier in this chapter is organized

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[42]The one project I have not discussed from 748 is Sonoda no. 104. The document Sonoda cites in his catalog is related to a text referred to as the *Scripture on the Great Bodhisattva of the Storehouse of Space* (Ch. *Da xukong zang jing*大虛空藏經), which here likely refers to the *Akāśagarbha-bodhisattva-sūtra* (Ch. *Xukong zang pusa jing* 虛空藏菩薩經). I have found two documents related to this project. The first records the receipt of 2,500 sheets of paper for one hundred scrolls. These sheets were given to Noto Oshihito to be assembled. The second document records 2,470 sheets of paper being pounded. See *DNK* 10:267 (*ZZS* 37:4) and 11:186 (*ZZS* 9:1). There are no documents in the Shōsōin that record the actual transcription of this project at the Office of Sutra Transcription, despite the fact that other records of copying from this period are relatively well preserved. It is likely, therefore, that the assembly of the scrolls was consigned to the Office of Sutra Transcription by another scriptorium. As we saw in chapter one, such consignment of services was relatively common. Kimoto's catalog of extant sutras from the Nara period suggests that the *Scripture on the Great Bodhisattva of the Storehouse of Space* refers to the eight-scroll *Scripture on the Collection of Questions of the Great Bodhisattva of the Storehouse of Space* (*Da ji da xukong zang pusa suowen jing* 大集大虛空藏菩薩所問經; T no. 404) translated by the esoteric master Amoghavajra. See Kimoto 1989, 97 and 271. This is highly unlikely for two reasons. For one, the documents mention copying one hundred scrolls, but an eight-scroll sutra is not easily divisible by one hundred. Second, the 2,500 sheets of paper used corresponds perfectly with what would have been needed to transcribe the single scroll *Akāśagarbha-bodhisattva-sūtra* (T 405; alternate translations in T nos. 406-408) one hundred times, but would not have been enough for the eight-scroll text.

[43] This project has been studied by Haruna Hiroaki in detail. I have drawn heavily upon his findings in tracing documents related to this project. See Haruna 1993.

chronologically and lists the *Golden Light Sutra* transcription immediately before the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* (*DNK* 10:267-269 [*ZZS* 37:4]). In other words, the two projects came next to one another sequentially in internal records. As with the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, the project to transcribe one hundred copies of the *Golden Light Sutra* was formally initiated on 6/27/748 with an order by Saeki no Imaemishi (*DNK* 11:171 [*ZZS* 16:1]). Although the project was ordered on 6/27/748, preparation had begun earlier, as paper for the *Golden Light* project was first delivered in the beginning of the sixth month (*DNK* 3:193-194 [*SS* 16:4 verso]). The paper for the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was also delivered prior to Imaemishi's request; this suggests that the date of the order was chosen intentionally and that Imaemishi intended for both projects to start at once. In fact, transcription for these two projects began at the beginning of the seventh month, a few days after the order (*DNK* 10:296-304 [*ZZS* 10:16]; 24:488-507 [*SS* 12:2-3 verso]). While proofreading for the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was completed by the middle of the seventh month, the transcription for the *Golden Light Sutra* project continued longer with the proofreading activities finishing before the end of the eighth month.[44] The beginning stages of the two projects, however, ran parallel to one another.

[44] Although both projects were composed of one hundred copies, the *Golden Light Sutra* was a substantially longer text and took more time to complete.

The timing of these projects and the allocation of resources for them highlight their importance. These are the first projects that we have evidence of being transcribed at the Office of Sutra Transcription after the Retired Empress Genshō's death. In fact, resources were allocated to the *Golden Light Sutra* over that of the one thousand-scroll *Lotus Sutra* project on behalf of Genshō; transcription of the one thousand-scroll *Lotus* only resumed after the *Golden Light Sutra* had been completed. This prioritization of these projects suggests that they were of supreme importance, even surpassing the memorial transcription for the deceased Empress. Moreover, the scriptorium gradually increased the number of scribes working on the *Golden Light Sutra* project from thirty copyists who started the project to fifty-eight scribes in an effort to complete it as quickly as possible (Haruna 1993, 20-25). What prompted this urgency? Shōsōin documents show that the *Golden Light Sutra* project was performed "on behalf of the crown prince(ss)" (*DNK* 11:171 [*ZZS* 16:1]). This refers to Princess Abe, who we will see would ascend the throne the following year. According to Haruna (1993, 34-35), the impetus behind the transcription of the *Golden Light Sutra* was intended to solidify Princess Abe's position as Shōmu considered abdication. The *Golden Light Sutra* was a central text used for state protection in Nara Japan; Kōmyōshi's decision to commission it for her daughter was logical. As we will see, the *Golden Light Sutra* shares several thematic similarities with the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. When we consider these commonalities in terms of both

timing and content, it seems reasonable to speculate that the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was also commissioned on behalf of Princes Abe. The thematic similarities will be explored in more detail below.

During the time the *Golden Light Sutra* was being copied, the only other project ordered at the scriptorium other than the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was the transcription of a text known as the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets* (*Fantian shen ce jing* 梵天神策經). This scripture was a divination text written in one hundred rhyming stanzas. In performing a divination, these stanzas would be placed in a bag to be randomized before selection. The prophecies would then be read to divine an individual's fate (Strickmann 2005, 58-75). The text was originally part of the larger *Consecration Sutra,* but this section circulated as an independent text in China and Japan.[45] This is the only known instance when it was copied independently at the Office of Sutra Transcription. Much like the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, this was an unusual text for a patron to have chosen to transcribe. It is almost certain that it was copied for the purpose of performing the divination described in the text.

[45] For a Dunhuang manuscript, see S 1322 (early seventh century). For a citation of an early Japanese manuscript, see *NI* 622. The version from the *Consecration Sutra* can be found in T 1331.21.523c-528c.

Documents related to the transcription of the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets* show that two copies were ordered by Saeki no Imaemishi on 8/2/748 (*DNK* 10:269 [*ZZS* 37:4]). The project may have also been connected to a nun, who was likely affiliated with Kōmyōshi.[46] After the project was ordered, the paper was immediately given to two scribes. Each transcribed one copy of the sutra. Since the sutra totaled ten sheets of paper in length, it would have taken each scribe about two days to copy his scroll, although it is possible that a fast copyist could have finished it in one day. All of the documents related to copying and proofreading list 8/2/748, so this may have been the case (*DNK* 3:105 [*SS* 18:3 verso]; 9:638 [*ZZS* 26:10]). From this evidence, we can see that the text was transcribed at the beginning of the eighth month, shortly after transcription of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* concluded but before the *Golden Light* project had been completed. Although the connection

[46] The nun is only listed as "Amagimi" or "Nikō" 尼公, which is likely a generic term of respect. She first appears in the third series of payment requests outlined above (see note 44); *DNK* 3:471-472 (*ZSBS* 15:2). The document was edited substantially. Not all of these edits are visible in the *Dai Nihon komonjo* edition, so it is necessary to consult the original photographic reproduction. In light black ink, Saeki no Imaemishi's name is crossed out and the nun's name is added beside it. The total number of scrolls is changed from two to three by adding another stroke to the character two (*ni* 二) in regular black ink. This document dates to 12/23/750. All of the earlier payment requests list the total number of scrolls as two and the person initiating the project as Saeki no Imaemishi. All of the later payment requests follow the edits introduced into the 740 document to replace Imaemishi with the nun and two scrolls with three. It is unclear when an additional scroll was added to the project and whether the nun was involved with the initial two scrolls copied in 748.

between the projects to transcribe the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and the *Golden Light Sutra*, which were ordered on the same day, may have been stronger than the link with this divination text, there is still reason to think that the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets* was at least loosely related to these two in that it was copied within a month of the start of the other projects and was likely connected to Kōmyōshi. If I am correct to assume that there is a connection among these three texts, it would imply that Kōmyōshi intended to divine the potential future of her daughter as she prepared to ascend the throne. At the very least, a woman at court would have likely had some curiosity about how the fragile political situation of 748 would be resolved and may have turned to this oracular text to find out. We will now turn to the politics of the 740s directly.

The Political Context

So why were these three projects copied alongside one another in the middle of 748? To understand this, it will be necessary to explore the tensions underlying the reign of Emperor Shōmu (r. 724-749), who served as the sovereign during the period under study in this chapter.[47] Joan Piggott has described Shōmu's reign as the "zenith" of kingship in early Japan,

[47] For some recent overviews of Shōmu's reign, see Tōyama 1999 and 2007, Takinami 2000, Morimoto 2010, and Yoshikawa 2011. In English, see Piggott 1987, 44-63 and 1997, 236-282 and

but Shōmu faced numerous problems throughout his time on the throne. The most pressing concern was that of succession. As we will see, Shōmu lacked a suitable male heir, a situation that lead to increased tensions at court.

Disputes over succession were nothing new. The seventh century witnessed numerous conflicts and even civil war. Shōmu's own ascension to the throne had faced opposition stemming from the fact that his mother was not of royal blood. In fact, Shōmu was forced to wait seventeen years before assuming the throne after the death of the previous Emperor Monmu. Shōmu's grandmother Genmei and aunt Genshō ruled in the period between Monmu's death and Shōmu's ascension. The delay was partially caused by Shōmu's youth (he would have been six years old at the time of Monmu's death), but it also took time to garner enough support for the young prince (Piggott 1997, 239-241).

After ascending the throne, Shōmu faced more problems with the death of his first-born son, the crown prince, on 9/13/728 (*Shoku Nihongi*, *SNKBT* 13:200-201). The importance of this prince and the shock that must have accompanied his passing is highlighted by the fact that he had been named crown prince at all. Never before had an infant been formally granted

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Naoki 1993, 247-257. I have mostly followed the recent Japanese scholarship in constructing a narrative of Shomū's reign.

this title, but Shōmu's son received the rank at the age of thirty-three days old.[48] There are at least two reasons why Shōmu and Kōmyōshi took such an extreme step. The first is related to lineage: Shōmu seems to have desired a Fujiwara heir. His lifetime partner, the future Queen Consort Kōmyōshi, was a Fujiwara, and Shōmu himself had a Fujiwara mother (Tōyama 1999, 81-83). Second, it is likely that Shōmu intended to prevent disputes over succession by quickly naming a successor. Conflicts over identifying the heir to the throne had plagued the court in the generations preceding Shōmu's reign. He and his advisors surely remembered the civil war that erupted between Prince Ōama 大海人皇子, who would rule as Tenmu 天武, and Prince Ōtomo 大友皇子(648-672), as well as the case of Prince Ōtsu 大津皇子 (663-686), who was accused of treason and executed by a competing faction at court.[49] Both of these incidents erupted out of succession disputes. While less violent, Shōmu's own ascension had been marked by uncertainty and delays. His eagerness to prevent these types of power struggles may have influenced his decision to name an heir immediately. In clearly expressing his opinion from the outset, he hoped to consolidate support around a single candidate. Unfortunately, the plan did not work; the young prince died before his first birthday.[50]

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[48] At this point, Kōmyōshi would have gone by Asukahime, but I have decided to use Kōmyōshi throughout this dissertation for reasons of clarity.

[49] For English language scholarship on these seventh century incidents, see Piggott 1997, 123-131 and 156-157 and Inoue 1993, 216-220.

[50] For a useful overview of this period in Japanese, see Morimoto 2010, 79-84.

The aftermath of the infant prince's death augmented the escalating tensions at court, which developed between Fujiwara and anti-Fujiwara factions. The Fujiwara clan had risen to power in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. Their ascent was largely due to the political acumen of Fujiwara no Fuhito (659-720), one of the most prominent statesmen of his age. Fuhito played marriage politics brilliantly by arranging for two of his daughters to marry emperors, one of these being Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. This increased presence of non-royals at court, however, upset some royals including Prince Nagaya, a figure we have encountered repeatedly in this dissertation. These tensions culminated in the second month of 729 shortly after the death of the Crown Prince, when it was reported that Prince Nagaya was practicing black magic (*sadō* 左道). More specifically, it was suspected that Nagaya and his circle had cast curses that led to the death of the infant imperial heir. While most scholars agree that the accusations against Nagaya were actually a Fujiwara plot, the false allegations proved convincing to the court; Nagaya and his family were forced to commit suicide in response to the incident.[51] The case of Nagaya points to the stresses of Shōmu's reign. The sovereign lived in constant fear of black magic, and advisors spread rumors intended to bring about the rapid demise of their enemies. Although the death of Nagaya temporarily mediated some of the

[51] Not all scholars accept the explanation of a Fujiwara conspiracy. For example, see Tōyama 1999, 90-91. For an overview of the Nagaya incident in English, see Ooms 2008, 237-241. In French, see Gras 2011. For the official account in the *Shoku Nihongi,* see *SNKBT* 13:204-207.

factions that had emerged in the preceding decades, his ghost—both literal and figurative—continued to haunt the capital for years to come.

The death of Nagaya undoubtedly strengthened the Fujiwara position, but debates over succession continued to rage throughout Shōmu's reign. These problems were compounded by the birth of a non-Fujiwara male named Prince Asaka 安積親王 (728-744), who was the son of Shōmu's consort Agata no Inukai Hirotoji 県犬養広刀自 (?-762). At this time, Kōmyōshi's daughter, Princess Abe, was the only Fujiwara child of Shōmu. While Prince Asaka would have been an acceptable candidate in terms of his credentials, Shōmu did not name him crown prince as he had done with the infant son of Kōmyōshi. It was perhaps in response to this threat of a non-Fujiwara candidate that Kōmyōshi received the rank of Queen Consort on 8/10/729, about six months after the Nagaya incident (*Shoku Nihongi*, *SNKBT* 13:220-221). According to Takinami Sadako (1991, 18-28; 2000,137-138), Kōmyōshi's promotion was intended to prevent Asaka's ascension; a child of the Queen Consort would have priority as a candidate to ascend the throne. This change in title significantly strengthened Kōmyōshi's position. It was also a daring move, as she was the first woman of non-royal birth to be named Queen Consort. Shōmu's decision to promote Kōmyōshi to a position in which she would be responsible for producing an heir reveals his preference for a successor of Fujiwara blood born by Kōmyōshi.

Kōmyōshi, however, never conceived another child. Her daughter Princess Abe was named Crown Prince(ss) on 1/13/738 (*Shoku Nihongi*, *SNKBT* 13:336-337). This was another remarkable step, as she was the first female in Japanese history to be named heir to the throne. Her promotion came immediately after a smallpox epidemic that had decimated the population and killed all of the prominent Fujiwara aristocrats on the Council of State.[52] In a climate where the court had just been reminded of the transient nature of life, Princess Abe's appointment provided a plan in case disaster struck again. Although her promotion was unprecedented, it is unlikely that she was actually expected to succeed to the throne. Japanese scholars have argued that she was originally named Crown Prince(ss) to serve as an intermediary until Prince Asaka was ready (he was eleven at the time) or until Kōmyōshi could conceive another male child (she was still thirty eight).[53] Of course, from the perspective of

[52] For the classic English language study of this epidemic, see Farris 1985, 53-69.

[53] In general, traditional narratives of Princess Abe have focused too much attention on Fujiwara influence and on the rivalry between Asaka and Abe. As Takinami Sadako has clearly shown, the Fujiwara family was severely weakened after the epidemic struck down its four most prominent members. Moreover, the prevailing view at court was that Asaka would eventually succeed to the throne even after Abe was named Crown Prince(ss). Shōmu himself likely played a large role in asserting Abe's position, although we cannot deny that Kōmyōshi and other Fujiwara's would have supported the choice, even if she was intended to serve as a placeholder for Prince Asaka. See Takinami 1998, 46-72. My reading has also been influenced by Yoshikawa 2011, 134-135. Also see Tōyama 1999, 116-117 and 2007, 56-60.

Kōmyōshi and the severely weakened Fujiwara clan, this plan served the purpose of at least temporarily preventing Asaka's ascension and would have been agreeable to them as well.

Although this move provided a temporary solution to the succession dispute, court politics remained tense in the 740s. First, Shōmu had to strike down a rebellion started by Fujiwara no Hirotsugu in 740, who was disgruntled over the growing strength of non-Fujiwaras at court.[54] After the rebellion, Shōmu moved capitals three times between 741 and 745. While the reasons for these moves are not entirely clear, it is hard to believe that his actions resulted in increased feelings of stability. It was in this uncertain climate that Princess Abe performed a dance in front of Emperor Shōmu and the Retired Empress Genshō in 743 (*Shoku Nihongi* 5/5/743, *SNKBT* 13:418-421). Scholars have claimed that this dance was intended to assert her position as the future ruler.[55] Whether the dance was successful in achieving its intended goals is unclear, but Abe's position was strengthened by the sudden death of Prince Asaka the following year (*Shoku Nihongi* 1/13/744, *SNKBT* 13:437-438).[56] After nearly five years away from Nara, Shōmu returned to the capital in 745 after a series of earthquakes and fires caused him to

[54] For an overview of this rebellion in English, see Farris 1992, 60-69.

[55] This dance has received significant attention in English. See Piggott 2003, 54; Ooms 2009, 121-122; and Como 2009, 80-81.

[56] Scholars debate whether Prince Asaka's death was illness or assassination. There is no historical evidence of assassination, but there was naturally a significant motive for such action. Regardless, it is undeniable that his death strengthened Princess Abe's position.

reconsider his decision to relocate. From this time, Shōmu began battling a series of illnesses that would continue over the next few years. It is easy to imagine that his fragile condition focused the court's attention on succession.

By the time Shōmu returned to Nara, it became increasingly likely that Princess Abe would succeed her father. Kōmyōshi was now forty-five and unlikely to bear any more children; Shōmu was battling illness that made it difficult for him to effectively rule; and Prince Asaka, Abe's chief competition for the throne, had died in 744. The death of the Retired Empress Genshō in 748 opened up the position of retired emperor for Shōmu. Soon after her passing, Shōmu decided to fill this role. He resigned from his kingly responsibilities and became a monk. He was the first male ruler to ever abdicate (Yoshikawa 2011, 200). In 749, Princes Abe ascended the throne as Empress Kōken in a climate filled with uncertainty and potential threats (*Shoku Nihongi* 7/2/749, *SNKBT* 14:82-87).

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was copied just after the death of Empress Genshō and just prior to Princess Abe's ascension. It is likely that Shōmu began considering the possibility of abdication from around the time of Genshō's death, as her passing was necessary for him to be able to claim the position of retired sovereign. Even if he had not yet made the decision to abdicate at the time when our texts were copied, the situation would have been obvious for anyone to see: Shōmu was in weak health, and Princess

Abe's ascension was only a matter of time. The analysis of Shōsōin documents earlier in this chapter showed that this project and the one to transcribe a hundred copies of the *Golden Light Sutra* took precedence over other transcription activities at the scriptorium, including a memorial project for Genshō. It also demonstrated that these two projects started on the same day and were the first projects to be initiated after Genshō's death. Finally, we saw that the *Golden Light Sutra* was commissioned on behalf of Princess Abe, and it is highly likely that the other texts were as well. When we consider the political environment of 748, we can begin to understand why Kōmyōshi prioritized the transcription of a relatively obscure text related to protection from demonic threats on behalf of her daughter at this time. Princess Abe would need all the help she could get.

Evil Times

The above discussion has focused on context. It has precisely dated the transcription of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, traced the activities at the scriptorium at the time the text was copied, and outlined the political climate leading up to 748. The remainder of the chapter will turn to a few themes appearing in common in the sutras copied in the seventh and eighth months of 748 to assess the way these texts functioned in shaping ideas about kingship and cosmos in early Japan.

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* describes a time in the future after the Buddha's death called the "Evil Age of the Five Corruptions" (Nanatsu-dera, line 4; T 2865.85.1325a). The five corruptions are defined in canonical texts as the corruption of 1) lifespan (Skt. *āyuṣ-kaṣaāya*; Ch. *ming zhuo* 命濁), 2) sentient beings (Skt. *sattva-kaṣāya*; Ch. *zhongsheng zhuo* 衆生濁), 3) afflictions (Skt. *kleśa-kaṣāya*; Ch. *fannaou zhuo* 煩惱濁 or *huo zhuo* 惑濁), 4) views (Skt. *dṛṣṭi-kaṣāya*; Ch. *jian zhuo* 見濁), and 5) eon (Skt. *kalpa-kaṣāya*; Ch. *jie zhuo* 劫濁). The corruption of lifespan refers to diminishing longevity. The corruption of sentient beings is characterized by feeble minds and bodies, as well as not being cognizant of one's parents and neglecting Buddhist practice. The corruption of afflictions is marked by immoral propensities. The corruption of views denotes deluded ideas. The corruption of the eon is an age marked by warfare, disaster, and epidemics.[57] These corruptions were said to appear when eons or kalpas are in decline.[58]

Although many Indic texts assert that the Age of the Five Corruptions is the period when Śākyamuni and other buddhas are born, in East Asia it became fairly common to claim

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[57] This is one of the more common lists that appear in texts such as the *Abhidharma kośa*. I have referred to Daoshi's medieval Chinese encyclopedia, the *Fayuan zhu lin* T 2122.53.1005a-c. For an overview in English, see Chappell 1980, 140-143.

[58] Kalpas are divided into four kinds, which are further subdivided into twenty sub-kalpas (Skt. *antarakalpa*; Ch. *xiao jie* 小劫). Within a sub kalpa, human lifespans go through cycles of growth and decline. It is during this period of decline of lifespan that the five corruptions are said to appear. For more on divisions of kalpas, see Nattier 1991, 15-17.

that the present era, which was decidedly absent of a Buddha, was stained with these five contaminants. Moreover, in East Asia, this doctrine was frequently linked with the teaching of the final age of the Dharma, a dark period when the message of the Buddha was disappearing, human capacities were limited, and natural disasters frequently appeared (Chappell 1980, 142-143). In fact, the monk Zenju 善珠 (723-797) understood the term in this way. He writes of "the final age of the five corruptions [*matsudai gojoku* 末代五濁]" when people face shortened lifespans, frequent epidemics, and delusions that impede spiritual progress (*Hongan yakushi-kyō shō*, *NDZ* 9:153-154). In eighth-century Japan, therefore, the doctrine of the five corruptions was generally understood as referring to the present age and viewed within the Buddhist narrative of the decline of the Dharma.

This doctrine is central to the narrative structure of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, but it also plays a strong role in the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets*. Here, the Buddha preaches that the methods outlined in the text are particularly attuned to the Evil Age of the Five Corruptions (T 1331.21.524a).[59] The intended audience of both texts is those who

[59] The term "five corruptions" also appears several times in the *Golden Light Sutra*, which we have seen was transcribed at the same time as the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. The discourse of corruptions in this text is used in a generic way of describing the time Śākyamuni appeared or in a vow to save all the beings in the Evil Age of the Five Corruptions. It does not play a central role in framing the *Golden Light Sutra* as it does in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and in the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets*.

believe that they are living in an age of decline. The doctrinal similarity of these two relatively obscure and compact sutras that were copied in succession suggests that this particular teaching of the Evil Age of the Five Corruptions was on the minds of those at court. The epidemics, natural disasters, and insurrections that the rulers faced at this time would have easily been understood within the doctrine of decline.

Demons and Venoms

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* highlights several threats said to be characteristic of an evil age, but two in particular stand out. The first is violence at the hands of demonic forces and the second is a form of sorcery known as "venom" that we will discuss in greater depth below. A variety of baleful beings including evil devils (Ch. *ema* 惡魔), evil demons (Ch. *egui* 惡鬼), and myriad malefic apparitions (Ch. *zhong xie wang liang* 衆邪魍魎) populate the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*.[60] These beings are closely associated with violence, as they threaten to shorten one's lifespan or commit outright murder. For example, both the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and the *Golden Light Sutra*

[60] Apparitions (Ch. *wang liang* 魍魎) were said to occupy various natural spaces including trees, rocks, and bodies of water. For an overview, see Mochizuki 1963, 10:650-651. In transcribing myriad malefic 衆邪, I have followed the three Dunhuang manuscripts, which all give *zhong xie* 衆邪. Nanatsu-dera gives *ye* 衆耶. This character is frequently used in Buddhist manuscripts in place of *xie* 邪, which can also be read as *ye*.

describe a particular type of demon who robs humans of their vitality.[61] This reference to stealing vitality refers to the Indic notion of the *ojohāra* or *ojāhāra*—beings who, in texts such as the *Mahāvastu-avadāna* and the *Divyâvadāna*, steal energy and eat humans.[62] Many of the prognostications in the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets* also deal with demons and phantoms (Ch. *mei* 魅). For example, the very first prediction in the text promises that the scripture can overcome demonic adversity:

> If you hear the Scripture of the Buddha's Spells
> The hundred phantoms will all disappear...(T 1331.21.524a)

For those who are less fortunate, however, the text forecasts bewitchment by assorted evil spirits:

> You are an ill-omened person.
> And so have been made to dwell in this place
> In it are malefic phantoms and demons
> Which are constantly coming and loitering. (T 1331.21.525b)[63]

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[61] For the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, I have followed the Beijing manuscript (BD 646) in reading the character "rob [Ch. *duo* 奪]." The Nanatsu-dera manuscript (line 5) is illegible, but Beijing is thought to share a common lineage with Nanatsu-dera. P 2340 has "suck" or "inhale" (Ch. *xi* 吸). The *Golden Light Sutra* also describes a demon that inhales vitality. See T 665.16.427a. Both translations are used to refer to the same Indic demon, although the connotations in Chinese differ slightly.

[62] See Ryan Overbey's useful entry "食精氣鬼" in the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*. Accessed 1/25/2012.

[63] I have followed the translation in Strickmann 2005, 62 with some minor modifications.

These types of predictions continue throughout the text——anyone who participated in the method of divination advocated by this scripture would have likely confronted demonic beings (Strickmann 2005, 73-74).

A second concern central to the texts under study in this chapter is a form of sorcery using a technique described as "venom [Ch. *gu* 蠱]." Scholars of Chinese history have explored this concept in detail. The "venom" is produced by filling a vessel with poisonous creatures and letting them consume one another until a victor emerges. This venomous creature is then transformed into a powerful spirit that is capable of changing shape and following the commands of the sorcerer who created it. Venom based witchcraft represented one of the most prominent forms of black magic in premodern Chinese culture (Feng and Shryock 1935). This type of sorcery was closely connected to demonology; those who participated in venom magic were said to enter pacts with demons to bewitch their enemies (Mollier 2008, 62). Protection against venom magic was a central concern of medieval Chinese Buddhists, who promoted Buddhism's strengths in combating death from sorcery (Mollier 2008, 55-99).

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* repeatedly describes its own powers in preventing sorcery and protecting people from demons.[64] The scripture portrays itself as a cure against these magical attacks, claiming that it functions as a medicine against evil poisons

[64] Masuo Shin'ichirō highlights this feature in particular; see Masuo 1996, esp. 842-845.

(Nanatsu-dera, lines 17-19; T 2865.85.1325a). There are reasons to believe that all three of the 748 transcription projects were responses to perceived threats of witchcraft and demons. For one, Christine Mollier (2008, 58-59) has argued that sorcery and curses were closely associated with the final age of the Dharma, a theme that was central to the narrative structure of both the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets*. The *Golden Light Sutra* also explicitly claims that it is useful against venomous attacks and contains spells that can be used to combat phantoms and sorcerers (T 665.16.434b-435c). In general, our texts vividly participate in what Christine Mollier (2008, 64-65) has described as the medieval Chinese "*imaginaire* of death," which is concerned with murder caused by venomous poison (Ch. *gudu* 蠱毒) and malefic and evil demons (Ch. *xiegui egui* 邪鬼惡鬼).

This imaginaire was not limited to Chinese Buddhism—it is fundamental to the worldview depicted in the national histories and legal codes promulgated by the court in eighth-century Japan. According to these texts, demons and angry spirits constantly threatened the imperial family. For example, the death of Empress Saimei 斉明 (594-661), a female ruler, was attributed to a demon (*Nihon shoki* 8/1/661, *NKBT* 68:350-351). Vindictive ghosts (*onryō* 怨霊) posed a particular threat, as they frequently attacked those who had

caused their untimely demise.[65] Shōmu's court had a great deal of blood on its hands, including the deaths of Prince Nagaya and Fujiwara no Hirotsugu, two figures whose spirits were thought to haunt the court.[66] Shōmu and Princess Abe's power was built on foundations laid through violence—the social and political order of their realm could only be maintained with constant rites of spirit pacification. The fear of the demons and sprits created through the actions of the court surely contributed to Kōmyōshi's decision to commission the transcription of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* just prior to her daughter's succession to the throne.

Sorcery was also an intimate part of the worldview of the Nara court. We have seen how Prince Nagaya was accused of cursing the infant crown prince. This event prompted fear of black magic, and an edict was issued against malefic practices on 4/3/729: "[If there are those who] learn heterodoxies, accumulate techniques of illusion, cast curses using effigies, or harm any of the hundred things, the principal offender will be beheaded and the accomplices will be exiled" (*Shoku Nihongi*, *SNKBT* 13:210-211). Reconstructed legal codes from the Nara period similarly outlawed the use of assorted forms of black magic including the venomous techniques outlined above: "Those who concoct or stock venomous poison or instigate others

[65] For *onryō* in early Japan, see Ōmori 2007 and Yamada 2007. In English, see Ooms 2009, 229-231. For later developments, see Plutschow 1983 and McMullin 1988.

[66] For the *onryō* of these two figures see Ōmori 2007, 16-32 and 215-235 and Yamada 2007, 13-22.

to do so [will be punished with death by] hanging [*kō* 絞]" (*Yōrō ritsuryō, NST* 3:95). These laws were not empty codes. Individuals were charged with crimes of sorcery and punished for them. In one case dating to 769, a female courtier named Agata Inukai no Aneme 縣犬養姉女 (n.d.) was exiled for practicing a form of witchcraft described as "sorcery venom [*fuko* 巫蠱]." In this case, Princess Fuwa was suspected of ordering Aneme to curse Empress Shōtoku (Princess Abe) so that her own son Hikami no Shikeshimaro 氷上志計志麻呂 (n.d.) could ascend the throne. To carry out the spell, Aneme had to steal a lock of the Empress's hair, stuff it in a skull from the Saho River, and recite a curse three times (*Shoku Nihongi* 5/769, *SNKBT* 15:238-240).[67] From this example, we can see that Kōmyōshi had a justifiable concern to protect her daughter from witchcraft—Princess Abe had real political and personal enemies who could resort to magical techniques to bring about her demise.

It is unlikely that the 748 projects were the only instance of patrons using sutra copying to quell demons in eighth-century Japan. In general, the Nara court lived in perpetual fear of demons and sorcerers who were capable of overturning their fragile realm. Sutra copying in general has several connections to preventing demonic and malefic attacks that warrant

[67] For an English language overview of this episode, see Ooms 2009, 216. Ooms gives the year 768, but it should be 769. A similar accusation of sorcery venom was lodged against Princess Inoue in 772. See *Shoku Nihongi* 3/2/772, *SNKBT* 15:372-373. For an overview, see Ooms 2008, 218 and Masuo 1996, 844.

further attention. In chapter three, we saw that dedicatory prayers in sutra colophons most commonly date to regular periods of abstinence defined in the Buddhist ritual calendar. These days were not only periods when the faithful were expected to engage in pious works; they were also a time when demons were thought to most readily appear.[68] It seems at least possible that part of the reason these days would have been chosen for dedication ceremonies was due to the perceived risks of demon attacks.[69] Moreover, the power of Buddhist scripture was viewed as capable of stopping sorcerers in early Japan. For example, a 769 edict issued in response to the Aneme sorcery incident states that the power of the *Golden Light Sutra* enabled the detection of the plot to use sorcery against the throne (*Shoku Nihongi* 5/29/769, *SNKBT* 15:240-241; Nagaoka 2009, 218-219). More careful research on other sutra copying projects from the Nara period may uncover similar connections.

In thinking about sutra transcription as a means of combating dark forces, it is useful to reflect on the role Buddhist patronage played in shaping the broader discursive field surrounding kingship in early Japan. It is helpful here to follow the lead of Michael Como, who

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[68] For demons appearing on these days, see Nagaoka 2009, 182-184. He draws upon a passage in the *Da zhi du lun*, a text that was frequently copied throughout the Nara period. This passage is also discussed in Hureau 2010, 1218. See *Da zhi du lun*, T 1509.25.160a-c.

[69] Although we do not know precisely what days the texts under study in this chapter were dedicated on, the general trend toward performing dedicatory rites on abstinential days suggests that there is a strong chance that they would have been offered at a time when demons were a particularly menacing threat.

has written about the efforts of the Hata immigrant kinship group to incorporate a variety of local deities into what he terms the "royal cult." According to Como (2009, 14), "Japanese rulers embraced these cults not from a position of strength but rather in fear and weakness." This insight can be applied to the cult of the book as well. Fear of demonic and malefic retribution was a driving force behind Buddhist patronage in early Japan. State protection was not simply a way for rulers to exhibit their authority in a theatrical form. Buddhist ritual responded to real concerns that plagued the Nara court. The transcription and recitation of these texts in 748 served to demonstrate fragility as much as power.

Protection at a Cost

In a climactic scene in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, the Four Heavenly Kings, and a group of divine beings each stand before the Buddha in turn to pledge that they will protect those who propagate the sutra. I have found little reason to suspect that Mañjuśrī was valued as a protective deity in early Japan, but the other two groups were closely connected to cults of protection in the Nara period. Kōmyōshi was well aware of these cults, as they appear frequently in texts and statues she commissioned. The Four Heavenly Kings' primary role, as defined in the *Golden Light Sutra* and other texts, is to protect and patrol the realm. Just as in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, the

Four Heavenly Kings of the *Golden Light Sutra* promise to lead an army of divine beings to protect human kings who uphold and propagate the scripture. In particular, they vow to watch over queens and princes and subjugate the vindictive enemies (Ch. *yuan di*; Jp. *onteki* 怨敵) of the court, all qualities that would have been greatly esteemed by Kōmyōshi as she commissioned this text on behalf of her daughter (T 665.16.427a, 428b).

The Four Heavenly Kings played an important cultic role in early Japan. They appear in some of the earliest Japanese legends, such as the story of Prince Shōtoku's battle against the Mononobe (*Nihon shoki* 7/587, *NKBT* 68:162-163).[70] These myths point to early associations between the deities and the conquest of enemies. Moreover, statues of the Four Heavenly Kings were frequently carved and cast in early Japan, and numerous examples survive. In most of these pieces, the heavily armed kings stand triumphantly atop vanquished demons, an image which surely reinforced their powers in combating demonic threats.[71] The Four Heavenly Kings were also credited with stopping sorcerers; they are mentioned alongside the

[70] This narrative is discussed in Como 2008, 18-19 and Como 2009, 106-107. For a recent and provocative analysis in Japanese, see Nagaoka 2009, 167-170.

[71] Famous examples include the Four Heavenly King statues from the Golden Hall (*Kondō* 金堂) of Hōryūji 法隆寺, two sets from Tōdai-ji: one presently at the Precept Platform Hall (*Kaidan-dō* 戒壇堂) and the other at the Lotus Hall (*Hokkedō* 法華堂); and two sets from Kōfuku-ji 興福寺: one from the Eastern Golden Hall (*Tōkondō* 東金堂) and the other from the Northern Circular Hall (*Hokuendō* 北円堂). Images of these statues are widely available; I have referred to numerous detailed photographs in Nara rokudaiji taikan kankōkai 1999-2001. I have also viewed many of these objects in person.

Golden Light Sutra in the 769 edict issued in response to the Aneme incident discussed above. It was in a world where patrons had constant visual and mythic reminders of the efficacy of the heavenly kings in the face of demonic and malefic forces that Kōmyōshi commissioned the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and the *Golden Light Sutra*, two texts that were deeply connected to the cult of the Four Heavenly Kings.

The final group to pledge protection in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* is less well known but appears to have been deeply connected to Kōmyōshi as well. This group is composed of an assembly of divine beings including a *gandharva* king, *asura*, *garuḍa*, *kiṃnara*, and *mahoraga*. They represent five of the eight kinds of beings, who were originally Indic deities that converted to Buddhism. Outside of their appearance in deathbed scenes of the Buddha, where they are portrayed as mourning Śakyamuni's passing, there are only two records of artistic representations of these deities from the Nara period. In both cases, they were placed in a hall that housed an image of the Buddha.[72] Only one set of these images is extant, but it is fortunately a collection that was commissioned by Kōmyōshi for the Western Golden Hall at Kōfuku-ji 興福寺, a structure that was originally built on behalf of her mother.[73]

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[72] One set at Kōfuku-ji are currently in the National Treasure Hall (*Kokuhōkan* 国宝館) at the temple. There is also a record suggesting that Daian-ji 大安寺 had a collection dating to 742. See *Daian-ji garan engi narabi ni ruki shizaichō*, in *NI*, 368.

[73] For the classic study on Kōfukuji's Western Golden Hall, see Fukuyama 1943, 87-148.

Nearly all of these statues depict the deities in full armor; much like the Four Heavenly Kings, they would have been visually imposing to behold.[74] This imagery surely helped shape the way Kōmyōshi and the court understood the role of these beings as warriors capable of fighting off enemies and preventing disaster.

In this way, it is clear that a central reason Kōmyōshi chose to commission a hundred copies of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and the *Golden Light Sutra* was to invite guardian deities to descend to the earth and protect the court from demonic and incantatory threats. Protection, however, had a cost. By invoking the Four Heavenly Kings, the rulers of Japan put themselves within a Buddhist system where the celestial powers were capable of both protection and punishment.[75] For example, in the *Golden Light Sutra*, the Four Heavenly Kings promise protection, but they caution that they will desert the realm of those who do not propagate the sutra. They warn that once they leave the realm the king will face disasters and lose the throne (T 665.16.429c-430a). These fears seem to have been on the minds of the people at court around the time our text was copied. Right before Princess Abe's

[74] In fact, the four heavenly kings and the eight kinds of beings are commonly linked in prayers in Dunhuang manuscripts as well. For example, see P 2055 and BD 14129. For translations, see Teiser 1994, 105-106 and 142-143.

[75] The following paragraph draws largely upon Nagaoka 2009, 206-217.

ascension, Emperor Shōmu donated sutras and other objects to Tōdai-ji and issued a cautionary prayer:

> I also vow that in later generations, were a master who does not [follow the Buddhist] path or a minister who is a heretical thief to commit crimes [against Buddhism] or break and obstruct [Buddhism] without cultivating [Buddhist practice], this person would have surely disputed with and disgraced all of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three ages in the ten directions...All of the various heavenly deities [including] Brahma, Indra, the four Heavenly Kings, as well as celestials, dragons, and the Eight Kinds of beings...would together cause great disasters and make it so that [future generations] have no descendents forevermore. (*DNK* 3:241)

Shōmu's prayer shows that the same deities who were responsible for protecting the throne in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* also threatened to punish rulers who failed to obey their commandments. In promoting Buddhism, the court placed themselves within a system where their own power was subject to a higher authority.

In addition to punishing sinners, the Four Heavenly Kings were also thought to regularly observe humans to ensure that they behaved piously. It was widely believed in both China and Japan that the Four Heavenly Kings and their messengers would descend to earth to inspect the activities of sentient beings regularly throughout the month on days corresponding to regular periods of abstinence (Hureau 2010, 1218).[76] These deities would then

[76] The locus classicus for this belief is in the *Si tian wang jing* 四天王經, T 590.15.118b. There is little evidence that the *Si tian wang jing* itself was widely read in Nara Japan, but the relevant passage is quoted in the *Da zhi du lun,* which was one of the most widely copied texts in eighth-century Japan. See T 1509.25.160a.

file reports to Indra. By invoking the Four Heavenly Kings, the Nara court received protection but also willingly submitted themselves to observation. Under the watchful eye of powerful and menacing heavenly kings, human rulers were expected to perform regular pious acts, such as the continued commissioning of Buddhist images, sutras, and temples. In this way, even the royal family needed to follow a specific set of norms that accorded with Buddhist teachings. By agreeing to participate in a system in which their actions were judged by powerful spirits, the royal patrons of Buddhism accepted standards of behavior that were not entirely of their own making.

Nagaoka Ryūsaku (2009, 171-223), one of the foremost authorities on Buddhist sculpture from early Japan, has pointed out that the iconographic features of the Four Heavenly Kings reveal these dual roles as punisher and observer. The punishing role is reflected in the fact the kings are generally depicted with fierce expressions on their faces, wearing armor, and at least two of them carrying weapons. Their role in observation is subtler. For one, the king guarding the west, whose Chinese name translates as Wide Eyes (Ch. Guangmu, Jp. Kōmoku 廣目), often holds a brush and a scroll.[77] Nagaoka (2009, 179-182; 214-

[77] The Sanskrit form of his name, Virūpākṣa, is probably closer to "variegated eyes" than "wide eyes." See Mochizuki 1963, 2:1097-1098. The feature of this king holding a brush and scroll is particularly common in the Nara period but also continues to appear through the Muromachi period and possibly beyond. Although this is a common feature, he is also depicted holding other objects such as a lasso (Ch. *juansuo*, Jp. *kensaku* 羂索), particularly in post-Nara statues.

216) has argued that these objects reflect Wide Eyes' responsibility in recording the behavior of sentient beings for regular reports to Indra. In fact, some statues of Indra similarly hold a scroll, thus linking the Four Heavenly Kings with him in both the visual and cultic spheres.[78] It should be added that one of the key texts for connecting the cults of the Four Heavenly Kings with Indra is the *Golden Light Sutra*.[79] The second clue that reveals the kings' roles as observers appears in their eyes. Nagaoka (2009, 210-214) has engaged in a careful visual analysis of the Four Heavenly Kings statues currently in the Precept Platform Hall at Tōdai-ji to convincingly show that two of the kings have ferocious eyes that are wide open and the other two have narrow eyes that gaze off in the distance. I have found a similar, although slightly less pronounced, set of statues at Hōryūji from the former refectory.[80] Both sets date to the Tenpyō

[78] For example, see the Indra statue in the Tōdai-ji Lotus Hall. This image is traditionally identified as Brahma, but Nagaoka (2009, 216) argues convincingly that it should be Indra. For published images, see Nara rokudaiji taikan kankōkai 1999-2001, 10: plates 12, 70, and 72.
[79] For the passage describing the Four Heavenly Kings making reports to Indra, see *Si tian wang jing*, T 590.15.118b and *Da zhi du lun*; see T 1509.25.160a. The Four Heavenly Kings are linked to Indra in the *Golden Light Sutra* repeatedly. For example, see T 665.16.417c, 426c, and 436b.
[80] For Hōryū-j former refectory and the Tōdai-ji Precept Platform Hall, see in Nara rokudaiji taikan kankōkai 1999-2001, 3: plates 134-136 and 10: plates 44-47. Note that the former refectory images are different from the more famous seventh-century statues from Hōryū-ji's Golden Hall. The Golden Hall images do not have two kinds of eyes; this trait seems to be an eighth-century characteristic.

era, which is the precise period under study in this chapter.[81] This particular feature seems to be characteristic of this period; I have been unable to find any examples of distantly gazing kings in earlier or later works. This suggests that this mode of representation was closely connected to the court culture of the mid-eighth century. In transcribing this text and calling upon the kings for aid, Kōmyōshi placed herself and her daughter under watchful eyes of heavenly kings.

Statues of the Four Heavenly Kings would be present at nearly every temple an individual were to visit in the Nara period. These deities wielded both the pen and the sword: they promised protection to the pious but also recorded the deeds of the sinner and threatened to punish those who defied the Buddhist path. In assessing the Four Heavenly Kings in this manner, it is clear that there is more at stake here than mere "state protection." If human kings did in fact create a spectacle of their authority through the use of symbol, they also displayed visual reminders that they themselves would be judged by a higher authority.

Prophecies found in the *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets* similarly functioned in complicated ways that cannot be reduced to a theatrical justification of authority. For one, the text instructs those carrying out the divination to first rinse their mouths and avoid

[81] The Tōdai-ji Precept Platform Hall images were originally in the Lotus Hall at Tōdai-ji, a building that was constructed in the 740s and completed in 748, the same year the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was commissioned.

consuming meat, alcohol, and the five pungent roots. The performance of the ritual, therefore, required the person consulting the oracle to engage in bodily practices connected closely with Buddhist ethical conduct, as described in chapter two. Second, the randomized nature of drawing lots would make it just as likely for rulers to receive predictions that describe a future filled with menacing demons as they were to receive those promising protection. Moreover, the underlying logic of this collection of Buddhist oracles is that of karma. As Michel Strickmann (2005, 73) writes, "The oracle's demonology is straightforward and uncompromising. For if you are imprudent enough to have left yourself karmically open to attack, there are several classes of ill-omened beings that will lose no time in taking advantage of your vulnerability." In this way, the very appearance of disasters and demonic forcers in the world could be explained by a lack of virtue on the part of the ruler. The fact that rulers viewed their own world as constantly threatened by demons suggests that performing such oracles did not only demonstrate royal authority but also made a spectacle of their shortcomings.

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the transcription of one hundred copies of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* in 748, as well as two other texts copied at roughly the same

time. After carefully considering the documents related to the transcription of these sutras, the chapter analyzed the texts thematically from the specific political and cultural contexts in which they were copied. The purpose of this discussion was to look at the relationship between Buddhism and the state from a new perspective that does not reduce the political function of religion to that of a tool used solely for ideological justification of authority.

Other chapters in this dissertation have explored the activities of a broad range of the population. These chapters have tried to compare elite practices with those of patrons of more humble origins and consider the effects state control had on individuals such as scribes working in an official scriptorium. These earlier chapters aimed to challenge two fundamental features of Inoue Mitsusada's state Buddhism model: a focus on patronage by the imperial family and the regulation of Buddhism by the state. This chapter has highlighted the third and least studied characteristic of Inoue's definition: the reliance of the state on apotropaic techniques. In looking at the transcription of texts that were thought to summon deities to protect patrons from demons and sorcery, we have seen the complicated role these rites had in shaping the political and cultic environment of early Japan.

The political function of Buddhist patronage in the Nara period had diverse effects. This chapter has suggested that the transcription of these three sutras in 748 functioned to demonstrate the contingency of political power in the 740s, illuminate the past misdeeds of

the ruler, and place the court under observation by powerful deities. The view presented in this chapter differs significantly from the theater-state model advanced by Joan Piggott, Max Moerman, and others. With regard to Nara Buddhism, scholars has focused on the way rulers performed their authority on a public stage through large-scale projects such as copying the Buddhist canon, constructing temples throughout the provinces, and commissioning ornate statues of divine beings. This chapter has shown that official patronage of Buddhism did not simply demonstrate authority but also displayed fragility. In calling upon guardian deities, the rulers sent out reminders that they were in a constant need of protection from ghosts and demons of their own creation that threatened to overturn the social and political order. More specifically, Kōmyōshi's dependence on this obscure text of dubious authenticity highlighted the particular vulnerabilities facing Princess Abe as she prepared to ascend the throne.

Moreover, the invocation of the Four Heavenly Kings and other divine beings by rulers placed the court in a position where it was not only protected by guardian deities but also observed and potentially punished by them. In this framework, pious Buddhist practice became the norm and deviation risked retribution in the form of attacks by demons and sorcerers. The rulers' behavior was governed by a system of norms defined by Buddhist scripture rather than officially sanctioned legal statutes. Transcription, therefore, had a normative function in that it established a code of conduct that the ruler was expected to

follow or else risk punishment. Heavenly protection depended upon the repeated performance of pious acts such as performing Buddhist rituals and commissioning the reproduction of images and texts, all practices performed and promoted by rulers in eighth-century Japan. To call upon the gods for protection meant that the imperial family had to play by their rules. It is never clear in this model if the state is controlling Buddhism or Buddhism controlling the state.

Conclusion

Japanese Buddhism underwent a dramatic change beginning in the second half of the seventh century that accelerated dramatically in the eighth century. During this period, scripture became a central component of the Japanese Buddhist tradition for the first time. Thousands of scrolls were imported and more than one hundred thousand were transcribed. Relatively complete copies of the Buddhist canon filled temple libraries in the capital and some of the most popular texts circulated widely in the provinces. Sutra transcription, sponsored primarily by devout lay patrons, enabled this transformation. This dissertation has traced the institutional, ritual, cosmological, and political significance of sutra copying in eighth-century Japan.

Scholars have frequently interpreted this period in terms of the state Buddhism model, most famously advocated by Inoue Mitsusada. Such a classificatory scheme does a great injustice to the richly textured nature of Nara religiosity. For one, imperial patronage was only one aspect of eighth-century Japanese Buddhism; individuals of diverse social rank and geographic backgrounds sponsored sutra transcription in the Nara period. A range of the population, from the sovereign to provincial fellowship groups, shared common ritual practices, manuscripts cultures, institutional structures, and religious aspirations. Second,

while the state *did* aim to regulate the clergy, the effects and intentions behind these rules are best understood within the context of ensuring ritual efficacy and maintaining ethical norms. Regulation cannot be reduced to mere secular control of ecclesiastical institutions. Third, the state did not limit its ideological toolkit to Buddhist resources; rulers turned to non-Buddhist notions of kingship and governance just as frequently as they embraced Buddhist ones. The state Buddhism model does not sufficiently address the non-Buddhist aspects of Nara period religiosity. Finally, Buddhism's influence extended beyond the political sphere. In particular, people from various social and geographic backgrounds turned to the religion for its highly developed mortuary culture, doctrinal sophistication, and standards of ethical conduct.

At the same time, this dissertation has questioned alternative terminology such as "popular Buddhism" or "diverse Buddhisms" proposed by critics of the state Buddhism model. The problem with these terms is that they simultaneously mask the aspects of the tradition that were shared across classes while also failing to account for forms of social differentiation beyond binary class-based analysis. This dissertation has highlighted the way that practices, beliefs, and technologies transcended social classes and geographic regions resulting in a shared Buddhist culture. Features of this common tradition included a focus on upholding purity in merit-making rituals, institutional structures such as lay fellowship groups, techniques of manuscript production, and an awareness of basic Buddhist cosmology and

soteriology. On the other hand, all parties could not participate equally in Buddhist practice. Variables such as access to material goods and human resources, literary ability, geographic location, and institutional organization mediated Buddhist practice and delineated religious communities in early Japan. State Buddhism, popular Buddhism, and pluralistic Buddhisms are all models that require further nuance and should be employed with a great degree of caution, if at all.

Characteristics of Nara Buddhism

My aim has been not simply to deconstruct old models but also to begin to consider alternative approaches. Although any definition of Nara Buddhism is inevitably incomplete, three features related to social organization, ritual practice, and cosmology can be said at least partially to define the Buddhism of eighth-century Japan as distinct from both earlier and later periods. First, lay institutions played a key role in the spread of Buddhism during the Nara period. These institutions included officially sanctioned scriptoria, household organizations, and fellowship groups. Although these institutions sometimes employed monks and often utilized temple grounds, their economic bases and supervising bodies were structurally separate from monasteries. For the most part, temples in Nara Japan lacked economic autonomy, sectarian identity, and political clout. This situation differs greatly from the Heian

period, when temples began to manage large landholdings, claim sectarian affiliation, and possess significant political authority. The emergence of the "gates of power system" (*kenmon taisei* 権門体制) and the "exo-esoteric system" (*kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制) in the medieval period would radically change the institutional and social organization of Japanese Buddhism.[1]

Second, Nara-period Buddhist ritual was largely defined by merit-making practices. These rituals included constructing temples, copying texts, and commissioning statues. It was widely believed that sponsoring such works generated merit that could be directed by the patron to provide salvation to the deceased or bestow blessings on the throne. Although other scholars have rightly pointed out that other non-Buddhist continental myths and practices circulated widely in early Japan, individuals and communities in the eighth century expended more material and human resources on Buddhist projects than those of any other religious tradition.[2] This suggests that the logic of merit making, which is frequently cited in prayers, rapidly gained appeal in eighth-century society. The increased reliance on Buddhist ritual radically altered various aspects of the religious and material cultures of the Japanese archipelago in the late seventh and eighth centuries. New architectural and artistic forms

[1] These models of *kenmon taisei* and *kenmitsu taisei*, which were advanced by Kuroda Toshio in the 1960s and 1970s, have received substantial attention and scrutiny. For English language overviews, see Dobbins (ed.) 1996 and Adolphson 2000.

[2] For non-Buddhist rituals in early Japan, see Bialock 2007, Como 2008 and 2009, and Ooms 2009.

developed; scripture emerged as a source of religious authority for the first time; and mortuary practices became closely integrated with Buddhist cosmology and ritual.

The eighth century was also distinct from later periods, because it lacked a way of interpreting rituals through an esoteric-exoteric rubric.[3] Although rituals that were later classified as "esoteric" existed in Japan in the Nara period, they were not understood as such until Kūkai identified a taxonomy distinguishing them from exoteric practices in the ninth century (Abé 1999, 151-184). The ritual practices of the Nara period were appropriate for the lay oriented qualities discussed above; merit-making rituals could be performed by anyone. Esoteric practices, which required specialized training and initiation, increased in importance during a time when monastic culture came to be defined by lineage-based sectarian institutions with highly developed curricula and social hierarchies.[4]

Third, the Nara period can be defined by its cosmological configurations. The late seventh and eighth centuries witnessed a marked increase in knowledge of Indic pantheons and Buddhist world systems across the Japanese archipelago. The spread of texts and images at this time made people from diverse backgrounds aware of the names of Buddhist realms and

[3] I do not mean to imply that esoteric rituals replaced exoteric ones. Exoteric Buddhist ritual continued to play a significant role in Heian religious culture. See Sango 2007.
[4] The same can be said for exoteric rituals such as debate assemblies (*rongi-e* 論議會), which became increasingly common in the Heian period. These also required training in monastic institutions and had close connection to lineage. For training for debates, see Groner 2011.

divine beings. This altered the cosmological possibilities of early Japan, which had previously been centered on regional deities tied closely to individual clans. People came to see the world as structured in ways that drew upon Buddhist texts and began to worship images that were shared across geographic regions in Japan and with the continent.

At the same time, Nara-period cosmology did not simply mirror the structures presented in canonical Buddhist texts. Prayer texts incorporated Chinese literary forms that reflected the increased literacy and poetic aptitude that emerged over the late seventh and eighth centuries. To some extent, the cosmology expressed in prayers was particular to the eighth-century. Although later prayers shared much in common with Nara-period examples, there were several new developments that emerged over the course of the Heian period that set them apart, particularly with regard to Buddhist elements. These included a turn from Maitreya to Amitābha; more esoteric components, such as references to the emperor as a manifestation of Mahāvairocana (Ch. *Dari*; Jp. *Dainichi* 大日); and an increased reliance on discourse about wheel turning kings (Kudō 2007).[5] Moreover, texts with idiosyncratic cosmological agendas such as the *Scripture on Performing Body and Life*, which had entered the Nara canon in spite of Chinese proscriptions, appeared to have played a much larger role in

[5] This is not to say that Chinese literary references disappeared from this genre. These continued to be central to Heian period prayer texts. More comparative work is needed on differences in the use of allusions to Chinese classics in Nara and Heian-period prayers.

the cultic life of early Japan than in later periods, although more study is needed on the medieval reception of this particular text. Although many of the cosmological building blocks that would define later periods were already in use in Nara Japan, the particular arrangements explored in this dissertation appear to have been closely connected to the political, cultic, and literary landscape of the eighth century.

Future Research

This dissertation has left several questions unanswered. For one, I have often used the word "widespread" to discuss the practice of sutra copying and the spread of Buddhism in eighth-century Japan, but this term requires further clarification. The activities of patrons and scribes hailing from provinces ranging from Higo in Kyūshū to Hitachi in the east have supported my claim that sutra copying involved a geographically diverse range of the population.[6] But more work remains to delineate the precise geographic configuration of Nara Buddhism. Would Buddhist ideas and practices have penetrated every community, or were there pockets of intense activity within various provinces? Would such pockets—assuming

[6] This range is not unexpected, as it corresponds closely to what represented a politically and culturally unified sphere. Southern Kyūshū had only recently come under Yamato control after years of battle with the Hayato. Northeastern Japan was still largely independent during the Nara period. See Batten 2003, Friday 1997, and Takahashi and Friday 2006.

they existed—have been connected to immigrant lineages, or would they have developed ties with local families native to the region? Did regional variations of the Buddhist tradition exist to the extent that particular geographic areas would engage in their own unique forms of Buddhist practice? To what degree would skilled human laborers and material resources have been available to various provincial communities? All of these questions are central to further assessing the limits of Buddhism in Nara Japan and to understanding the precise ways that geography functioned to circumscribe religious communities. More synthetic work on the archaeology of excavated temple sites would help us further understand these issues.

This dissertation has also largely ignored the effects sutra copying had on doctrinal studies in early Japan. As Inoue Mitsusada (Inoue [1948] 1994) showed in a classic article, scholasticism—in the form of written commentaries—only emerged in the second half of the Nara period. Inoue does not connect this rise of a commentarial tradition to sutra copying, but the fact that the volume of scholastic output increased immediately after Buddhism achieved a solid textual foundation is suggestive. In addition to looking at the commentaries themselves, documents in the Shōsōin provide rich records of monks and nuns borrowing texts for the purpose of study or preparation for delivering lectures. More careful research on these sources would reveal which commentaries were frequently borrowed and would illuminate the

reception of Buddhist texts in early Japan. The relationship between Nara period textual circulation and later doctrinal developments also warrants further investigation.

Finally, this dissertation has focused on the late seventh through early ninth centuries. One of the reasons for ending my study in the beginning of the ninth century is that sutra copying declined in importance (at least quantitatively) from that time. The precise causes of this change remain poorly understood, but the emergence of esoteric ritual, the rise of sectarian institutions, and changing economic conditions could have all played a role in this transformation. While the ninth century saw a decline in sutra copying, the tenth and eleventh centuries witnessed its reemergence. Practices related to sutra copying that were absent or at least uncommon in the Nara period also appeared at this time. These included sutra burial, increased use of illuminated manuscripts, and the compilation of ritualized manuals describing the precise means in which a sutra should be copied.[7] The underlying

[7] For sutra burial, see Blair 2008, 151-188 and Moerman 2007 and 2010. For decorative and illuminated manuscripts, see Komatsu 1976 and Tanabe 1988 and 2009. For codified ritual texts, see *Nyohō kyō genshu sahō*, T 2730.84.890a-898a and *Jōdo sanbu kyō nyohō kyō shida*i, *JZ* 9:370-372. For more general overviews of standardized rituals for transcription in the Heian period, see Kabutogi 1983, 3-143 and Nakano 2009, 118-33. While these practices all increased in the Heian period, they originated earlier. Sutra burial is often described as a Japanese practice, but I have found a Chinese tale that discusses it; see *Fahua zhuanji*, T 2068.51.81c. Moreover, Richard Salomon has argued that the Gandharan manuscripts were ritually interred; see Salomon 1999 69-86 and 2009, 19-34. There is an illustrated manuscript from the Nara period that is believed to be a copy of a Tang work; see Tsuboi 2004. I discussed ritualized practices of transcription in East Asia and Nara Japan in chapter two; also see Lowe (forthcoming, 2012).

causes as well as the social and spiritual effects of these Heian developments would be a fruitful topic for future research.

In attempting to move beyond both the state Buddhism model and more recent "re-readings" (*yominaosu* 読み直す) of Nara Buddhism, this dissertation has laid the groundwork for a rewriting of early Japanese Buddhist history. A great deal of erasure has been necessary, as many modernist assumptions about the relationship between religion and the state and the category of popular Buddhism have been written into the dominant academic narratives. What has emerged from this dissertation is but a rough sketch. A vast amount of empty space awaits additional details and coloration. Ideally, any rewriting of Nara Buddhism would pay particular attention to the way that individuals ranging from sutra copyists to rulers as well as communities of pious practitioners actively inscribed their own particular form of Buddhism into the economic, political, and religious spheres of eighth-century Japan.

Appendix One: Manuscripts Consulted

This appendix contains information about the manuscripts cited in this dissertation. It is organized alphabetically by the name of the archive and provides the title, catalog number (when applicable), published versions, number of sheets, and basic information from the colophon. I have not listed Shōsōin documents or *mokkan* in this appendix. Information for these sources can be found in the parenthetical citations and footnotes of the main text. For many of these manuscripts, I have only consulted published photographic reproductions. Those that were researched personally in archives are marked with a "*." All items are in scroll format unless noted. Online versions were accessed 5/2012.

Agency of Cultural Affairs (Tokyo)

Jingang chang tuoluoni jing 金剛場陀羅尼經. Sponsored by Kawachi fellowship led by Hōrin 寶林. Dated 5/686. 15 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 1 and Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/db/Index.do.

Bibliothèque nationale de France (Pelliot Chinese Dunhuang manuscripts)

P 2055 *Yu lan pen jing* 盂蘭盆經, *Da bo nie pan mo ye fu ren pin jing* 大般涅槃摩耶夫人品經, *Shan e yin guo jing* 善惡因果經. Commissioned by Zhe Feng da 翟奉達. Dated to 958-960. 17 sheets. Reprod. IDP web site, http://idp.bl.uk/ and *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang Xiyu wenxian* 法國國家圖書館藏敦煌西域文獻, 3: 339-348.

P 2056 *Apitan piposha lun* 阿毘曇毗婆沙論, scroll 52. Dated 7/15/662. Sponsored by Yuchi Baolin 尉遲寶琳 and monk Daoshuang 道爽 with fellowship group as part of canon; copied purely by Shen Hong 沈 弘 in Yu 雩 prefecture. 10 sheets. Reprod. IDP web site, http://idp.bl.uk/ and *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang Xiyu wenxian* 法國國家圖書館藏敦煌西域文獻, 3:349-354.

P 2340 *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. Verso contains name of monk Daozhen 道眞 and character 界 signifying 三界 monastery. 6 sheets. Reprod. IDP web site, http://idp.bl.uk/ and *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang Xiyu wenxian* 法國國家圖書館藏敦煌西域文獻, 12:154-156.

P 4523 Illustration of the *Scripture on the Ten Kings*. 7 sheets. Reprod. IDP web site, http://idp.bl.uk/ and *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang Xiyu wenxian* 法國國家圖書館藏敦煌西域文獻, 31:322-325.

British Library (Stein Collection)

S 1164 Prayers for transfer of merit. 1 sheet with writing on both sides. Reprod. IDP web site, http://idp.bl.uk/.

S 1322 *Guanding fantian shen ce jing* 灌頂梵天神策經. Early seventh century. Reprod. *Baozang* 10: 127-134.

Chion-in (Kyoto)

Fahua jing xuanzan 法華経玄賛, scroll 3. Sponsored by Kurahashibe no Miyatsuko Maro 倉橋部造麻呂. Dedicated 5/23/731. 20 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 10.

Huayan bahui gang mu zhang 華嚴八會剛目章. Copied by the Tōdaiji monk Kōken 興顕. Dated 4/22/765. Cursive script. Heian period copy of *Da Tang sanzang Xuanzang fashi biaoqi* 大唐三藏玄奘法師表啓 on verso. 10 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 67.

Yuqie shidi lun 瑜伽師地論, scroll 8. Sponsored by fellowship of "disciples of Maitreya [*jishi deshi* 慈氏弟子]." Dated 8/14/735. Originally scroll but transformed to *orihon* book format. 14 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 15.

Dannō-hōrin-ji (Kyoto)

Qizhi jing 七知経. Part of canon sponsored by Emperor Shōmu 聖武. Canon copying began in 734. 3 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 14.

Gotō Museum (Tokyo)

Miao fa lianhua jing 妙法蓮花經, scroll 5. Copied through Fujiwara Southern house. Likely dates to 747. 21 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 85.

Shisong lü 十誦律, scroll 17. Part of Jingo keiun canon. Sponsored by Empress Kōken/Shōtoku. Contains prayer in colophon. 25 Sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 71.

Yuqie shidi lun 瑜伽師地論, scroll 60. Sponsored by fellowship of "disciples of Maitreya [*jishi deshi* 慈氏弟子]." Dated 8/14/735. Originally scroll but transformed to *orihon* book format. 18 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 16.

Harvard Art Museum/Arthur M. Sackler Museum

*Hofer Collection, 1985.361. *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 90. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 13 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to *orihon* book format in 1787. Partial reprod. Harvard Art Museum web site, http://www.harvardartmuseums.org and Shimizu and Rosenfield 1984, plate 2.

*Hofer Collection, 1985.353. *Da kongqiao zhou wang jing* 大孔雀呪王經, fragment of section entitled "Tan chang huaxiang fashi 壇場畫像法式." Part of Zenkō 善光 canon. Contains vermillion Zenkō seal. Six sheets. Partial reprod. Harvard Art Museum web site, http://www.harvardartmuseums.org.

*Hyde Collection, 1974.92. *Fangguang bore jing* 放光般若經, scroll 30. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 14 sheets. Partial reprod. Harvard Art Museum web site, http://www.harvardartmuseums.org and Rosenfield et al 1973, plate 2.

Hōgon-ji (Shiga)

Bieyi za ahan jing 別譯雜阿含經, scroll 10. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/11/743 canon. 14 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 31.

Ishiyama-dera

36函29 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 33. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 12 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 419.

36函31 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 34. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 17 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 421.

36函34 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 50. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 18 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 424.

36函35 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 56. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 17 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 425.

36函36 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 60. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 17 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 426.

36函37 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 79. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 21 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 427.

36函38 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 83. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 15 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 428.

36函39 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 86. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 18 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 429.

36函40 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 100. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 16 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 430.[1]

39函7, 23-29, 31-43 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scrolls 14, 68, 70-72, 74, 77, 79, 84, 86, 88, 90-96, and 98-100. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. Originally scroll but transformed to *orihon* book format. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 471, 474-493, and *NCS*, plate 35.

39函8 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 21. Sponsored by monk Kenshō 賢證. Dated 2/10/730. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 472 and *NCS*, plate 6.

39函18 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 38. Sponsored by Tatebe no Kimi Mushimaro 建部君虫麻呂. Dated 8/19/754. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho: shiryō hen* 3, plate 473 and *NCS*, plate 48.

重8 *Shuo yiqie you bu jushe lun* 説一切有部倶舍論, scroll 21. Sponsored by Senshaku 仙釋. Dated 5/1/752. Partial reprod. *Ishiyamadera no kenkyū*, plate 6 and *NCS*, plate 45.

Jingo-ji (Kyoto)

Daoxing bore jing 道行般若經, scroll 5. Part of canon sponsored by Fujiwara no Bunin 藤原夫人. Dated 3/15/740. 20 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 22.

[1] Scrolls one through ten are also thought to be part of the Keta-ji project but lack colophons. See Yoshikawa 2010. I have not listed them here, because I did not refer to the manuscripts or photographic reproductions for the purpose of this dissertation. In fact, *Ishiyamadera shiryō sōsho* did not include images of many of these scrolls.

Jōmyō-ji (Shiga)

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 214. Sponsored by Prince Nagaya 長屋王. Dated 11/15/712. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. 17 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 4. 27 scrolls total extant at Jōmyō-ji.

Jōraku-ji

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scrolls 50, 91, and 187. All scrolls likely sponsored by group associated with monk Dogyō 道行. Scroll 91 contains prayer dated 6/30/757. Scroll 50, 16 sheets; scroll 91, 20 sheets; scroll 187, 22 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plates 55-57.

Kagawa Prefectural Museum

B980166 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 61. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. Partial reprod. Kagawa Prefectural Museum web site, http://www.pref.kagawa.lg.jp/kmuseum/index.html and Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/db/Index.do.

Kairyūō-ji (Nara)

Zizai wang pusa jing 自在王菩薩經, scroll 1. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/11/743 canon. 16 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 32.

Kōsan-ji (Kyoto)

Mile shangsheng jing 彌勒上生經. Sponsored by Ishikawa no Ason Toshitari 石川朝臣年足. Dated 6/29/738. 9 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 18.

Kyō'ōgoku-ji (Kyoto)

Guanding jing 灌頂經, scroll seven. Sponsored by Hata no Zenme 秦禪賣. 9 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 50.

Kyoto National Museum

B甲47 *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 250. Sponsored by Prince Nagaya 長屋王. Dated 11/15/712. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. Partial reprod. Kyoto National Museum web site, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html and emuseum, http://www.emuseum.jp.

B甲50 *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 522. Sponsored by Geshin 解信. Dated 3/730. 19 sheets. Partial reprod. Kyoto National Museum web site, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html and *NCS*, plate 7.

B甲52 *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 319. Copied by Kawai no Kimi Mizomaro 川相君溝萬呂. Dated 4/15/735. Fragment. Partial reprod. Kyoto National Museum web site, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html and *NCS*, plate 17.

B甲62 *Qianshou qianyan tuoluoni jing* 千手千眼陀羅尼経. Sponsored by Genbō 玄昉. Dated 7/15/741. 6 sheets, incomplete fragment. Partial reprod. Kyoto National Museum web page, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html; Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/db/Index.do; and *NCS*, plate 29.

B甲63 *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 232. Sponsored by Shimo no Suguri Hiromaro 下村主廣麻呂. Dated 7/18/741. Partial reprod. Kyoto National Museum web page, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html.

B甲64 *Fanwang jing* 梵網經, scroll 2. Sponsored by fellowship group led by monk Ryōshun 靈春. Dated 3/25/757. 22 sheets. Partial reprod. Kyoto National Museum web site, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html; Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/Index.do; and *NCS*, plate 53.

B甲115 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 76. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. 14 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 36 and Kyoto National Museum web site, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html.

B甲671 *Jingming xuan lun* 淨名玄論. Scrolls 4 and 6. Both contain colophons dated 706. Around 30 characters per line. Scroll 6, 12 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 2 (scroll 6); Kyoto National Museum web site, http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/index.html; and Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/db/Index.do.

Moriya 247 *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. Colophon reads 禪定持誦. 4 sheets. Beginning missing. Cataloged in *Kokyō zuroku: Moriya Kōzō-shi shūshū*, 55.

Kyoto University Library

*01-24/タ/01貴 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 40. Keta-ji manuscript; patron's name not listed. Dated 11/23/734. 18 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787.

Kyoto University Faculty of Letters, Japanese Language and Literature Collection

* 国文 To 5(貴) *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scrolls 76, 81, 97. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. Scroll 76, 16 sheets; scroll 81, 15 sheets; scroll 97, 21 sheets. Originally scrolls but transformed to *orihon* book format. Above scrolls share single catalog number.

Nakamura Collection (Nakamura shodō hakubutsukan, Tokyo)

N 066 *Weimo jie jing* 維摩詰經, scroll 3. Sponsored by Yanshuo 閻碩. Copied by Zhu Lingbian 朱令辯. Dated 3/14/620. 13 sheets. Reprod. *Taitō-kuritsu Shodō Hakubutsukan shozō Nakamura Fusetsu kyūzō uiki bokusho shūsei*, 2:4-7.

N 069 *Apitan piposha lun* 阿毘曇毗婆沙論, scroll 60. Dated 7/15/662. Sponsored by Yuchi Baolin 尉遲寶琳 and monk Daoshuang 道爽 with fellowship group as part of canon; copied purely by Shen Hong 沈 弘 in Yu 雩 prefecture. 18 sheets. Reprod. *Taitō-kuritsu Shodō Hakubutsukan shozō Nakamura Fusetsu kyūzō uiki bokusho shūsei*, 2:12-20.

Nanatasu-dera (Nagoya)

Jiuhu shenming jing 救護身命經. Late Heian. Reprod. *Nanatsu-dera koitsu kyōten kenkyū sōsho* 七寺古逸経典研究叢書, 2: 504-512,

Nanzen-ji (Kyoto)

Da zhidu lun 大智度論, scroll no 54. Sponsored by Kasugabe no Suguri Hirota 春日戸村主廣田. Dated 742. 20 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 32.

Nara National Museum

*1164-0 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 87. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. 17 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. Partial reprod. Nara National Museum web site, http://www.narahaku.go.jp/collection/1164-0.html.

1191-0 *Guanding sui yuan wangsheng jing* 灌頂隨願往生經. Sponsored by Ishikawa no Ason Toshitari 石川朝臣年足. Dated 12/737. 10 sheets. Partial reprod. Nara National Museum web site, http://www.narahaku.go.jp/collection/1191-0.html and *NCS*, plate 19.

***** 1248-0. *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 66. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 21 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787. Partial reprod. Nara National Museum web site, http://www.narahaku.go.jp/collection/1248-0.html.

National Library of China (Beijing Dunhuang manuscripts)

BD 646 (cf. 日046; PK 8298). *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. Dated seventh-eighth century (Tang dynasty). 5 sheets. First 2 sheets damaged. Reprod. *Guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang yishu* 9: 241-243 and IDP web site, http://idp.bl.uk.

BD 14129 (cf. 新0329) *Jian yiqie ruzangjing mulu* 見一切入藏經目録. Written by Daozhen 道真. Dated 934. 10 sheets. Reprod. *Guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang yishu* 122: 217-222.

BD 14496 (cf. 新0696). *Apitan piposha lun* 阿毘曇毗婆沙論, scroll 51. Dated 7/15/662. Sponsored by Yuchi Baolin 尉遲寶琳 and monk Daoshuang 道爽 with fellowship group as part of canon; copied purely by Shen Hong 沈 弘 in Yu 雩 prefecture. 12 sheets. Reprod. *Guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang yishu* 128: 220-226.

National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba

H-194 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 18. Sponsored by fellowship group of Fujiwara southern house. 8 sheets. Full reprod. National Museum of Japanese History's web site, http://www.rekihaku.ac.jp/database/index.html and partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 86.

Nezu Museum (Tokyo)

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 12. Sponsored by Shimo no Suguri Hiromaro 下村主廣麻呂. Dated 7/18/741. 17 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 30.

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 23. Sponsored by Prince Nagaya 長屋王. Dedicated 11/15/712. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format. Partial reprod. Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/Index.do.

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 57. Sponsored by Shanyi 善意. Dated 11/8/747. 14 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 40 and Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/Index.do.

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 267. Sponsored by Prince Nagaya 長屋王. Dedicated 9/23/728. In addition to prayer, colophon lists scribe, proofreaders, assembler, and other workers. Composed of long sheets of paper measuring 176 cm per sheet; 5 sheets total. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 5 and Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/Index.do.

Da Tang neidian lu 大唐内典錄, scroll 10. Part of canon sponsored by Mutobe no Azumabito 六人部東人. Dated 7/23/755. Colophon lists scribe, assembler, and proofreaders. 41 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 52 and Cultural Heritage Database, http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/Index.do.

Shelifu apitanlun 舍利弗阿毘曇論, scroll 12. Part of canon sponsored by Chihō 知法. Dated 5/10/710. 28 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 3. Originally scroll but transformed to *orihon* book format.

Otani University Museum

**Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 44. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. 15 sheets. Currently scroll but was transformed from original scroll to *orihon* book format before being remade into a scroll.

Princeton University, East Asian Library and Gest Collection

*GM 220 *Zhong shifen apitan lun*, scroll 12. 衆事分阿毘曇論. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 15 sheets.

*GM 221 *Guangzan bore boluomi jing* 光讚般若波羅蜜經, scroll 10. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 14 sheets.

Private Collections (Japan)

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 232. Sponsored by Ishikawa no Toshitari. Dated 7/10/739. 18 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 20.

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 591. Sponsored by Kasukabe no Hira 春日戸比良. Dated 6/30/744. 15 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 38.

Shōchi-in (Wakayama)

Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經. Part of 1,000 scroll project by Emperor Shōmu 聖武 to heal Genbō 玄昉. Dated 5/4/739. 10 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 21.

Shōgozō (Nara)

SK 273 *Du Zhufo jingjie zhiguang yan jing* 度諸佛境界智光嚴經. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 20 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 25.

SK 290 *Pei hua jing* 悲華經, scroll 6. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 20 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 27.

SK 294 *Pei hua jing* 悲華經, scroll 10. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 19 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 27.

SK 300 *Rulai xingxian jing* 如來興顯經, scroll 4. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 22 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 28.

SK 350 *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經, scroll 23. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 25 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 33.

SK 395 *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經, scroll 46. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 19 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 37.

SK 412 *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經, scroll 44. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 17 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 38.

SK 419 *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經, scroll 52. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 22 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 39.

SK 459 *Fajupiyu jin* 法句譬喻經, scroll 2. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 27 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 43.

SK 464 *Baoyu jing* 寶雨經, scroll 10. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 18 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 43.

SK 482 *Xiaopin bore boluomi jing* 小品般若波羅蜜經, scroll 8. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. 20 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 44.

SK 539 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 65. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. Verso contains name of scribe Nishikori no Kimi Maro 錦織君麻呂. 17 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 49.

SK 540 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 69. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. Verso contains name of scribe Nishikori no Kimi Maro 錦織君麻呂 and other info about copying. 22 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 49.

SK 752-761 *Zhong shifen apitan lun* 衆事分阿毘曇論, scrolls 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/1 canon. Copied by Karakuni no Hitonari. Hitonari's name appears on verso of scrolls 1-3 and 7-9. Scroll 1, 18 sheets; scroll 2, 18 sheets; scroll 3, 26 sheets; scroll 4, 17 sheets; scroll 6, 17 sheets; scroll 7, 12 sheets; scroll 8, 19 sheets; scroll 9, 22 sheets; scroll 10, 22 sheets; scroll 11, 19 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, discs 68-69.

SK 1467 *Pusa diqi jing* 菩薩地持經, scroll 5. Part of Jingo keiun canon. Sponsored by Empress Kōken/Shōtoku. 15 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 95.

SK 1474 *Dengji zhongde sanmei* 等集衆德三昧, scroll 2. Part of Jingo keiun canon. Sponsored by Empress Kōken/Shōtoku. 17 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 95.

SK 1475 *Genben shuoyiqie youbu pinaiye* 根本説一切有部毘奈耶, scroll 3. Part of Jingo keiun canon. Sponsored by Empress Kōken/Shōtoku. 16 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 95.

SK 1486 *Genben shuoyiqie youbu pinaiye* 根本説一切有部毘奈耶, scroll 30. Part of Jingo keiun canon. Sponsored by Empress Kōken/Shōtoku. 19 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 95.

SK 1492 *Genben shuoyiqie youbu pinaiye* 根本説一切有部毘奈耶, scroll 36. Part of Jingo keiun canon. Sponsored by Empress Kōken/Shōtoku. 25 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 95.

SK 1755 *Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所説經, scroll 2. Sponsored on behalf of Hozumi no Ason Oyu 穂積朝臣老. Dated 4/15/750. 18 sheets. *Shōgozō kyōkan*, disc 98.

Tenri Central Library

*****183-イ3**.** *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 96 . Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 18 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787.

*****183-イ5 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 85. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. 17 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format.

*****183-イ115 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 3. Sponsored by Anaho no Otomaro 穴太乙麻呂. Dated 3/25/779. 14 sheets.

*****183-イ165 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 7. Sponsored by Anaho no Otomaro. Dated 3/25/779. 13 sheets.

*****183-イ173 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 42. Sponsored by Toneri no Kunitari 舍人國足. Dated 3/15/744. 16 sheets. Currently scroll but was transformed from original scroll to *orihon* book format before being remade into a scroll.

*****183-イ239**.** *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 97. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 18 sheets. Currently scroll but was transformed from original scroll to *orihon* book format in 1787 before being remade into a scroll.

*****183-イ263**.** *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 53 . Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. 13 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787.

*****183-イ265 *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, scroll 7. Sponsored by Anaho no Otomaro. Dated 3/25/779. 14 sheets.

Tokyo Historiographical Institute

*S貴41-4. *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 87. Keta-ji manuscript. Dated 11/23/734. Second colophon in vermillion gives date of collation to 5/19/1180. 15 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to *orihon* book format in 1787.

Tokyo National Museum

B 3083. *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經, scroll 45. Sponsored by Queen Consort Kōmyōshi. Part of 5/11/743 canon. Partial reprod. Tokyo National Museum web site, http://www.tnm.jp.

Tokyo University, Department of Japanese Language and Literature

* L 54847. *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, scroll 81. Keta-ji manuscript (here written as 氣多寺). Dated 11/23/734. 22 sheets. Originally scroll but transformed to orihon book format in 1787.

Tōmyō-ji (Kyoto)

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 401. Sponsored by Yamada no Katami 山田方見. Dated 8/29/743. 18 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 34.

Tōshōdaiji (Nara)

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 176. Completed by Gyōshin's 行信 disciple Kōnin 考仁 and others. Dated 9/5/767. 4 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 66 and *Tōshōdai-ji kokyō sen*, plate 9.

Da bore boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經, scroll 176. Copied on behalf of Sakanoue no Imiki Iwatate 坂上忌寸石楯. Dated intercalendary 5/779. Colophon damaged and reconstructed with other sources. 8 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 75.

Yuqie shidi lun 瑜伽師地論, scroll 21. Sponsored by Man'yu Bosatsu 萬瑜菩薩 and copied by Shin'yu Bosatsu 信瑜菩薩. Dated 4/745. 15 sheets. Partial reprod. *NCS*, plate 39.

Yuqie shidi lun 瑜伽師地論, scroll 55. Completed by Gyōshin's 行信 disciple Kōnin 考仁 and others. Dated 9/5/767. 8 sheets. Partial reprod. *Tōshōdai-ji kokyō sen*, plate 10.

Appendix Two: Translation of *The Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*

In this appendix, I have provided a translation of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, which was discussed in detail in chapter four. This is the first English language translation of this indigenous sixth-century Chinese sutra. I have followed the Nanatsu-dera manuscript but have also referred to two Dunhuang versions: P 2340 and BD 646 in the notes, as well as the critical edition prepared by Suwa Gijin (1996). In general, I have only cited character variants when they have shaped my interpretation. I provide line numbers at the end of each paragraph for the relevant section in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript. In addition to the manuscripts cited above, Suwa also referred to a Dunhuang manuscript in the Moriya collection at the Kyoto National Museum and a Korean manuscript in the National Library of Korea.[1] While I consulted Suwa's notes and Masuo's modern edition of the Korean manuscript, I did not cite these in the footnotes to my translation for several reasons. First, I have been unable to view photographic representations or original copies of these manuscripts. Moreover, there is some doubt about the authenticity of the Moriya manuscript. The Korean manuscript dates significantly later than the Dunhuang and Nanatsu-dera materials. Finally,

[1] For a modern print edition of the Korean manuscript, see Masuo 1996.

the Korean and Moriya manuscripts do not provide any significant variants absent from the other sources.

The Scripture Preached by the Buddha on Saving and Protecting Body and Life[2]

At one time, the Buddha was amidst the twin śāla trees.[3] At the time when [the Buddha] was approaching *parinirvāṇa*,[4] Śāriputra[5] and Ānanda,[6] as well as immeasurable great bodhisattvas, *mahāsattvas*,[7] great disciples, and every heavenly being came and assembled together. The Buddha returned to the correct sitting [position][8] and told Ānanda, "I am about

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[2] P 2340 contains a subtitle of "Saving Humans from Illness and Suffering Calamities [濟人疾病苦厄]" that follows the title of the sutra.

[3] **Twin śāla trees** 娑羅雙樹. This sets the scene as the deathbed of the Buddha, where he was surrounded by double-trunked śāla trees in each of the four directions, as described in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra*. This setting establishes the text as the final teachings of the Buddha before his passing. Nanatsu-dera mistakenly transcribes 娑 as 婆.

[4] **Parinirvāṇa** 般泥洹. Complete or perfect Nirvāṇa. The Buddha achieves this state upon his death. P 2340 uses the more common transliteration of 般涅槃.

[5] **Śāriputra** 舍利弗. One of the principle disciples of the Buddha.

[6] **Ānanda** 阿難. Cousin and disciple of the Buddha. Ānanda was responsible for memorizing all of the Buddha's sermons.

[7] **Great bodhisattvas, mahāsattvas** 大菩薩摩訶薩. Bodhisattva literally means awakening being and mahāsattva great being. The latter is often used as an honorific name of a bodhisattva, but some texts distinguish between two types of beings.

[8] **Returned to the correct sitting [position]**. The Nanatsu-dera manuscript gives 還改座 (using a character variant for 改), but all other extant manuscripts list 還正座. The phrase 還正座 also appears later in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript. I have followed 還正座 here. I take

to enter parinirvāṇa. After I pass away, with regard to all sentient beings in the evil world of the five corruptions[9], if there are evil devils and myriad malefic ways of venom[10] that rob people of their vitality,[11] seek to shorten their lives,[12] and violently come to kill them, Ānanda, you must wholeheartedly propagate this scripture and make the sentient beings in this evil world be without illness, suffering, and untimely death and make the myriad malefic ways of venom[13] all completely disappear. [lines 1-8]

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this to mean that the Buddha sat upright in the lotus position. He would have been previously lying on his side on his deathbed.

[9] **Evil world of the five corruptions** 五濁惡世. For an analysis of the five corruptions, see chapter four.

[10] **Myriad malefic ways of venom** 衆邪蠱道. P 2340 replaces these four characters with 惡鬼嬈擾, which would translate as "evil demons torment." Judging from the P 2340 manuscript, these four characters seem to be a later repair, so we do not know how the original appeared.

[11] **Rob [people] of their vitality** 奪精氣. The character奪 is illegible in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript but is clear in BD 646, which shares a common lineage with the Nanatsu-dera manuscript. In P 2340, it is 吸精氣. These are all likely references to demons known in Sanskrit as *ojohāra* or *ojāhāra,* who are said to devour or steal a being's vitality.

[12] **Seek to shorten their lives** 求人短. The more common reading of this phrase would be to criticize a person's shortcomings. Since the rest of the passage has to do with vitality and death, I have chose to translate 短 as a shortened lifespan, a meaning that is attested elsewhere. P 2340 gives 求人長短, which may mean "seek out strengths and weaknesses," but this reading does not seem to fit the context of the passage. Another possibility would be "seek to make the longevity of men short."

[13] **Myriad malefic ways of venom** 衆邪蠱道. This refers to techniques of sorcery that are discussed in detail in chapter four. I have chosen to treat the phrase as 衆邪 as an adjectival clause modifying the noun venomous ways. Masuo takes it as two noun phrases, which could be translated as "myriad wraiths and venomous ways." Both translations are defensible, as these usages appear in other Buddhist texts. Michel Strickmann has shown how wraiths 邪

Ānanda, the things I have transmitted to you are only in this sutra. If there are sentient beings, regardless of whether they are male or female, who are able to recite even a single phrase or a single verse of this sutra, then the myriad malefic evil demons will not be able trespass upon [such people]. Whether they are in a barren field or in the midst of an unforeseen calamity, or in a great fire, or in a great flood, they should constantly recite this sutra. [By doing so] they will be able to completely eliminate these misfortunes. Why is it so? This is because the sutra has a great authoritative and divine power and as such one should constantly read it. If you cannot read, then you should carry it in your heart[14] and give your full attention to receiving and upholding it.[15] This sutra holds the divine power of the buddhas of the past, present, and future. If you are going to go on a long trip, then you must always take

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were closely connected to Chinese Buddhist demonology and pathology. See Strickmann 1980, 225 and 2002, 241.

[14] **Carry it in your heart** 著懷. To literally to fix to your bosom. P 2340 adds that you should "copy it" and fix it to your bosom. It is possible that the text could refer to physically affixing the manuscript as an amulet. There is precedent for such a practice. See Campany 1991, 37-40.

[15] **Receiving and upholding** 受持. I have followed P 2340 and BD 646 manuscript here to read the phrase I have translated as uphold. Nanatsu-dera has to receive and acquire 受得. The characters 受持 means literally to receive and grasp and often is used in the context of memorization and contemplation or possession of scripture with great devotion. For an overview, see Teiser 1994, 139-141.

it with you.[16] At every village you reach, you should single-mindedly preach it to others. Those that are able to hear it even for an instant[17] will attain whatever they pray for. [lines 8-16]

Ānanda, the Buddha does not [speak] empty words. This scripture, as the hidden crux of the Buddha's [preaching], is extremely difficult to attain. It is much like a subtle medicine able to cure the poisonous illness, able to ward off[18] poisonous vapors, and able to cut off the evil poisons. If there is a person who holds it and practices it, even were evil poisonous insects and myriad malefic ways of venom to come and quarrel with and harm this person, then even a whiff of the vapors of this medicine against evil poisons will make them scatter in the four directions and not dare turn back. This sutra is also just like this. If there is someone suffering from illness then he should purify and wash while single-mindedly reading and reciting [the sutra]. This will eradicate myriad illnesses. [lines 16-21]

The Buddha told Ānanda, "If there are evil devils or [those practicing] the way of venom that do not follow my words, I will make these devils meet[19] the various malefic ways of

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[16] P 2340 adds "[by doing so] the various evil poisonous beasts will not be able to approach you [諸惡毒獸無能近者]."

[17] **Instant** 須臾. In the critical edition for the Nanatsu-dera manuscript, Suwa provides 申 for the Dunhuang manuscripts. A close examination, however, shows that both P 2340 and BD 646 actually use a common character variant for 臾 that closely resembles 申 and agrees with Nanatsu-dera.

[18] **Ward off** 辟. I have followed P 2340 and BD 646 here to read this as 辟. The character is being used as a substitute for 避. Nanatsu-dera has 群, which appears to be a transcription error.

[19] Reading 曹 as 遭 in accord with P 2340.

venom and, just like pressing oil, calamites will be completely extinguished without remainder." [lines 16-24]

The Buddha then gave the names of seven buddhas: "First is Vipaśyin Buddha, second is Śikhin Buddha, third is Viśvabhū Buddha, fourth is Krakucchanda Buddha, fifth is Kanakamuni Buddha, sixth is Kāśyapa Buddha, seventh is Śākyamuni Buddha.[20] If there is suffering of calamity or illness, then one should immediately recite these seven names. The various malefic ways of venom will all extinguish and none will be able to encroach upon you." The Buddha finished preaching this teaching and again told Ānanda, "I now take pity on sentient beings, so I will preach further on the names of the six spirits.[21] The first is called Hanara[22], the second is called Kanara[23], the third is called Zenta[ka],[24] the fourth is called Gonka[25], the fifth is called

[20] These are the seven buddhas of the past. Namely, the six historical buddhas who were thought to precede Śākyamuni and Śākyamuni himself.

[21] **Six spirits** 六神. This notion of the six spirits is obscure and was likely created by the author of our text or another Chinese apocryphal work. Some similarly named spirits appear listed together in the *Consecration Sutra* but not as a group of six. See T 1331.21.510a-b. I have chosen to transcribe their names following Japanese readings. Since the names are meant to represent transliterations of Sanskrit terms, they would have been intended to have a foreign feel to them. I have chosen Japanese over Chinese, since my translation is focused on the Nanatsu-dera manuscript and the dissertation considers the text's reception in Japan. Japanese readers would have likely identified these names as sounding Indic.

[22] **Hanara** 波奈羅. This deity appears in the *Consecration Sutra*, T 1331.21.510a. In a sixth-century dictionary, the word is glossed as "can drink." See *Fan fanyu*, T 2130.54.1030a.

[23] **Kanara** 迦奈羅. This deity, at least transcribed in this way, does not appear elsewhere in translated or apocryphal sutras in the Taishō canon. It is listed in the *Fan fanyu*, where it is glossed as "without limit." See T 2130.54.1030a.

Mazu,[26] and the sixth is called Magi.[27] These are the names of the six spirits. Ānanda, if there are sentient beings—regardless of whether they are male or female, exalted or base, if they suffer a calamity—then they should recite the names of the six spirits, then the hardships they are subject to will be eradicated. The myriad illnesses and evil vapors will all be nullified[28] without remainder." [lines 24-34]

The Buddha told the innumerable and boundless bodhisattvas, *mahāsattvas*, heavenly divine kings, and all the heavenly beings, "After I pass away [to the other shore],[29] if there are any who uphold the Dharma that I have entrusted to you, you all should constantly protect [them] day and night and make them attain peace and tranquility."

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[24] **Zenta[ka]** 禪吒[迦]. The Nanatsu-dera manuscript only gives 禪吒 but all other extant manuscripts have 禪吒迦. I have been unable to find any other reference to this deity.
[25] **Gonka** 懃迦. The Nanatsu-dera manuscript has 懃迦. P 2340 lists 勤迦. BD 646 gives 勤迦吒.
[26] **Mazu** 摩頭. This phrase appears repeatedly in the Buddhist canon, usually as a translation meaning to stroke someone's head. This meaning does not seem to be relevant here, as the other names are all clearly transliterations.
[27] **Magi** 摩祁. An early medieval Japanese dictionary of Sanskrit lists "body" as a meaning for 摩祁. See *Tarayō ki*, T 2707.84.609c. I have not found any other references to this deity.
[28] The Nanatsu-dera manuscript reads "will not be nullified (不盡), but I follow the Suwa to view the negation as a mistakenly inserted character (*enji* 衍字).
[29] **Pass away [to the other shore]** 滅度. Literally to extinguish and perfect or cross. The second character, perfect or cross, is used to refer to the Buddhist metaphor of crossing to the other shore, a synonym for liberation from the river of cyclic rebirth and suffering. The two-character compound is often used as a translation for *parinirvāṇa*, but each constitutive element of the Chinese represents *nirvāṇa* (extinguished; blown out) and *pāramitā* (perfection; often given the etymology of to cross to the other shore).

Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva[30] said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, after you have passed away, I will lead twenty-five bodhisattvas to the place in the evil world where this sutra is recited. We will protect these people on all sides day and night. The myriad malefic apparitions[31] will not be able to come near. We will make these people be at peace when asleep and when awake. We will carry out this excellent Dharma."

The Buddha praised Mañjuśrī: "How excellent, how excellent. You can protect those who cultivate the mind of *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*[32] for one, one thousand, and ten thousand *kalpa*[33] as I did." [lines 35-43]

At that time, the four heavenly divine kings[34] bared their right shoulders and put their right knees to the ground.[35] They single mindedly joined their palms together and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, after [you] the Thus Come One's extinction, we will each lead

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[30] **Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva** 文殊師利菩薩. One of the most popular bodhisattvas. He is closely associated with wisdom.

[31] **Apparitions** 魍魎. These were said to occupy various natural spaces including trees, rocks, and bodies of water. For an overview, see Mochizuki 1963, 10:650-651. For the phrase "myriad malefic," all three Dunhuang manuscripts have (*zhongxie* 衆邪). Nanatsu-dera gives 耶 instead of 邪. This substitution is common in Buddhist manuscripts.

[32] ***Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*** 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提. Unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment

[33] **One, one thousand, and ten thousand kalpa** 百千萬億劫. An exceedingly large number of eons.

[34] **Four heavenly divine kings** 四天神王. These kings protect each of the four directions. For more on these deities and their iconography, see chapter four.

[35] **Bared their right shoulders and put their right knees to the ground** 偏袒右肩右膝著地. These are Indian rituals of respect that typically appear before addressing the Buddha.

our entourage to patrol the realm. If there are those who recite or copy or uphold this sutra, our entourage and we will constantly come and shadow these people. Day and night we will protect them and make it so that they do not encounter evil. Should these people go to a barren field, we will constantly shadow them front and back and, with diligent minds, we will protect them. If these people hunger or thirst or have a longing, we divine kings will provide them with whatever they ask for, and there will be nothing they lack.[36] Why would it be so? It is because these people propagate this sutra, practice the excellent Dharma and make offerings to the three treasures, and do not allow it to perish." [lines 44-51]

At that time, the *gandharva* king, *asura*, *garuḍa*, *kiṃnara*, and *mahoraga*,[37] human and non-human,[38] each knelt before the Thus Come One, single mindedly joined their palms, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we heavenly beings will constantly fly around this

[36] This is a somewhat tentative translation. Each of the manuscripts differ subtly on this line.
[37] **Gandharva king, asura, garuḍa, kiṃnara, mahoraga** 乾闥婆王阿修羅迦樓羅緊那羅摩睺羅伽. These are five of the eight kinds of beings (Ch. *Ba bu zhong*八部衆), who were once evil Indic deities that now protect the Dharma. The full list is celestial beings known as devas, snakes or dragons known as *nāga*s, nature spirits known as *yakṣa*, centaur-like musicians known as *gandharva*, titans known as *asura*, golden winged birds known as *garuḍa*, celestial musicians known as *kiṃnara,* and snake spirits known as *mahoraga*.
[38] **Human and non-humans** 人非人. This phrase can either mean human-like but not human or humans and non-humans. In both cases, it is used as a general designation for the eight kinds of beings of which five were just listed. See *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten* 805-806.

evil world. If there are those who recite, or copy[39], or uphold this scripture, our entourage and we heavenly beings will together go to the place where these people reside. As for those who listen to and receive the dharma of this scripture, we will constantly guard and protect them day and night and never leave[40] [their side]. We will protect these people on all four sides so that myriad devils and evil demons are not able to encroach upon them. [The demons] will not be able to steal [the people's] vitality. They will not be able to violently come and snuff out the root of [the people's] lives. They will not be able to violently come and harm [the people's] bodies. They will not be able to seek to shorten [the people's lifespans]. They will not be able haunt [people].[41] We will make it so their poisons do not work. [lines 52-60]

Our entourage will constantly come to the place where these people reside and [will be] in the sky [above them]. Should these people encounter a great fire, our entourage will follow these expedient means and protect their bodies so they are not burned. Should they encounter a great flood and get swept away in the raging currents, our entourage will immediately come

[39] Reading 晝寫 as 書寫. All other extant manuscripts agree on this reading. 晝寫 appears to be a transcription error. The character 晝 appears two lines over and it is likely that the scribe mistakenly wrote this character here.

[40] The character is illegible here, but I am following the other extant manuscripts to read it as 離.

[41] **Haunt** 觸厭. This is a tentative translation. I am drawing on the associations of necromancy and curses with the character 厭 in my translation. Nanatsu-dera and BD 646 give 觸厭. P 2340 has 觸犯.

from the sky to take these people with our hands so they do not drown. Then they will return to stop [the waters?] to save the people from flooding. Should they encounter strong bandits, we will save and protect these people from the four directions and change the hearts of the bandits so that instead of raising swords, they give rise to compassionate minds. Should these people encounter public laws [that result in them] being bound and shackled undergoing anguish and suffering day and night, from the sky our entourage will make the officials' hearts give rise to joy. We will save [the people from] being killed,[42] and all will be liberated. Our entourage will single mindedly save and protect them. We will not let others bring disorder and will make sure that this scripture is always remembered for boundless kalpas. Why is it so? This scripture is the Dharma kindly entrusted by the World Honored One, so we will propagate it for evermore." [lines 60-70]

The Buddha again praised these heavenly beings: "How excellent, how excellent. Your entourage has already for *asaṃkhyeya* kalpa[43] met disciples for hundreds and thousands, and tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousand of kalpas[44] and enabled them to propagate this

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[42] **Save them from being killed** 放殺. I am tentatively following the Nanatsu-dera manuscript here. P 2340 has release 放流. BD 646 has pardon 放赦. These alternative meanings fit the sentence better semantically, but the Nanatsu-dera is perfectly comprehensible as is.

[43] **Asaṃkhyeya kalpa** 阿僧祇劫. Immeasurable eons.

[44] There may be an omission here. Other manuscripts all describe the entourage meeting buddhas of the past and protecting their disciples; Nanatsu-dera simply has the entourage meeting the disciples of the past.

Dharma. Recitation and transcription are expedient means for salvation and healing. [Those who do so] will not encounter evil and will constantly cultivate good minds. At that time, the gandharvas and [other beings] together with their entourages prostrated themselves at the feet of the Buddha and single-mindedly carried out [his teachings]. [lines 70-74]

The Buddha told Ānanda, " I take my right hand and stroke the top of your head.[45] You shall pay close attention. What I have entrusted to you is only in the teachings of this scripture.[46] Ānanda, propagate this Dharma with a diligent mind and make all sentient beings be able to hear it and know it. Ānanda, you are the disciple closest to my heart. The Dharma that I have put forth has been completely transmitted to you. It is because I now take pity on all sentient beings that I wish for them to be liberated [through these teachings]." [lines 74-79]

The Buddha returned to the correct sitting [position] and entrusted this Dharma: "Ānanda, this scripture is venerable and fierce; it has divine power to the extreme. I exhort the men and women of great clans[47] to offer fragrant flowers, assorted silks, burning lamps of continuous illumination, and also to propagate and recite [this scripture] of the Great

[45] **Stroke the top of your head** 摩汝頂. The compound 摩頂 is often used to refer to the act of the Buddha stroking a disciple's head in accompaniment to the conference of the Dharma or a prophesy.

[46] **Teachings of this scripture** 經法. All of the other manuscripts simply have scripture 經.

[47] **Great clans** 族姓. People of good birth; often used to refer to followers of the Buddha.

Vehicle,[48] [so that] all people will be saved[49] from illness, suffering and calamities. Their present [lives] will be tranquil and auspicious[50] and, in a future [life], they will be born in the Realm of Immeasurable Lifespan[51] on lotus blossoms with golden colored bodies and the bodily marks fully endowed[52] and [possessing] wisdom, knowledge, courage, and strength[53] just like the highest class.[54] As such, the merits will be impossible to calculate." [lines 79-84]

"Ānanda, the Dharma that I put forth should be copied with utmost concentration using fine paper[55] and fine ink. From top to bottom, every verse and every phrase has been preached by the Buddha thusly. Not a single stroke or dot[56] should be left out. Ānanda, it is because I pity sentient beings that I have entrusted this Dharma [to you]. Have each and every kind of existent being be able to fully hear and know [of this teaching]. With opened minds and liberated intellects, may they cultivate excellent minds." [lines 84-88]

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[48] **Great Vehicle** 大乘. These characters are absent from P 2340.
[49] The character for save "救" is not fully visible in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript but appears in all other manuscripts.
[50] Reading 吉 for 告. The other manuscripts agree on this reading.
[51] **Realm of Immeasurable Lifespan** 無量壽國. The Pure Land where Amitābha resides.
[52] **Bodily marks fully endowed** 身相具足. These are the thirty-two marks that adorn superior beings such as buddhas.
[53] Reading 健for 揵. The other manuscripts support this reading.
[54] Reading 輩 for 章. The other manuscripts agree on this reading. Here the term likely refers to the highest of the various classes of births in the Pure Land.
[55] P 2340 includes brushes. BD 646 has "a fine hand."
[56] Reading 治 as 點. P 2340 and BD 646 both give 點 instead of 治, although the order of the list is reversed for BD 646. BD 646 has 書 instead of 畫.

At that time, Ānanda single mindedly joined palms before the World Honored One. The hairs on his body all stood erect as he trembled with awe. Having single-mindedly listened to the words of the Buddha with great care, he dared not forget a single phrase or verse. With tears streaming, he said, "World-Honored One, I will diligently uphold what you have entrusted to me. I will propagate this scripture widely." Ānanda then added, "I have received the teachings honored in the heavens." He prostrated himself at the Buddha's feet and single mindedly received and carried out [these teachings]. [lines 89-92]

Cultivate merit to receive pleasant recompense
Whatever you want will come to be spontaneously.
You will overcome the seas of rebirth
And ascend to the quiescence of nirvāṇa.

If there are people who make many blessings
The heavenly deities will spontaneously protect them.
Whatever they pray for will come to be on its own accord.
The myriad demons will not be able to destroy them.

Merit is thin and delusions are many.

Blessings can extinguish the myriad misfortunes.

Blessings of merit are already strong and secure.

Soon they become fixed steadfastly.

Through birth in a heaven, one receives happiness and pleasantry.

Departure to [the Pure Land] is completely spontaneous.

It is in accord with blessings of merit

That those in the human path are able to attain freedom.[57]

It is in accord with expedient means of blessings,

That one is forever separated from the sufferings of birth and death.

To be able to reach Nirvāṇa.

Means no more death or rebirth.[58] [lines 89-97]

Namo[59] to the rise of the immeasurable fine blessings of the Buddha!

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[57] The second and fourth lines of this stanza are reversed in P 2340.

[58] This entire section of verse appears to have been adopted from the *Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya*. See *Mohe sengqi lü,* T 1425.22.276b and 306c-307a.

Namo to the brightness of the immeasurable wisdom of the Dharma!

Namo to encountering the good friendship of the Saṃgha!

Namo to the Buddha!

To have a karmic connection with a Buddha realm

Is to have a karmic connection with a Buddha.

To have mutual karmic connections with the Buddha and the Dharma

Is to realize permanence, bliss, self, and purity.[60]

In the morning, contemplate the One Who Observes the Sounds of the World[61]

In the evening, contemplate the One Who Observes the Sounds of the World.

Karmic connections arise in accord with what is contemplated.

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[59] ***Namo*** 南無. Pronounced *namu* in Japanese, this word is a transliteration of the Sanskrit *namo* or *namas*. It means to pay homage to or take refuge in and is commonly placed before the name of a text or divine being. This entire section beginning with these two characters and continuing to the end of the text is absent from the Dunhuang manuscripts and only appears in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript. The fact that it comes before the final title suggests that it is intended to be read as part of the text rather than a colophon. The references to Avalokiteśvara are somewhat puzzling as this bodhisattva does not appear anywhere in the main text.

[60] **Permanence, bliss, self, and purity** 常樂我淨. The four positive attributes of enlightenment outlined in the Nirvāṇa Sutra.

[61] **One Who Observes the Sounds of the World** 觀世音. The Chinese translation of the name Avalokiteśvara.

Contemplate the Buddha separate from your mind.

Namo to the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha!

Namo to the One who Observes the Sounds of the World!

All dharmas emerge from conditions.

May the Buddha Dharma constantly protect the body,

So that one's body is forever removed from suffering and calamity

And crosses over the border to Nirvāṇa.

The Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life

Proofread once by Eishun 榮俊.

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