The study of the history of religion and the history of Buddhism in Japan has recently advanced in great leaps and bounds, with many heretofore unknown facts coming to light. Research on specific topics have gradually accumulated in a variety of fields, and the new perspectives that have emerged have made possible intense debates on how to reevaluate (or “revision”) the history of religion and Buddhism in Japan. The field of ancient (kodai) Japanese history—the focus of this essay—has also shown remarkable progress in recent years. Textual studies on the basic historical sources for this period have steadily advanced, including the analysis of the difficult *Nihon shoki*. In this essay I have tried to absorb the results of recent research and sketch a new history of religion and Buddhism in ancient Japan.

**KEYWORDS:** Shōtoku Taishi – state Buddhism – jingi rituals – shinbutsu shūgō – local clans – sectarianism

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Archaeological surveys and research have made great strides in Japan recently, and the remains of what are believed to be the performance of religious rituals have been identified in archaeological sites from the Jōmon, Yayoi, and Kofun periods. As might be expected, these findings indicate that there were beliefs in gods (kami) in the country of Wa (ancient Japan) before the introduction of Buddhism. Without any textual evidence, however, we have no concrete idea as to how these kami were perceived, the contents of the beliefs in kami, or how the kami were worshipped. It is presumed that these were relatively simple beliefs, and probably there were no systematic doctrines, nor any religious structures that correspond to the shrines (jinja) of later times. One could classify these phenomena as one type of the common beliefs in gods that can be found across the East Asian world of ancient times. These beliefs in gods/kami in ancient Japan were, in later times, taken to be the original form of “Shinto.” At present, however, these phenomena are considered to be different from what we now call “Shinto.” The view that “Shinto” existed as an independent entity before the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century is untenable today (see Takatori 1979, Kuroda 1995, Teeuwen and Scheid 2002).

The Introduction of Buddhism

Buddhism was introduced to the land of Wa in about the middle of the sixth century CE. Buddhism is a religion founded in India by a historical figure known as Śākyamuni. What was originally a small band of disciples eventually developed into a large religious order. In the third century BCE King Ashoka converted to Buddhism and spread the teaching throughout India. From about the first to third centuries CE, a new Buddhist movement called Mahāyāna Buddhism developed. This movement appealed to the masses and incorporated various local deities as buddhas and bodhisattvas, and thus expanded its influence. Buddhist images also began to be made around this time.

Buddhism, mostly of the Mahāyāna tradition, was transmitted to China in about the first century CE. At first Buddhism did not fit well into Chinese society, but from around the fourth century many of the Buddhist scriptures were translated into Chinese, and gradually a Chinese form of Buddhism developed. The countries surrounding China were strongly influenced by elements of Chinese culture, including writing, Confucian teachings, Buddhism, and legal codes. Buddhism was transmitted to the kingdoms on the Korean peninsula at
around the fourth or fifth century, and was then transmitted in turn from the
Korean kingdom of Paekche to Japan around the middle of the sixth century.

It is important to consider the official records along with the results of
archaeological research when examining the transmission of Buddhism to
Japan. The remains of the earliest temples are distributed throughout the Asuka
and wider Yamato area in central Japan. The official records from this period,
such as the Nihon shoki compiled in 720, state that Buddhism was introduced in
552. The passage that reports the transmission of Buddhism, however, refers to
a version of the Sûvarṇaprabhâsa Sûtra (金光明最勝王経, T no. 665) that was not
translated into Chinese until 703, reflecting the fact that much of the informa-
tion in this record was composed by its editors (see Fuji 1925, Inoue 1961). The
year 552 was chosen on the basis of the belief that, according to some calcula-
tions, this was the beginning of mappô, the degenerate age. In any case it is
difficult to accept this dating as a historical fact. On the other hand, a number
of records point to the year 538 as the date of transmission. One of these texts,
the Gangô-ji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichô 元興寺伽藍縁起井流記資財帳
(part of the Gangô-ji engi manuscripts kept at Daigo-ji) claims to have been
compiled in Tenpyô 19 (747) but is probably a much later forgery of the later
Heian period, and thus is not a reliable source for the date of transmission (see
Kita 1980). The Jôg Shôtoku Hôôteisetsu 上宮聖德法王帝説 (extant at Chion-
in) also posits the year 538, but this text probably was not compiled until the
early Heian period. The oldest document using the date 538 is the Gangô-ji engi
quoted by Saichô in his Kenkairon. This is a different text than the Gangô-ji
garan engi referred to above, and is not extant. All we know about it is the short
part quoted in the Kenkairon, and it is presumed to be a history of Gangô-ji
from the mid- to late-eighth century. Thus it appears that the 538 dating is later
even than the Nihon shoki, being proposed around the end of the eighth cen-
tury; this dating also is most likely a hypothesis presented at a later period, and
cannot be accepted as historical fact (see Yoshida 2001). All that we can say for
certain is that the story that Buddhism was transmitted from Paekche during
the time of Kinmei was in circulation from around the end of the seventh and
into the eighth century, and we have no basis for pinning down a specific date.
Thus the exact date for the transmission of Buddhism is not clear, but it most
likely occurred during the time of Kinmei (539–571).

Asuka Buddhism

The Buddhism of Wa from the period after the official transmission until the
early mid-seventh century is now referred to as “Asuka Buddhism” 飛鳥仏教. This was a time when Buddhism was sustained by the political powers of the
Wa state, such as the powerful aristocratic families (ujizoku)—especially the
Soga family—and influential visitors and naturalized immigrants from abroad.
The Asuka-dera, built by the Soga family, was the first full-scale temple in Japan (see Tsuboi 1985). The imperial family was more apprehensive about embracing Buddhism, but there were some members—such as Umayado no miko 軍待王, who established Hōryū-ji—who were exceptions and were active in promoting it. A number of families of immigrant origin, such as the Hata 秦 family, also built Buddhist temples. There are about fifty temple ruins from this period known to us today; these centered around Asuka in Yamato, mostly in the Kinai (Kansai) area. It is believed that most were family temples of the ujizoku. For the most part, Asuka Buddhism could be described as the Buddhism of the ujizoku. Another characteristic of this period is that many nuns were active during the early days of Buddhism in Wa, and many temples (amadera) were built for nuns.

Who Was “Shōtoku Taishi”?

Any discussion of Asuka Buddhism in the past focused on the figure of Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子, who was presented as an outstanding politician as well as a man of culture, who fully understood sophisticated Chinese thought and Buddhist philosophy, created the Seventeen Article Constitution 十七条憲法, and composed commentaries on three major Buddhist sutras. Contemporary Japanese historians, however, have looked closely at the evidence for these claims, veiled in the mists of legend, and discredited them one after the other as a later product of the Shōtoku Taishi cult. Kume Kunitake (1988) has claimed that the various stories recorded in the Shōtoku Taishi denryaku 聖徳太子伝懐 are not historical facts, and the basic records in the Nihon shoki— that he was born in a stable, could predict the future, and so forth—are nothing more than creative fiction. Tsuda Sōkichi (1950) also claimed that many of the accounts in the Nihon shoki are not historically accurate, and argued convincingly that the so-called Seventeen Article Constitution was composed at the time the Nihon shoki was compiled. Fujieda Akira (1975) compared the commentaries attributed to Shōtoku Taishi with texts discovered at Tun-huang and concluded that these commentaries were composed in China, not by Shōtoku Taishi in Japan. On the basis of these studies, Ōyama Seiichi (1998, 1999) has argued that the figure we know of as “Shōtoku Taishi” was created at the time of the compilation of the Nihon shoki. Ōyama recognizes the historical existence of Umayado no miko, but recognizes the historicity of only three facts associated with him: his family lineage, date of birth, and his involvement in the construction of the Ikaruga 斑鳩 palace and establishment of the Ikaruga temple (later to become Hōryū-ji). He does not recognize the historicity of any other events associated with Shōtoku Taishi recorded in the Nihon shoki, and concludes that they were produced by the editors of this compilation. He also argues that the historical materials at Hōryū-ji—such as the famous inscription on the halo of the Sākya-
muni triad in the Kondô of Hôryû-ji, and the inscription on the Tenjukoku shûcho 天寿国繡帳 embroidery (“this world is an illusion; only the Buddha is real”)—were not composed in the time of Suiko 推古 (592–628) but after the compilation of the Nihon shoki, probably by those involved in the Shôtoku Taishi cult around the middle of the eighth century. Øyama argues that the image we identify as “Shôtoku Taishi” was created in the Nihon shoki on the basis of the idealized image of a Chinese sage who combines the three “ways” of Confucius, Buddha, and the Tao. Thus we should consider “Shôtoku Taishi” as a figure created at a later date, and it is a mistake to try to understand the Buddhism of this period in terms of his life and activities.

Hakuhô Buddhism

The Buddhism in Japan from the latter half of the seventh century to around the time of the transfer of the capital to Heijô-kyô/Nara (710) is called “Hakuhô Buddhism” 白鳳仏教. Buddhism infiltrated rapidly throughout Japan during this period, which began about a century after its official transmission. In contrast to Asuka Buddhism, which was based on an axis of powerful families (uji-zoku) in the Yamato region, Hakuhô Buddhism developed among a greater variety of social classes and geographical regions. The Buddhism of the uji-zoku continued to prosper, and at the same time became actively involved with Buddhism and its promotion, thus laying the foundation for “state Buddhism.” In the outlying regions we find Buddhism promoted by powerful regional clans, as well as the beginnings of Buddhism among the common people, with many temples being built throughout the Japanese archipelago.

“State Buddhism” began under the ruler Jomei; that is, he established the Kudara ôdera 百済大寺—the first royal, or “national,” temple in Wa—in 639. The ruins of this temple were excavated in 1997 to 1998, revealing a very large site with buildings that must have taken many years to construct. “National” temples were then built one after the other: Kawara-dera 川原寺 and Sûfuku-ji 崇福寺 by Tenchi 天智, and the construction of Yakushi-ji 薬師寺, began by Tenmu and completed under Jitô. The nation’s name was changed from Wa to Nippon at the end of the seventh century, and the ruler took on the title of tennô (“emperor”). Jitô could thus be considered the first Japanese tennô, and she also was the first to complete a Chinese-style capital—the Fujiwara-kyô in Asuka. Kudara ôdera was transferred to Fujiwara-kyô as a national temple and renamed Daikan ôdera 大官大寺; this was joined by Kawara-dera 川原寺 (Gufuku-ji 弘福寺), Yakushi-ji, and the Asuku-dera 飛鳥寺, which was confiscated from the Soga family (and became Gangô-ji 元興寺).

As for the temples of the uji-zoku, Soga no Kuronoyama no Ishikawa no Maro established the Yamada-dera 山田寺, and the Nakatomi (Fujiwara) family the Yamashina-dera 山科寺 (later Kôfuku-ji 興福寺). Excavations on the site of
Yamada-dera show that the corridors of the temple building had fallen to the side and remained preserved in the ground. Thus a building constructed in the second half of the seventh century—having collapsed in the first half of the eleventh century—was preserved for us to see. This important discovery revealed much about the temples of the *ujizoku*.

The most important aspect of Buddhism in this period, however, was the construction of many temples in local areas throughout Japan. Over seven hundred sites have been excavated, and further excavations promise to yield even more results. The existence of so many temples from this period indicate that this was the first construction boom in temples for the Japanese archipelago. The concrete characteristics of these temples can be viewed in local museums around the country, and are available in catalogues published at the time of various exhibitions (e.g., *Rittô Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan* 1991, *Nagoya-shi Hakubutsukan* 1994, *Gifu-ken Hakubutsukan* 1995). The people who constructed these temples were powerful local clan families. Stories concerning the Buddhist faith of these local families and the construction of these temples can be found in collections such as the *Nihon ryôiki* (see *Nakamura* 1973) and *Izumo no kuni fudoki* 出雲国風土記.

This period also saw the spread of Buddhism among the “common people.” An entry in the oldest extant handwritten copy of a sutra in Japan (the 金剛場陀羅尼経 [*Vajramañḍadhārāṇī*], T no. 1345) reports that a certain preacher-monk named Hōrin 宝林 was active in Shiki no kōri 志貴評 in the land of Kawachi in 686, and that he had organized a group of “friends” (chishiki 知識) to practice the copying of sutras. Shiki no kōri was a progressive area and still within the Kinai area, but this entry indicates that monks were active in propagating Buddhism in such local areas, and that Buddhism had begun to spread among the common people.

The Issue of “State Buddhism”

Buddhism in ancient Japan is often explained in terms of “state Buddhism.” This concept has been in use for a long time, including scholars such as *Tama-muro* Taijô (1940) and *Hori* Ichirô (1977), and was a mainstay of post-war scholarship from the 1950s to the 1970s. *Tamura* Enchô (1982) argued that state Buddhism began in the Hakuho period and characterized the developments from Asuka Buddhism to Hakuho Buddhism as a shift from “*ujizoku* Buddhism to state Buddhism.” According to this theory, the state played a central role in the acceptance of Buddhism into Japan, and such a state system was formed by the second half of the seventh century. *Inoue* Mitsusada (1971), on the other hand, argued that the state Buddhism of ancient Japan should be understood in terms of the legal structure (such as the *ritsuryô* 律令 regulations) that regulated such matters. From this perspective, the basic character of state
Buddhism can be seen in the laws and regulations promulgated in the legal codes such as the sono-ryō (regulations for monks and nuns), kando-sei (regulations for bureaucrats), and sōgō-sei (see YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1995).

Beginning in the 1980s, however, the theories on “state Buddhism” began to be criticized from many different angles, so that they are no longer tenable on their own. In the first place, the term “state Buddhism” itself is too ambiguous, and a close examination of its various aspects reveal numerous problems. The regulations of the sono-ryō, for example, were mostly dysfunctional, so any theory based on the assumption that the letter of the law was reflected in actual practice is untenable. Again, “privately ordained” monks and nuns (shido sono private-ordained) were indeed proscribed by law, but in fact they were widely accepted, and were very active in all areas including the Buddhism of local clan families, among the common people, and even within “state Buddhism” (consider, for example, the case of Kūkai).

What is required is a relativization of “state Buddhism.” There is no doubt that in ancient Japan there was a form of “state Buddhism” (see the following section). This was not, however, the total sum of Buddhism during this period. “State Buddhism” was only a part of a greater array of Buddhist activity that included the Buddhism of the imperial court and the aristocratic families, that of the local clan families, and that of the common people, as well as the interaction between these aspects. The shift from Asuka Buddhism to Hakuho Buddhism, therefore, is not a simple development from “aristocratic ujizoku Buddhism” to “state Buddhism,” but a more complicated development from “aristocratic Buddhism” to a variety of “Buddhisms,” including aristocratic Buddhism, state Buddhism, the Buddhism of the local clan families, and that of the common people (see YOSHIDA 1995).

The view of Buddhism in ancient Japan as merely “state Buddhism” has also served as a basis for presenting a contrast with the new Buddhist movements of the Kamakura era and the medieval period, which are then explained as “Buddhism for the masses” (minshū bukkyō; see, for example, HARA 1927 and IENAGA 1947). In this view, the history of Buddhism from ancient to medieval Japan is explained in terms of a shift “from state Buddhism to Buddhism for the masses.” The kenmitsu taiset theory of KURÔDA Toshio (1975, 1990, and 1994; DOBBINS 1996), however, presents a convincing argument that the real axis of medieval Buddhism was formed by the “exoteric and esoteric” schools (kenmitsu bukkyō) of “old” Buddhism, so that there was a mixture of various “Buddhisms” in medieval times as well. In any case, the kenmitsu taiset theory requires a wholesale reevaluation of ancient Japanese Buddhism, not just Buddhism in the medieval period.
**Buddhism and the State in Ancient Japan**

From the later half of the seventh century, the state adopted policies to actively promote Buddhism, such as the construction of temples and statues, the sponsorship of rituals (hõe 法会) and the copying of sutras, and the promotion of monks and nuns. The era of Empress Jitõ 持統 (690–697) was a turning point. Jitõ sought to establish a state based on Chinese models of legal codes, the construction of a capital, and the compilation of a national history. Religious policy called for a dual religious foundation for a newly reborn Japanese state based on both jingi/kami rituals 神祇祭祀 and Buddhism. Japanese myths were created, providing a literary expression for the imperial transmission through a single family lineage. Elements of Buddhism based on the *Suvarṇaprabāsa Sūtra* were appropriated for state rituals that were to be performed across the country. The state also provided regulations for the ordination of monks and nuns, borrowing the Chinese system for state recognition of ordinands. The number of annual official ordinations (*nenbundōsha* 年分度者) was set at ten. The capital (Fujiwara-kyō) established by the empress was lined with splendid state-supported temples such as Yakushi-ji, and she was cremated after her death.

The imperial line of Jitõ, continuing with Monmu 文武, Genmei 元明, Genshô 元正, and so forth, all attached great importance to Buddhism. The next emperor Shõmu 聖武 (724–749), in accordance with the wishes of Empress Kõmyô 光明, established Kokubun-ji 国分寺 and Kokubun-ni-ji 国分尼寺 around the country (see Tsunoda 1986–1997), and built the “big Buddha” (*daibutsu*) of Tõdai-ji (see Inoue 1966 and Horiike 1980–1982). The Kokubun-ji series of temples was modeled on the Chinese system and built with the advice of Dõji 尊寂, a monk who had traveled to China. When the capital was moved from Fujiwara-kyō to Heijõ-kyō (Nara) in 710, major temples such as Dai’an-ji 大安寺, Yakushi-ji, and Gangô-ji were transferred to the new capital. The temple holding the *daibutsu* was renamed “Tõdai-ji” 東大寺, and the residence of Empress Kõmyô was made into a nunnery and named “Hokke-ji” 法華寺. The empress’s daughter, who became the next *tennô* Kõken/Shõtoku 孝謙・称徳 (749–758 and 764–770), established the temple Saidai-ji 西大寺. In this way the new capital was filled with large, state temples. The copying of the Buddhist canon also was a large-scale state-supported project. The details of this project are recorded in the *Shôsōin documents* 正倉院文書, which have received close scrutiny recently (see Yamashita 1999). It should also be noted that Shõmu himself was ordained a monk, the first case of an ordained *tennô* in Japanese history. Shõmu abdicated at around the same time he was ordained, and his daughter Kõken/Shõtoku also abdicated once before becoming a nun, and then later ascended the throne again. This is notable as the only case in Japanese history where a *tennô* reigned as an ordained Buddhist monk/nun (see Katsuura 2000). The system for regulating the sangha was gradually institutionalized,
and in 734 (Tenpyō 6) it was required that anyone to be ordained as an official monk or nun must master two texts: the *Lotus Sūtra* and *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra*. It is presumed that this requirement was also influenced by the advice of Dōji.

The imperial line of Jitō came to an end with Kōken/Shōtoku, and shifted to the line of Kōnin (770–781) and Kanmu (781–806), and the capital also shifted first to Nagaoka and then to Heian (Kyoto). It is often said that the capital was moved in order to avoid the political meddling of the Buddhist establishment, but this theory is no longer accepted. The capital was moved because there was a change in the imperial line. Kanmu performed a *kōten ritual* and announced the change in imperial lines. This Kōnin imperial line also followed a policy promoting Buddhism, establishing major temples in the new capital such as Tō-ji and Sai-ji. Kanmu was a strong supporter of Saichō, and Saga Ōtsukayama (809–823) supported Kūkai (see below).

**Jingi Rituals and the State in Ancient Japan**

At the time of Tenmu and Jitō at the end of the seventh century, the Japanese state developed a series of state religious rituals (*jingi saishi*) that were based on religious rituals current at the time in T'ang China but modified somewhat. The Japanese regulations (*ritsuryō*) from this time include a section on “kami-related” matters (*jingiryō*), but the contents were prepared on the basis of the T'ang ritual regulations (*shirei*). The contents of these two codes are identical in many respects, but there are some crucial differences. The twin pillars of the imperial rites in China were the rituals for honoring “heaven” (*kōshi*) and the rituals for honoring the imperial ancestors (*sōbyō*), and the regulations in general were based on this structure. A comparison of the T'ang regulations and the Japanese *jingiryō* show that the regulations for ritual sacrifices (*shakuten*) in the T'ang regulations are covered under the “scholarly regulations” (*gakuryō*) in Japan; that the Japanese regulations do not make a distinction between the ritual honoring of the heavenly deities (*shì*) and the ritual honoring of earthly deities (*sai*); that the *jingirei* includes instructions concerning imperial ascension rituals not found in the Chinese regulations; and that the *jingiryō* includes descriptions of *ōharai*, a matter that did not exist in the Chinese regulations.

The idea of the “mandate of heaven” 天命, that the person who has the favor of “heaven” ascends the imperial throne, developed early in China. In ancient Japan, however, the acceptance of this idea was shunned because of the implication that the imperial line could be overthrown and replaced. Instead, the idea was produced that the imperial family was in a blood relationship and descended from the gods, and this idea was expressed through the creation of myths. This significant difference was reflected in the respective codes, such as
the inclusion of imperial ascension rituals in the jingiryō. These imperial ascension rituals consisted of the sensoshiki 賢祚式 and the daijōsai 大嘗祭 accession ceremonies. It was also at this time that Ise Shrine was identified as the place that enshrines the ancestral deities of the imperial family (see Hayakawa 1986).

The jingiryō prescribed thirteen types of state rituals to be carried out nineteen times in a year. The most important were the rituals of praying for and blessing the crops in the spring, and the rituals for celebrating the harvest in the fall. The first consisted of an annual festival of prayers (kinensai/toshigoi no matsuri 祈年祭), and the latter included the three celebrations of offering fruits from the new harvest: the shin’jōsai/kan’name no matsuri 神嘗祭,¹ ainamesai/ainie no matsuri 相嘗祭,² and the niinamesai 新嘗祭.³ The four celebrations (three types) of the kinensai, niinamesai, and the tsukinamisai 月次祭 (twice, once each in the sixth and twelfth months) were called “the four festivals” (shikasai 四節祭), and were considered the most important rituals. All of the most important shrine officials from around the country would gather for a hanpei 斑幣 offering⁵ on these occasions. Also, the jingiryō included provisions for the ōharai purification ritual which is not found in the T’ang regulations, indicating that having state rituals for removing impurity was considered important in Japan (see Yamamoto 1992).

It was only a few decades after the promulgation of the jingiryō, however, that it was necessary to revise these state rituals. As Okada Shōji (1994) has shown, new official rituals were introduced one after the other from the last half of the eighth century into the ninth century. These new rituals were lined up along with the jingiryō rituals to form the core of state jingi rituals. These included local festivals such as the Kasuga matsuri 春日祭, Hirano matsuri 平野祭, Sonokarakami matsuri 圓幸神祭, Kamo matsuri 賀茂祭, Matsuo matsuri 松尾祭, Umemiya matsuri 梅宮祭, Ōharano matsuri 大原野祭, Ômiwa matsuri 大神祭, Taima matsuri 当麻祭, Hiraoka matsuri 平岡祭, Isakawa matsuri 池川祭, Yamashina matsuri 山科祭, and so forth. Eventually the ceremony of the hanpei 斑幣 offering was not performed during jingiryō rituals, and the significance of this ceremony changed. The newly-established official rituals merged with the evolving jingiryō rituals to form the system of state rituals, forming the core of Japanese jingi rituals from the beginning of the Heian period to the end of the Muromachi period.

1. An annual festival during which the emperor offers, at Ise Shrine, sake and food made with rice from the new harvest.
2. The offering of fresh grain from the new harvest at specifically designated shrines.
3. The harvest festival and offering of grain from the new harvest at the imperial palace and at shrines throughout Japan. The first niinamesai after the ascension of a new emperor is the daijōsai 大嘗祭.
4. A festival celebrated twice a year, on the eleventh day of the sixth and twelfth months, bringing together state officials for prayers.
5. The offering of a nusa 祭 (zig-zag shaped paper) by state officials during a state-supported ritual.
The Rejection of Taoism

Taoism, along with Confucianism and Buddhism, is one of the representative religious traditions of China. Throughout the long history of China, these three traditions have, at different times, come into furious conflict, have mutually influenced each other, and have cooperated harmoniously. There are differences of opinion as to how Taoism should be understood and categorized, but it can be described as a fusion of ancient Chinese beliefs in deities, the philosophy of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu (rōsō shisō 老莊思想), concepts of hermit-wizards (shinsen shisō 神仙思想), and various folk beliefs and customs, evolving further under the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism. Gradually various rituals, institutions, and teachings developed, religious specialists (male 道士 and female 女冠) appeared, and a Taoist religion with its own world view (道観) and religious facilities and activities took form. Eventually Taoist culture—not just Buddhism—was transmitted to Yamato. Many aspects of Taoist culture were accepted into Japan and flourished especially during the reign of Tenmu, in the second half of the seventh century. Examples of Taoist influence are mahito 真人, one of the so-called “eight-colored titles” yakusa no kabane 八色の姓 established during this period, and the posthumous title of Tenmu (天智中興真人天皇).

By the eighth century, however, the situation began to change, and there was a sharp difference of opinion among those at the center of political power as to whether or not Taoism should be accepted. Eventually, after the revolt against Nagaya ô (Nagaya ô no hen 長屋王の変) in 729, when the Fujiwara family took the reigns of power, state policy tightened against the acceptance of Taoism, and envoys to T’ang China were instructed not to bring back any documents related to Taoism. As a result there were no examples of Taoist religious specialists in Japan, and a specifically Taoist world view did not take root. Japan chose a policy of developing its own religious jingi rituals and practices that were different from the Taoist tradition in China (see NOGUCHI 1996, 1997 and SHINKAWA 1999).

Dōji and Gyōki

The two monks who best represent the Nara period are Dōji 道基 (?–744) and Gyōki 行基 (668–749) (see INOUÉ KAORU 1961 and SAKUMA 1983). Dōji was a monk who supported state Buddhism during the first half of the Nara period. Upon returning to Japan after studying Buddhism in T’ang China, he received the confidence and support of the Fujiwara family and Nagaya ô. He was involved in the compilation of the Nihon shoki, and wrote many of the entries related to Buddhism, such as those on the official transmission of Buddhism, on the early conflict between those who supported and those who rejected the acceptance of Buddhism, on Shōtoku Taishi, on Sōmin 僧旻, and so forth (see YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 2002). In addition, his advice was probably crucial in the
development of state policies such as the emphasis on the *Lotus Sūtra* and *Śrīvakṣaprabhāṣa Sutra*, the construction of the Kokubun-ji temple network, and the invitation of vinaya-precept monks from China.

Gyōki, on the other hand, was supported by local clans and was the focus of the fervent support of the masses (see Inoue Kaoru 1959 and 1997, Yoshida Kazuhiko 1986). He was at first criticized by the central government, but later his social work—such as his role in the construction of bridges, shelters, and lakes—won the trust and support of the government. He cooperated in raising funds for constructing the “big Buddha,” and was eventually given the high rank of *daisōjõ* 大僧正. Gyōki traveled from town to town spreading the Buddhist teachings, and it is said that he was beloved by the people and was called a bodhisattva. It is also said that he established forty-nine centers of worship in the Kinai area alone (the “forty-nine temples” 四十九院 shijūkuin). Finally, many women were included among his disciples.

**Aristocratic Buddhism, Local Clan Buddhism, and the Buddhism of the Masses**

The powerful clan families (*ujizoku*) were gradually incorporated as state officials from the end of the seventh and into the eighth century, until they became “aristocrats.” Many of them were fervent supporters of Buddhism, but the focus of their activities was the family temple or their own homes. As Katsuura (2000) has recently clarified, monks and nuns were frequent guests at the homes of aristocrats, sometimes for a short period but often for a much longer period. Those who stayed for a long period took on the character of “family” monks or nuns. Examples include the monks and nuns of the Nagaya family as recorded on the *Nagaya ōke mokkan* 長屋王家木簡 (wooden strips with notations), the Silla monk Rigan 理願 of the Ōtomo no Yasumaro 大伴安麻呂 family, Enkyō 延慶 of the Fujiwara no Nakamaro 藤原仲麻呂 family, and the nun Shōshō 聖証 of the Fujiwara no Kuzumaro 藤原久須麻呂 family. These monks/nuns would take care of the family’s Buddhist affairs and ceremonies, lead sutra copying, and teach calligraphy. Although it was known that such “family clerics” 家僧 kasō (or “family teachers” 家師 kashi,門師 monshi) existed in China, it was only recently discovered that such figures were also active in Japan in the homes of the aristocrats. It is possible to characterize such famous monks as Genbō 玄坊, Ganjin 鑑真, and Dōkyō 道鏡 as the “family clerics” of the imperial family, and it is known that Dōji began his career as a family monk for the Nagaya family. Katsuura argues that Buddhist activity in ancient Japan was not limited to temples, but also had private homes as one of its foundations. This is an important point that has been overlooked by those who would understand the Buddhism of this time only in terms of “official monks” 官僧 kansō and “privately-ordained monks” 私度僧 shidosō. The homes of the aristocrats often included Buddhist facilities, were adorned with Buddhist statues and
images, were the site of Buddhist ceremonies, and were often used for the practice of sutra copying. The sutra copying of the Nagaya family, for example, resulted in two famous collections—the Wadôkyô 高鈔經 and the Jinkikyô 神龜經—both large-scale copies of the Buddhist canon.

At the local level the clan families, as in previous times, continued to build temples and Buddhist images, welcomed monks and nuns, and sponsored Buddhist ceremonies (see Suzuki 1994). It is probably safe to assume that, like the aristocratic families of the capital, the local clan families also sponsored and invited monks and nuns to stay at their homes. When a monk from a major temple in the capital would visit a local area, he would often give a lecture on Buddhist teachings. Buddhist activities in local areas are vividly described in collections of tales such as the Nihon ryôiki (see Nakamura 1973). One of the fascinating aspects of this collection is that it reveals the Buddhist faith not only of the local clan families but also of the common people, including, for example, stories of how people of a certain village cooperated in constructing a Buddhist place of worship, how two poor fishermen were lost at sea but were saved by chanting “Namu Shakamuni-butsu,” how a miner was accidentally caught underground but was saved through his Buddhist faith, how Buddhist ceremonies and sutra copying were performed in a local setting, and so forth. Buddhist customs, such as performing memorial services a week or seven weeks after a person’s death, were widespread among the common people by around the middle of the eighth century. The tales include scenes of the major temples in the capital (such as Daian-ji) as well, such as that of a poor woman making a visit to the temple, indicating that the state temples were open also to the common people.

It is often said that Buddhism spread to the masses during the Kamakura period, and that the birth of so-called “new Kamakura Buddhism” was the first appearance of “Buddhism for the masses” in Japan. This view, however, is no longer tenable. Buddhism had spread among the masses to a great extent already by the Nara and Heian periods, and can be traced as far back as the Hakuhô period (see Yoshida 1995).

Characteristics of Buddhist Faith in Ancient Japan

The characteristics of Buddhist faith in ancient Japan can be known through collections of Buddhist stories such as the Nihon ryôiki and Nihon kanryô-roku 日本感靈録, inscriptions on Buddhist images (see Môrî 1985), postscripts on copies of sutras, temple histories (engi) and registers, biographies of monks such as the Enryaku sôroku 延暦僧録 and Gyôki nenpu 行基年譜, and various

state documents, histories, and other historical materials. One is struck by how different these practices were from the so-called “orthodox” Buddhism of India. In the past these differences have been explained or understood as the result of the mixture of Buddhism with indigenous religious elements in Japan, or as an expression of a unique Japanese spirituality. If we compare the Buddhist faith of ancient Japan with the contemporaneous situation in China and Korea, however, it is clear that the Buddhist faith of ancient Japan was a direct import from China and Korea. An important task for the future is to scrutinize the historical materials on Buddhism in ancient Japan and compare them carefully with related historical materials from that time in China and Korea, in order to clarify which elements were held in common, as well as identify any differences.

Women and Buddhism

One of the characteristics of Buddhism in ancient Japan is the prominent role of women. The *Nihon shoki* records that the first person in Yamato to take ordination was the daughter of Shiba Tarto, and that she was named Zen-shin’ni. This passage in the *Nihon shoki* shows indications of embellishment by the editors, but there is no good reason to doubt that her ordination was a historical fact. And in the following years nuns were very active in the Yamato of the seventh century, with the construction of many nunneries such as Sakata-dera and Toyoura-dera.

Even after the incorporation of the official regulations concerning Buddhist monks and nuns in the eighth century, the number of nuns continued to be significantly large, and nuns also participated in the official Buddhist ceremonies in the imperial palace. The imperial line at this time consisted of Jitõ, Monmu, Genmei, Genshô, Shômu, and Kôken, of which the four marked with an asterisk were women. Again, Shômu’s empress Kömyô was a powerful figure. Many nuns were in positions of influence during this period, and were active in managing and executing Buddhist affairs at the court. The empress Kömyô was instrumental in having Kokubun-ji built in all parts of the country, a system modeled on that of China. Nuns were also active in areas beyond the Buddhism of the court. Many of the “family clerics” that resided in the homes of the aristocrats were in fact nuns. Female religious figures were also active in local areas, receiving the support of local clan families and the common people. The followers of Gyôki included many nuns, and they constructed numerous nunneries.

Another important point is that there were also a large number of women among the lay supporters of Buddhism. In the world of state Buddhism and the

7. On stone monument inscriptions see *Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan 1997* and *Atarashi Kodaishi no Kai 1995.*
Buddhism of the imperial court, there were many women emperors and empresses, as well as other women at the court, who pursued policies that strongly supported Buddhism. Many women in aristocratic circles also supported Buddhism, and historical records reveal that they were active in the production of Buddhist images and paintings, and in sutra copying. The same could be said for local clan families. Stories such as those in the *Nihon ryōiki* show that women were deeply involved in Buddhism. Many women among the common people were also involved in a variety of Buddhist activities (see Nishiguchi 1987, Takagi Yutaka 1988).

This situation began to gradually change from the later part of the Nara period and into the early Heian period. With the shift in imperial line to that of Kōnin and Kanmu, the *Naikubu jūzenji* regulations were introduced in 772 by Kōnin, after which Buddhist affairs at the court were managed by the *jūzenji*, or ten male monks. Later, under Kanmu, a new system of annual ordinands was introduced in 806 on the advice of Saichō. This proved to be a crucial change of policy that established the long-term framework for Buddhism in Japan (see below). This change in policy meant that henceforth the annual ordinands would be assigned according to “school/sect” *shūha*, laying the foundation for the sectarianism of Japanese Buddhism. Ushiyama (1990) argues that this was a turning point in Japanese Buddhism, after which only male ordinands were trained to run the various Buddhist sects. As a result women, for the most part, lost the opportunity to be ordained, and the number of officially ordained women decreased drastically. Many nunnery lost support and were abandoned, and some became temples for male monks. Nuns were thus forced out of involvement in state and court Buddhist affairs, and the focus of their activities shifted to other areas (see Katsuura 1995 and 2000; Yoshida et al., 1999).

### The Amalgamation of Kami and Buddhas

The mixture and amalgamation of indigenous deities (*kami*) and “foreign” buddhas has often been explained and understood in terms of a unique development within the Japanese archipelago as a “Japanese” phenomenon. The usual explanation was that there was conflict between Buddhism and the indigenous kami beliefs and practices (*kami shinkō*) in Yamato when Buddhism was first transmitted to Japan, but eventually the supporters of Buddhism won the day. After this there was a gradual merging of Buddhism and local spirituality, leading eventually to the religious culture known as the “amalgamation of kami and buddhas” (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合). Tsuji Zennosuke was the first to put together this theory academically; in an article on “the origin of the honji suijaku theory” first published in 1907 (see Tsuji 1983), he presented an outline of the route supposedly taken by which the idea of the amalgamation of kami
and buddhas originated and developed in Japan, eventually giving rise to the theory of the relationship between buddhas and kami as that of “basis” and “traces” (honji suijaku 本地垂迹). Tsuji’s theory has long been accepted as standard. This theory of “internal origin,” however, came in for early criticism by Tsuda Sōkichi, who pointed out that the same phenomena explained as a Japanese amalgamation of kami and buddhas can also be found in the early Chinese biographies of monks 高僧伝 (see reprint in Tsuda 1964). I have followed up on Tsuda’s suggestion and concluded that the amalgamation of kami and buddhas in ancient Japan developed through the acceptance of such ideas that were already present in Chinese Buddhism (see Yoshida 1996).

The historical documents relating to the amalgamation of kami and buddhas in ancient Japan often state that the kami suffer from “shintō recompense” 神道報 due to their heavy “karmic offenses” 罪業; or that the kami confess that they became such due to their “karmic destiny” 宿業; or say that they want to escape from the “kami way” (shintō) because of the deep suffering that accompanies having a “kami body” 神身; or that they plead to take refuge in the “three treasures” or “Buddha dharma” of Buddhism in order to be saved from their current suffering and karmic path 業道, thus reflecting an attitude of wanting to be liberated from being kami (神身離脱). Stories with these elements can be found in the historical documents of shrine-temples (jingū-ji 神宮寺) such as Kehi Jingū-ji 気比神宮寺, Wakasa 若狭 Jingū-ji, Tado 多度 Jingū-ji, and Kaharu 香春 Jingū-ji, as well as in the Nihon ryōiki. These stories were understood in the past as indicating that such ideas were unique to Japan. The same type of stories, logic, and vocabulary, however, are also found in Chinese texts such as the Biographies of Eminent Monks (Kōsōden 高僧伝) and Further Biographies of Eminent Monks (Zoku kōsōden 続高僧伝). These ideas, and even the vocabulary, were imported into Japan as the result of influence from Chinese Buddhism.

Thus it is proper to say that the concepts of the amalgamation of kami and buddhas in Japan were introduced and implanted from Chinese Buddhism. It is likely that monks who had traveled to and studied in China, and had a good understanding of the amalgamation of deities and buddhas in China—such as Dōji, Saichō, and Kūkai—transmitted this way of thinking to Japan.

Saichō and Kūkai

The monks who best represent Buddhism in the early Heian period are Saichō 最澄 (767–822) and Kūkai 空海 (774–835). These two were deeply involved in the management of state Buddhism and made important contributions in this regard, but in addition had a definitive influence on the later development of Buddhism in Japan. The new Buddhist system that was formed around them defined the Buddhism of the Heian and Kamakura periods.

Saichō was born Mitsu no Obito Hirono 三津首広野. The Mitsu family was a
clan of Chinese immigrant descent in the Shiga area of Ômi province. His father Momoe used his private home as a Buddhist temple and was diligent in worshipping the buddhas and chanting sutras. Hirano entered the local Ômi Kokubun-ji and became the disciple of a monk named Gyôhyô when he was eleven years old, took the tonsure (tokudo 得度) at the age of fourteen, and was fully ordained as a monk at the age of nineteen. Saichô entered Mt. Hiei and performed mountain ascetic practices for twelve years, and was appointed one of the ten official ordinands (jûzenji) for the year 797, at which time he descended from the mountain and served the court of Emperor Kanmu. Doctrinally he focused on the Lotus Sûtra, and showed an interest in the Chinese T’ien-t’ai 天台 tradition. He traveled to T’ang China in 804, climbed Mt. T’ien-t’ai and visited various temples there (including the head temple Kuo-ch’ing ssu 国清寺), and received the transmission of the T’ien-t’ai tradition. He returned to Japan in 805, also receiving a transmission in the new esoteric Buddhist tradition along the way. In 806, Saichô’s proposal—with the endorsement of Gomyô 護命 of Gangô-ji—to assign the annual ordinands according to school/sect was approved, thus introducing an important change in the official system regulating Buddhism. This was a turning point in the development of sectarian Buddhism in Japan. It also marked the official founding of the Tendai school, for which two ordinands were to be appointed annually. One of these was to focus on Tendai proper (shikangô 禪観業) but the other was to focus on the esoteric tradition (shanagô 詩那業). Saicho was involved in a doctrinal debate with the Hossô monk Tokitsu 徳一 from 817 to 821, during which he composed works such as Shô kenjitsu ron 照権実論, Shugo kokkai ron 守護国界論, Ketsu kenjitsu ron 決権実論, and Hokke shûku 法華秀句. In his later years Saichô focused on establishing a new ordination platform on Mt. Hiei, composing works such as Kenkai ron 顕賢戒論. Saichô portrayed the regimen of precepts kept in Japan until that time as inferior “Hinayâna” precepts, and asked the government to approve the establishment of a new ordination platform on Mt. Hiei based on “Mahâyâna” precepts. This proposal met strong opposition from the Nara Buddhist establishment, and was approved only after Saichô’s death. The Mahâyâna precepts promoted by Saichô were based on the Bonmô-kyô (Fan wang ching 梵網経, a Chinese apocryphon; T 24, no. 1484), but the idea of basing ordination on these precepts was an original idea of Saichô, not found in India or China. Saichô’s view of the precepts had an enormous influence on Buddhism in Japan, and opened the door for an increasing neglect of the precepts. Saichô’s official biography is found in the Eizan Daishi den 東山大師伝, by his disciple Shinchu 眞忠 (or Ninchu 仁忠) (see Andô and Sonoda 1974, Sonoda 1981, Saeke 1992).

Kûkai was born Saeki no Atai 佐伯直, in the home of a local clan family in the Tada area of Sanuki province. He first studied Confucianism at university, but then became interested in Buddhism, and practiced mountain asceticism in the
provinces of Awa and Tosa. At this time he was a “privately-ordained” monk (shidosō 私度僧). It is said that he composed a treatise “on the three teachings” (of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism) at this time. He traveled to T’ang China in 804; just before leaving he received official ordination. In T’ang he learned the esoteric teachings of Shingon 真言 Buddhism under Hui-kuo 惠果, which he transmitted to Japan upon his return in 806. He then spread esoteric Buddhism throughout Japan, introducing faith in Mahāvairocana (Dainichi). The emperor Saga took an interest in Kūkai and supported his work. In 822 Kūkai was appointed to perform ceremonies “for the protection of the country,” and in the next year he was given control over the important Kyoto temple Tō-ji 東寺, which became a center for esoteric Buddhism. He was appointed Shōsōzu 小僧都 in 824, and Daisōzu 大僧都 in 827. He retreated to the mountain center of Kongōbu-ji 金剛峰寺 on Mt. Kōya 高野山 in 832, and passed away in 835. His major works include Ben kenmitsu nikyō ron 弁顕密二教論, in which he discusses the comparative ranking of exoteric and esoteric Buddhism, and the Himitsu mandala jūjishin ron 秘密曼荼羅十住心論, in which he argues for the superiority of Shingon Buddhism, and the poetry collection Shōryōshū 性耀集 in ten volumes (see Takagi Shingen 1997).

The Formation of Sectarianism: The “Eight Schools” System

Sectarianism in Japanese Buddhism, as mentioned above, received a major impetus in Enryaku 25 (806) with the implementation of a new ordination system. This revised system was proposed by Saichō, with the endorsement of Nara monks such as Gomyō, and approved by the government. The revision called for assigning a specific number of annual ordinands to each of the seven schools of Buddhism: the “six schools” (but actually only four schools) in Nara and the new Tendai school. This system of annual ordinands began in the tenth year of Jitō (696) by officially sanctioning ten annual ordinands. At this early date there were no distinct “schools,” and thus the ordinands were not assigned to any specific tradition. The Enryaku-period revision, however, incorporated the concept of “schools” (shūha) and assigned three ordinands each to the Hossō 法相 and Sanron 三論 (which included the Kusha 俱舍 and Jōjitsu 成実) schools, and two each to the Kegon 華厳, Ritsu 律, and Tendai 天台 schools, increasing the total annual ordinands to twelve. As a result, the state officially recognized seven independent “schools,” leading to the development of sectarianism. A little later, on the twenty-third day of the first month in Jōwa 2 (835), the government approved an additional three ordinands to be assigned annually to the Shingon school, thus raising to eight the number of officially recognized schools. Thus arose the system of “eight schools” (hasshū 八宗) which dominated the religious world of the Heian and Kamakura periods.

The early sprouts of this sectarianism actually began to germinate prior to
the Enryaku-period revision. Documents in the Shōsōin collection from the middle of the eighth century already contain references to groups with the term shū (衆 or 宗). In this context, however, as Sonoda Kōyū (1981) and Sone Masato (2000) have pointed out, these terms refer to academic schools or groups that were quite different from the sectarian “schools” of the Heian and Kamakura periods and those which currently exist. During the Nara period, monks of different “schools” lived in the same temple, worshipped the same buddha, and chanted the same sutras. There was little sense of doctrinal or exclusivist sectarianism. The term shū began to take on sectarian connotations from the middle of the eighth century, but these were preliminary developments, and the definitive point in the birth of true sectarianism was the new system of ordinands introduced in 806. After this point, anyone who took the path of an official monk had to follow this system and become ordained as a monk of one of the officially recognized “schools” at the ordination platform associated with that school. The phrase “the six schools of Nara” (nanto rokushū 南都六宗) is often used; however, this is not a phrase from the Nara period but has real referents only with the adoption of this revised system in 806. Sone (2000) argues that it was only after this time that each “school” decided on identifying their own “orthodox” Chinese founder and their basic texts, leading to the formation of sectarian doctrine (shūgi 宗義) and sectarian studies (shūgaku 宗学). Eventually sectarian temples were also founded.

In Tenchō 7 (830), Emperor Junna decreed that each school submit a description of their teachings (Tenchō roppon shūsho 天長六本宗書), and a representative of each school prepared a report on the doctrinal characteristics and historical development of their own tradition. The six documents that were submitted were the Daijō Hossō kenshin sho 大乗法相研神章 by Gomyō, the Daijō Sanron daigi sho 大乗三論大義抄 by Gen’ei 玄叡, the Kegon-shū ichijō kaishin ron 華厳宗一乘開心論 by Fuki 普機, the Kairitsu denrai ki 戒律伝来記 by Buan 豊安, the Tendai hokkeshūgi shū 天台法華宗義集 by Gishin 義真, and the Himitsu mandala jūjūshin ron by Kūkai. There was little of what could be called “Buddhist doctrinal studies” (bukkyō kyōgaku 仏教教學) in Japan in the sixth and seventh centuries, and it was only in the middle of the eighth century that doctrinal studies by some scholar-monks begin to appear, but they were few and far between, and their arguments still not mature. By the ninth century, however, doctrinal studies were promoted and kept pace with the formation of sectarianism, and the study and debate of Buddhist thought, as well as the production of doctrinal treatises, became prominent.

The Periodization of Japanese Religious History

In dividing the history of Japanese religion into periods, the rise of the new Buddhist movements in the Kamakura period is often presented as aepochal
development. The figures who appeared in the Kamakura period—Hōnen
Shinran, Eisai, Dōgen, Nichiren, Ippen—are considered to be different from those who came before, presenting teachings that
were selective and easy to understand and practice, and it is believed that Bud-
dhism spread among the common people and the warrior caste as never before.
In contrast to the Buddhism of the state and the aristocrats, it was said, this new
Buddhism offered salvation for the common people. This was called a “new
Buddhism” that reformed the Buddhism of old. Today, however, this inter-
pretation should be called “the theory on Kamakura new Buddhism” (Kamakura
shin bukkyō ron), a theory that began among intellectuals of the
Meiji period and the early scholars of modern historiography. As Ōsumi Kazuo
(1975) has pointed out, the theories of Hara Katsurō (the founder of the
study of medieval history in Japan) compared the formation of new move-
ments in the Kamakura period with the European Protestant reformation (see
Hara 1927), and subsequent studies in this area were greatly influenced by this
idea. The discussion of Kamakura new Buddhism in terms of a “religious refor-
mation” was standard for most historians almost to the end of the twentieth
century, and the history of medieval Japanese Buddhism was usually presented
with the new Kamakura movements at the center of discussion.

This interpretation, however, is more and more perceived by Japanese histo-
rarians as a theory of the past. Kuroda Toshio proposed his theory of the “system
of exoteric and esoteric [Buddhist power structures]” (kenmitsu taisei ron
1975), and this theory has had a decisive influence on our view of
medieval history, society, and religion. The most important point of Kuroda’s
theory is that the “new” Kamakura movements had not spread very much at all
during the Kamakura period, and it was still the “old” Buddhism of the exo-
teric/esoteric schools (kenmitsu bukkyō) that were the dominant
influence on the state and society in general. Scholars of the later medieval and
modern period have also proposed that the “new” Buddhist movements were
not very influential during the Kamakura period but only began to spread and
permeate society in the later medieval and early modern period. This “new
Buddhism” began to permeate society and the common people along with the
formation of the ie as a dominant social unit around the fifteenth century,
together with the development of “funerary Buddhism” (sōshiki [sōsai] bukkyō
葬式 [葬祭] 仏教). At the same time, studies of ancient Buddhism (as discussed
above) have shown that Buddhism had already spread to a great extent in local
areas and among the common people from ancient times. Thus it must be said
that the “theory on Kamakura new Buddhism,” as understood for many years,
is no longer tenable.

If we were to summarize the findings of recent scholarship, it must be said
that the two major times of epochal change for Japanese Buddhism occurred in
the ninth century and in the fifteenth century. As explained above, the ninth
The century saw the development of sectarianism in Japanese Buddhism, and was the time in which the structure of the “eight schools system” was developed. It was also at this time that the system of regulations for official monks and religious ranks was established. Again, the incorporation of Buddhist rituals—such as the *Gosai-e* 御斎会, the *Yuima-e* 維摩会, and *Saishô-e* 最勝会—as state ceremonies was established at this time, and were managed and performed by the monks of the eight exoteric-esoteric schools. The amalgamation of kami and buddhas also began at around the middle of the eighth century, and permeated society in the Heian period. At first the idea of the kami wanting to escape their current state, and then the idea of the buddhas as the “basic ground” with the kami as their “phenomenal traces,” were imported from China, and eventually evolved into the *honji-suijaku* theory, which functioned as a way to combine the kami with the buddhas and bodhisattvas of Buddhism. As a result, temples and shrines were established together, or next to each other, and functioned as a unit in providing religious services. Thus it was during the ninth century that the basic structure was created for religion in Japan, continuing through the Heian and Kamakura periods and up to the fifteenth century (see Yoshida Kazuhiko 2003).

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