New Angles of Critical Vision on the Study of Prince Shōtoku

Mark Dennis(America Wisconsin大学博士課程)

大学博士課程)

Critically assessing how knowledge about Buddhism has been produced, transmitted, and constrained has become the concern of a growing number of Western, especially North American, scholars. Of particular interest has been determining how the institutional structures and racist attitudes of Western colonialism, and the traditional paradigms and intellectual isolation of Western Buddhist studies have produced misperceptions of Buddhism. In a similar way, scholars have also begun questioning how Japan's own colonial past, its racist attitudes and theories, and the dominant intellectual paradigms and social structures of Japanese Buddhist studies have affected our understanding of Japanese Buddhism.

Although Zen Buddhism has received the most attention in this regard, recent studies of Japan's Prince Shōtoku (574-622) are raising similar epistemological questions, a shift in focus that represents a substantive departure from both a large body of hagiographic works and from previous critical studies of Shōtoku. These earlier critiques of Shōtoku have generally been informed by religious or philosophical convictions, or, in the post-World War II period, have focused on recovering the 'real' Shōtoku by disproving the historicity of particular events or texts ascribed

to him.

The studies I cite below, however, are expanding this field of critical vision by investigating the historical circumstances and ideologies that produced the cult of Shōtoku, and by showing how intellectual and government elites have interpreted Shōtoku to support their academic theories and political policies. Before discussing these studies, however, I will briefly review recent critiques of traditional Western and Japanese Buddhist scholarship, and will describe the development of the Shōtoku cult.

1. Post-Oriental Buddhist scholarship

Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, helped induce the current movement toward greater epistemological and methodological reflection in North American Buddhist studies[1]. Said writes that Orientalism is a mode of discourse—with a supporting vocabulary, scholarship, and institutional base—created by Western colonialists to gain physical and psychological control over the 'Orient' and its inhabitants[2]. This discourse created and perpetuated a homogenized, hypostatized image of the racially, culturally, and intellectually inferior 'Oriental other', who was deemed incapable of representing himself. Said's groundbreaking work has spurred on a critical examination of the Orientalist legacy in Buddhist studies by creating an intellectual framework with which to better understand how dominant representations of Buddhism were influenced by the interests of a larger colonial project[3].

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[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978)

[2] Said, p. 2

[3] There have been a number of critical responses to Said's work from scholars of Buddhism. Bernard Faure claims that while Said has identified the negative and universalizing tendencies in Orientalist discourse, he fails to see the same

In response to Said's work, a growing body of research in Buddhist studies has emerged that is self-consciously post-Orientalist. *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, for example, takes up Said's arguments and applies them to specific cases in Buddhist studies[4]. This collection of essays reveals how Buddhist scholarship, under the influence of colonialism, has repeated wider Orientalist patterns: that is, Western scholars created a homogenized and hypostatized object 'Buddhism', for which the 'Oriental' informant was judged incapable of speaking[5]. As such, Western scholars were charged with the duty of recovering 'authentic Buddhism' from amidst the religion's ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts. In this way, these scholars gained control over the object they had created and became self-appointed curators of an antiquarian wisdom that lay dormant in a group of 'master texts'[6].

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deficiencies in non-Western discourses. See *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 5. Donald Lopez points out that Said failed to take into account the complex series of exchanges between 'Orientalizer' and 'Orientalized' in which Asians themselves also acted as agents who could influence these interchanges. See 'Introduction', *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 12

[4] *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

[5] A similar process occurred with the Buddha's own biography. Rhys Davids and other scholars believed that the Buddhist communities of the 'Orient' were incapable of recovering an objective biography of the Buddha, and thus set out to do so themselves through textual exegesis. Through this process of appropriating the Buddha's biography, these scholars were able to reinforce their claim to the origins of Buddhism. See Charles Hallisey, 'Roads Taken and not Taken in the Study of Theravāda Buddhism', *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 37-8.

[6] Philip Almond describes this process as 'textualization' in which "the essence of Buddhism came to be seen as expressed not 'out there' in the Orient, but in the

This search for an original and uncorrupted Buddhism among its canonical texts has been one of the defining characteristics of the field's 'classical paradigm', which, Frank Reynolds writes,

> places a strong emphasis on the study of texts and the intention of their presumed author; on the search for origins; on the primacy of the South Asian Sanskrit/Pali traditions; on the central importance of doctrines and scholastic systems; and on special attentiveness to the voices of monastic and social elites. Methodologically this traditional paradigm privileges a language centered philological approach, gives little attention to the historical context and usage of texts, emphasizes the production of authoritative critical editions and translations, and tends toward a positivistic view of historical methods and historical facts[7].

Reynold's work is one among a growing body of studies that suggests new directions being taken by North American scholars of Buddhism in response to the intellectual shortcomings of scholarship produced under these twin legacies of colonialism and the classical paradigm[8]. This

West through the control of Buddhism's own textual past." Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 3. Quoted in Hallisey, p. 37

[7] Frank Reynolds, 'Coming of Age: Buddhist Studies in the United States from 1972 to 1997', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 2/22 (1999), p. 462.

[8] See, for example, José Ignacio Cabezon, 'Buddhist Studies as a Discipline and the Role of Theory', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 18/2 (1995). See also, T. Griffith Foulk, 'Issues in the Field of East Asian Buddhist Studies: An Extended Review of *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 16/1 (1993). See also, Louis Gómez, 'Unspoken Paradigms: Meanderings through the Metaphors of a Field', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 18/2 (1995). See also, Frank Reynolds, 'Coming of Age: Buddhist Studies in the United States from 1972 to 1997', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 22/2 (1999).

literature suggests that scholars are placing greater emphasis on the study of modern, vernacular languages in an effort to understand contemporary forms of Buddhism as dynamic, living traditions of equal scholarly value to ancient texts and their classical languages. There has also been an effort to break free of the field's traditional intellectual isolation and text-based positivism by incorporating into current scholarship the methods and theories of outside disciplines such as archaeology, history, anthropology, and literary criticism[9].

Gregory Schopen, one of the most vocal critics of the classical paradigm, believes that the field's textual bias has created a situation in which 'textuality overrides actuality'[10]. That is, texts serve as unreliable historical witnesses of lived Buddhism because they can be difficult to date, can undergo multiple edits, and are often meant to inculcate particular ideals among their readers[11]. In response to these deficiencies, Schopen has turned to the study of epigraphic data, and has produced results that challenge many widely accepted interpretations of Buddhism[12].

Other scholars are examining the processes by which texts are

[9] For a discussion of these issues, see, for example, Peter Gregory's 'Is Critical Buddhism Really Critical?' *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 1997), pp. 286-97.

[10] 'Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism', *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 7.

[11] Schopen, p. 1

[12] Schopen claims that despite the existence of rules prohibiting monks and nuns from possessing money, epigraphic data proves that a number of them actually did. Monks who lived at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa in south India may have minted their own coins, suggesting either state sanction or counterfeiting. Schopen complains that such evidence has often been ignored by Buddhist scholars, or, when it has been examined, it has been reinterpreted to fit preconceived ideas created from textual study. Schopen, pp. 3-9.

produced, transmitted, and used, and seek to understand how they are related to broader issues of religious authority, political power, and other social processes including literacy and changing conceptions of time and history[13].

These and other recent approaches are meant to recover the religion's underlying diversity and elided voices, reveal the rhetoric and ideologies that lie beneath common representations of Buddhism, and account for the influence of indigenous traditions and institutions in the process of assimilating Buddhism to locally specific cultural and religious patterns.

2. Recent Critiques of Japanese Buddhism

A number of recent Western studies are challenging commonly accepted interpretations of Japanese Buddhism and the methodologies and interests that have produced them. T. Griffith Foulk writes that although Western scholars of Japanese Buddhism are heavily indebted to the research and methods of their Japanese counterparts, there is a growing awareness that the latter's scholarship often reflects the interests of sectarian institutions, which are part of normative traditions with theological dimensions[14]. These interests have led Western scholars to focus on the history of Japanese Buddhist schools and lineages, or on the lives and thought of important figures within these traditions[15]. This focus has not only closed off other avenues of scholarly inquiry but it has also isolated these scholars from Sinology, Japanology, and religious studies. Foulk believes, however, that Western scholarship is now moving beyond its initial

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[13] See Hallisey, pp. 31-61.

[14] Foulk, p. 108.

[15] Bernard Faure writes that the narrative of Zen Buddhism first gained legitimacy as the study of patriarchs, but notes that the ideological uses of this narrative have often been ignored. Faure, *Chan Insight*, p. 4.

apprenticeship and is beginning to articulate a new set of methods and interests[16].

This new direction is most conspicuous in the study of Zen Buddhism. Bernard Faure, Brian Victoria, Robert H. Sharf, and other scholars have challenged commonly held views of Zen that have become part of accepted Western academic discourse[17]. Sharf, for example, seeks to disabuse Western observers of a number of common misperceptions, including the view that Zen is a transhistorical phenomenon that lies at the foundation of all religious experience, or that it is a teaching that eschews logic for the 'direct perception'of reality. He also rejects the notion that Zen has been the principal inspiration for expressions of the Japanese artistic spirit, including landscape painting, calligraphy, and garden design[18]. Sharf claims that these and many other images of Zen have been produced by the 'proselytizing' of 'Japanese apologists' like D.T. Suzuki whose interpretations of Zen were attempts to respond to attacks on Buddhism from Western culture and state-supported Shintō, and to the social and political dislocations associated with the Meiji restoration[19]. Sharf contends that these interpretations were also shaped by

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[16] Foulk, pp. 102-110.

[17] See Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997). See also, for example, Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights; The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). See also Robert Sharf, 'The Zen of Japanese Nationalism', *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

[18] Sharf also claims that although Zen has been portrayed by its interpreters as an antinomian and iconoclastic tradition that has abandoned ritualism, such views ignore the highly regimented and ritualistic practices of monastic Zen. He contends, 'The *kōan* genre, far from serving as a means to obviate reason, is a highly sophisticated form of scriptural exegesis: the manipulation or 'solution' of a particular *kōan* traditionally demanded an extensive knowledge of canonical Buddhist doctrine and classical Zen literature'. Sharf, p. 108.

[19] Sharf, p. 108.

nihonjinron, a racist theory explicating the unique qualities of the culturally homogeneous and spiritually superior Japanese[20]. The studies of Faure and Victoria have been equally critical in their attempts to demystify widely accepted understandings of Zen. Before examining a similar process in the study of Prince Shōtoku, I will briefly review the development of the Shōtoku cult.

3. Development of the Shōtoku Cult

The *Nihonshoki* (compiled in 720), the first of the Six National Histories, is a key text in the formation of the Shōtoku cult. This text recounts the founding legends and great figures of Yamato, and describes an unbroken lineage of sovereigns that begins with Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. This lineage is traced through the descent of the Heavenly Grandson, Ninigi-no-mikoto, to the line of human sovereigns, which includes Prince Shōtoku's grandfather, father, and aunt[21].

The text also recounts the transmission of Buddhism from Paekche to Yamato in the mid-sixth century and the subsequent battle fought by the Soga (Shōtoku's kinship group and the principal supporters of Buddhism) and Mononobe over its acceptance[22]. The *Nihonshoki* ascribes to Shōtoku a

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[20] He also writes 'Suzuki ⋯ placed his reading of Buddhist history and exegesis in the interests of the most specious form of *nihonjinron*. Sharf, p. 127.

[21] Prince Shōtoku was the grandson of Emperor Kimmei (r. 539-571), son of Emperor Yōmei (r. 585-587), and nephew of Empress Suiko (r. 592-628).

[22] Two dates are offered for the official transmission of Buddhism to Yamato from Paekche. The *Gangōji garan engi narabi ruki shizaichō* records 538 as the date of its transmission, while the *Nihonshoki* lists 552. For a translation of the *Gangōji garan*, see Miwa Stevenson, 'The Founding of the Monastery Gangōji and a List of Its Treasure', *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 299-315. For a translation of the *Nihonshoki*, see W.G. Aston, *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 69* (Rutland VT:

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pivotal role in Buddhism's eventual victory and subsequent efflorescence, as it was he who, facing defeat on the battlefield, called upon the Four Heavenly Kings to grant victory to his forces. The Soga triumph helped solidify its political power base and thus ensured widespread support of Buddhism.

Shōtoku is also depicted as a devout practitioner and generous patron of Buddhism who donated land to the *saṃgha* and funded the construction of temples[23]. His keen intellectual interest and understanding of Buddhist doctrine, honed under the instruction of continental tutors, led to lectures at court on the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-* and *Lotus-sūtras*, lectures thought to constitute the basis for two of the three Buddhist commentaries later attributed to him (these texts are known collectively as the *Sangyō-gisho-Commentaries on the Three Sūtras*)[24].

The *Nihonshoki* also describes Shōtoku as a shining figure in the imperial line who, after his appointment to crown prince and regent in 593, played a leading role in the Yamato government until his death in 622. During this thirty year period, Shōtoku is credited with composing the *17-Article Constitution*, instituting a system of twelve ranks to distinguish court functionaries, and promoting diplomatic, religious, and cultural contacts with the continent.

Subsequent texts, rituals, and art work, many drawing on the *Nihonshoki*'s accounts, embellished these images of Shōtoku as father of Japanese Buddhism, sage ruler, and culture hero, thereby giving shape to

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Charles E. Tuttle, 1972).

[23] This included Shitennōji (Temple of the Four Heavenly Kings), which was built to commemorate the Soga victory

[24] The three commentaries are the *Shōmangyō-gishō* (*Commentary* on the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-sūtra*), the *Hokke-gisho* (*Commentary on the Lotus Sūtra*), and the *Yuimagyō-gisho* (*Commentary on the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*). The *Nihonshoki* mentions Shōtoku's lectures on the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-* and the *Lotus-sūtra*, but not on the *Vimalakīrtinirdaśa-sūtra*.

and transmitting a Shōtoku cult and discourse. These texts include the histories of temples associated with Shōtoku, such as Hōryūji and Gangōji, and a number of Shōtoku-biographies, such as the *Jōgū Shōtoku hōō teisetsu*[25]. There is also a wealth of non-textual material that includes statues, inscriptions, *maṇḍalas*, and illustrated biographies (*eden*)[26], some of which are believed to date from soon after Shōtoku's death. Among these works, the remains of a set of embroidered curtains called the *Tenjukoku maṇḍala* are thought to be among the earliest. The Shōtoku cult was also transmitted by the performance of rituals at Hōryūji and other temples, and through the interpretive accounts of the illustrated biographies given by monks to lay believers.

The Shōtoku cult was also reinforced through a body of auspicious omens, predictions, and supernatural events recorded in these sources. It is said that Shōtoku could speak at birth, and, at the age of two, faced the east and chanted 'hail to the Buddha'. Shōtoku was believed to possess the gift of clairvoyance and the Solomon like ability to listen simultaneously to the claims of ten men and produce a sagacious judgment for each. As the cult developed, moreover, Shōtoku came to be identified as the emanation of important Buddhist figures including

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[25] The *Jōgū Shōtoku hōō teisetsu* contains information on Shōtoku's family, political activities, and promotion of Buddhism. It credits him with instituting the system of twelve cap ranks, building Buddhist temples, lecturing on the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-sūtra*, and composing the *Sangyō-gisho*. The text also recounts Shōtoku's ability to listen simultaneously to the claims of eight men (not the ten of the *Nihonshoki*), and the appearance of a golden figure in a dream to explicate for Shōtoku the meaning of difficult passages in a Buddhist text. William E. Deal has translated passages from the *Nihonshoki* and th *Shōtoku Taishi hōō teisetsu*. See 'Hagiography and History: The Image of Prince Shōtoku', *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 316-333.

[26] These scrolls, which depict aspects of Prince Shōtoku's life, are housed in a number of Japanese temples.

Buddha, Maitreya, and Avalokiteśvara, as well as the reincarnation of Queen Śrīmālā and the Chinese T'ien-t'ai master Hui-ssu[27]. Shōtoku allegedly manifested himself in these and other forms, to provide inspiration and spiritual guidance to his followers, including Shinran, the founder of the True Pure Land school[28].

Modern Critical Studies of Prince Shōtoku

In the modern period[29], there has been a massive outpouring of

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[27] Queen Śrīmālā is the protagonist of the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-sūtra*, the root text of the *Shōmangyō-gisho*.

[28] Shōtoku, as Avalokiteśvara, appeared to Shinran in a dream during the latter's one-hundred day retreat at Rokkakudō temple. The content of the dream is recorded as follows:

Because, due to the retribution of past karma,
[you], the practitioner, are involved in sex,
I will manifest myself as a jade woman so that you can possess me.
I will adorn your life, and at the moment of death,
I will guide you to the land of ultimate happiness.

Quoted in Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread*, p. 122.

[29] Sakamoto Tarō divides Shōtoku studies into three periods: (1) the Middle Ages through the Edo period; (2) the Meiji period to the end of World War II; and (3) post World War II. According to Sakamoto, Shōtoku studies of the first period were generally hagiographic works produced by monks, although there were a number of Confucian critiques. The second period was characterized by works that generally accepted Shōtoku's image as a great leader and Buddhist figure. In the third period, based on uncertainties over the *Nihonshoki*, critical studies of Prince Shōtoku grew in number. See Matsuda Kazuaki, 'The History of Prince Shōtoku Research', *Shōtoku Taishi jiten*, ed. Ishida Hisatoyo (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1997), pp. 467-481. Since the Meiji period, there has been a large output of scholarly work on Prince Shōtoku. These studies can be classified into the following general categories:

scholarly and popular studies of Shōtoku that continues to the present day[30]. The 1,300th anniversary of the promulgation of the *17-Article Constitution* in 1903, and the 1,300th anniversary of Shōtoku's death in 1921 heightened interest in Shōtoku, as did the Japanese military government's appropriation of Shōtoku's image during World War II. During this period, there were few scholarly critiques of Shōtoku as most studies lauded his many virtues and accomplishments[31]. In the more open intellectual environment of the post-war period, however, a number of scholars began challenging the texts, ideas, and figures that had been held inviolate under imperial orthodoxy.

The historian Tsuda Sōkichi, jailed for his views during the war, was instrumental in beginning a process of exposing the inaccuracies in the ancient historical records. In his work, Tsuda challenged the *Nihonshoki*'s

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Prince Shōtoku's thought; texts (translations, critical editions, and exegesis); the Shōtoku cult; art work; temple studies; politics and economics; sectarian studies (particularly True Pure Land); biographies; family relations; Prince Shōtoku and Japanese culture; international activities; topical collections such as the *Shōmangyō-gisho ronshū* (Kyoto; Heirakuji Shoten, 1965); Prince Shōtoku and the *Nihonshoki* (or other such texts); and dictionaries. See *Shōtoku Taishi jiten*, ed. Ishida Hisatoyo (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1997), pp. 10-65, for a detailed bibliography of Shōtoku studies.

[30] In the last year, new material continues to appear and includes Takehiko Yoshimura's *Shōtoku Taishi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002), and NHK's three-hour television dramatization of Shōtoku's life titled 'Shōtoku Taishi', which aired in November, 2001.

[31] Confucian, Shinto, and nativist (*kokugaku*) thinkers have attacked Prince Shōtoku at various times for his perceived role in the propagation of Buddhism. Some have sought to uncover a sinister side to him, claiming that it was Shōtoku, not Soga Umako, who assassinated Emperor Sushun. For a brief discussion of some of these criticisms, see Kimio Itō, 'The Invention of *Wa* and the Transformation of the Image of Prince Shōtoku in Modern Japan' *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1998), pp. 41-2.

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accounts of Prince Shōtoku, including Shōtoku's alleged lectures on the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-* and the *Lotus-sūtras*, and thus rejected Shōtoku's authorship of the texts allegedly based on them[32]. Subsequent studies have cast further doubts on Shōtoku's authorship of the Sangyō-gisho, a position known as the 'false-composition-hypothesis'[33]. These efforts are part of a larger group of critical studies that have tried to reconstruct the 'authentic' Shōtoku by culling historically accurate accounts from hagiographic accretions, often relying on textual analysis to disprove the veracity of particular claims regarding Shōtoku's thought and deeds[34].

The recent work of Seiichi Ohyama has taken this search for the 'real' Prince Shōtoku to its logical extreme[35]. That is, Ohyama asserts that there is no reliable evidence indicating the existence of 'Prince Shōtoku' prior to the compilation of the *Nihonshoki*, and claims that the prince was the fabrication of the politician Fujiwara Fuhito (659-720) and the monk Dōji

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[32] Tsuda Sōkichi, *Nihon jōdai no kenky* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1930) and *Nihon koten no kenky* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1950)

[33] There are a number of studies that address the issue of Shōtoku's authorship. Some of these works take up one of the three texts, while others address the collection as a whole. See, for example, Fujieda Akira, *Shōmangyō-gisho'*, in *Nihon shisō taikei: Shōtoku Taishishū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975), pp. 484-544, and 'Hokuchō ni okeru *Shōmangyō* no denshō', *Tōhōgakuhō*, 40 (March 1967). See also, Koizumi Enjun, 'Tonkō *Shōman-gisho hongi*', *Shōtoku Taishi kenkyū* 5 (1970). See also, Ogura Toyofumi, Sangyō-gisho jōgū ōsen ni kansuru gigi', *Shōtoku Taishi to Asuka bukkyō*, ed. Tamura Enchō and Kawagishi Kōkyō (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1985). See also Fukui Kōjun 'Sangyō-gisho no seiritsu o utagau', *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 4/2 (1956).

[34] Michael Como writes 'These works can in general be characterized by their concern with issues of textual dating and verification along with a hermeneutic of retrieval which seeks to uncover the life and thought of Prince Kamimiya'. *Silla Immigrants and the Early Shotoku Cult: Ritual and the Poetics of Power in Early Yamato*(Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2000), p. 16.

[35] See Ohyama Seiichi, *Shōtoku Taishi no tanjō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999) and *Nagayaō mokkan to kinsekibun* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998).

(d. 744), who composed sections of the Nihonshoki that portray Shōtoku as a Buddhist.

Ohyama roundly criticizes other Shōtoku scholars for failing to free themselves from the 'spell' of Shōtoku hagiography and for not making the critical distinction between the fabricated images of Prince Shōtoku and the historical figure Umayado (One of Shōtoku's given names)[36]. Ohyama takes this distinction as the crucial point of entry for continued research into Shōtoku, and thus his work focuses on separating historically reliable material from devotional fancy.

Although Ohyama's work is an extension of the text critical methods of previous studies, it also represents an important challenge to accepted scholarship because of its call to establish greater critical distance from Shōtoku hagiography, and because of its concern for investigating the religious interests and political ideologies that helped to create the figure of Prince Shōtoku.

The work of the Japanese scholars Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, the principal exponents of so-called Critical Buddhism, represents another significant challenge to the legacy of Prince Shōtoku that comes from within Japan. These scholars have gained attention for their direct attacks on a wide range of topics associated with Japanese Buddhism[37],

[36] Ohyama accepts the existence of a historical figure Umayado, but contends very little information about him can be verified. Ohyama accepts only the following information to be true. Umayado (his given name) was the son of Emperor Yōmei, and was a member of the Soga line through his maternal grandmother. His date of birth was 574, but his date of death is uncertain. Umayado built and lived in the Ikaruga palace starting in 601. He also built Ikaruga temple nearby. Ohyama also accepts the dates of the murder of Umayado's son, Yamashiro-no-ōe-no-ō (643) and of the fire that destroyed Ikaruga temple (670). See Ohyama, *Shōtoku Taishi no tanjō*, pp. 7-8.

[37] They have also harshly criticized a number of other targets, including the work of well-known scholars of Japanese Buddhism and culture, the imperial institution, the

including two ideas closely associated with Shōtoku: 'harmony' (*wa*) and the 'thought of original enlightenment' (*hongaku shisō*)[38].

Rather than offering a direct, sustained critique of Shōtoku scholarship, however, Hakamaya and Matsumoto have tried to expose how ideas associated with him have corrupted Japanese Buddhism and culture, and have been used as ideological tools by governmental and intellectual elites to restrict critical thought. Hakamaya contends that *wa* is a "⋯ repressive principle wielded by the powerful to maintain the status quo and social order, and to restrict criticism⋯ The *wa* promoted since the time of Prince Shōtoku and his famous *17-Article Constitution* is not a Buddhist virtue. *Wa* is an enemy of Buddhism and an enemy of true peace. Buddhists should not give in to a compromising and mushy 'tolerance' that uncritically accepts all things as 'equal'."[39]

Hongaku shisō is faulted for promoting a form of non-dualistic thinking that denies causality and therefore 'does not allow for the existence of an Other, since all things are considered to arise from the single, undifferentiated primordial dhātu or locus, and that it is thus rendered

Kyoto School of philosophy, and Zen Buddhism

[38] *Hongaku shisō* is associated with other Buddhist doctrines including *Tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha nature. The Critical Buddhists contend that these are 'essentialist' doctrines that contravene the Buddhist teachings of emptiness and non self. *Tathāgatagarbha* is one of the main themes of the *Shōmangyō-gisho*, while *wa* is the topic of Article I of the *17-Article Constitution*. Article I states: 'Value harmony and follow the principle of nonopposition. All people have factional interests and few are wise. Therefore, some do not follow their ruler and their father, while others are at odds with the neighboring village. However, when the superior is harmonious and the inferior is congenial, and when there is agreement in the discussion of different matters, then understanding will naturally occur and no matters will remain unfinished'. Quoted in William Deal, p. 324

[39] Paul Swanson, 'Why They Say Zen Is Not Buddhism: Recent Japanese Critiques of Buddha-Nature', *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 1997), p. 17.

epistemologically and ethically incapable of dealing with the complex manifestations of otherness that force concrete ethical choices'[40]. Hakamaya and Matsumoto contend that *hongaku shisō*, despite claims that it promotes an all-embracing equality, is an inherently repressive, ātman-like doctrine that has been used to support militarism and theories of Japanese racial uniqueness (*nihonjinron*), and which lies at the root of a host of Japanese social ills, including discrimination against women, the *burakumin*, and Koreans.

Although their work has occasioned harsh attacks[41], it has also raised important epistemological issues that have stimulated a number of recent studies attempting to clarify the relationships that exist among Japanese Buddhist thought, racial attitudes, and the imperial legacy[42]. In this regard, their work is also significant because it tries to explain, from

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[40] Steven Heine, 'Critical Buddhism and Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō: The Debate over the 75-fascicle and 12-fascicle Texts', *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 1997), pp. 256-57.

[41] A number of scholars reject the claim that *hongaku* thought is inherently repressive, and others point out that in their search for 'true' Buddhism, the Critical Buddhists may be recreating the same type of essentialist and authoritarian discourse that they attack as *hongaku shisō*. Jacqueline Stone offers an extended discussion of a number of these criticisms in her review of *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, 'Some Reflections on Critical Buddhism', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 26/1 2 (1999), pp. 159-188. Sallie King contends that the seemingly 'essentialist' language that appears throughout Buddha-nature texts is a soteriological device meant to encourage practitioners. See 'The Doctrine of Buddha-Nature Is Impeccably Buddhist', *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 1997), pp. 174-192.

[42] For works in English on Critical Buddhism, see *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 1997). This collection of essays includes works by Hakamaya and Matsumoto that have been translated from Japanese.

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within the tradition, how established theories and dominant representations of Japanese Buddhist traditions and culture have been used for rhetorical and ideological purposes.

There is also a growing body of work on Shōtoku in English that is offering new angles of critical vision with which to understand the construction of the Shōtoku cult and the particular confluence of interests and theories that have perpetuated images of him as father of Japanese Buddhism and culture.

In one recent study, Michael Como investigates the roles played by immigrant kinship groups from the Korean peninsula in the construction of the early Shōtoku cult[43]. Como argues that the knowledge, skills, and myths of these groups were instrumental not only in the construction of the Shōtoku cult and the spread of Buddhism in Yamato but also in the development of a broad range of religious and cultural institutions and ideas, including the myths and rites of the Imperial House[44]. Como writes, for example, that the *Nihonshoki*'s account of the founding of Shitennōji (in which Prince Shōtoku leads his forces to victory after praying to the Four Heavenly Kings) is modeled on Silla's founding legend of the Sachonwangsa ('Four Heavenly Kings') temple[45].

Como believes that most previous studies of Shōtoku 'have methodological flaws related to deeply held assumptions about Japanese national identity and the role of Prince Shōtoku as an icon of Japanese cultural uniqueness', and he, like Seiichi Ohyama, faults these studies for failing to distinguish Shōtoku from his antecedents in an indeterminate historical figure[46]. These sentiments, in conjunction with entrenched images

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[43] Michael Como, *Silla Immigrants and the Early Shōtoku Cult: Ritual and the Poetics of Power in Early Yamato*(Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2000)

[44] Como, p. 27.

[45] Como, pp. 64-5.

[46] Como, p. 23.

of Shōtoku as a Buddhist, have prevented Japanese scholars from investigating the roles played by these immigrant groups in the development of the early Shōtoku cult[47]. But Como also faults Japanese and Korean scholars for failing to break free from anachronisms of modern national identities in their studies of Shōtoku and the Asuka period. He writes that in its early stages the Shōtoku cult was probably a disputed cultural symbol centered not on a Japan-Korea divide, but along ethnic lines between immigrants from the kingdoms of Paekche and Silla[48].

Como believes that despite the great efforts that have been made to recover the life and thought of the 'authentic' Shōtoku, the results have been disappointing[49]. He suggests, however, that by recognizing the influence of these immigrant groups from the Korean peninsula in the construction of the Shōtoku cult, and by viewing Shōtoku as 'an emblem for the process of cultural transformation', promising new angles of

[47] Como distinguishes these figures by referring to the former as Prince Shōtoku and the latter as Kamimiya, one of the names by which he was known during his lifetime. Como, p. 12.

[48] Como states that any surprise over this division "should alert us to a methodological anachronism that has up until now dominated scholarship on the period. This anachronism, stated baldly, occurs when the actors of the period are portrayed as either 'Japanes' or 'Koreans'. This framework has obscured the fact that notions of 'Japanese' or 'Korean' identity were only beginning to emerge during this period, and that it took several centuries for them to emerge fully. Worse, this anachronism has led to endless wrangling among Japanese and Korean scholars because it has become implicated in nationalist discourses in both countries. One suspects that Japanese scholars have often blurred the distinctions between immigrant groups because it is felt that the immigrants most important characteristics is that they were all 'foreign'. One also suspects that Korean scholars, similarly, have acceded to this, the better to point out the enormity of the 'Korean' contributions to Japanese culture." Como, pp. 45-46.

[49] Como, p. 25.

critical vision will open up on the political and religious dynamics of the Asuka and Nara periods[50].

Maria del Rosario Pradel's recent study which reconstructs the iconography and historical development of the *Tenjukoku Shūchō maṇḍala* also contributes to our understanding of the early Shōtoku cult[51]. This piece is a set of two embroidered curtains thought to have been commissioned after Shōtoku's death by Empress Suiko upon the request of Princess Tachibana, Shōtoku's fourth wife. The embroideries were meant to depict the afterworld in which Prince Shōtoku had been reborn. Like Michael Como, Pradel argues that a fixation on Shōtoku's image as a Buddhist has led Japanese scholars to ignore compelling evidence that contradicts it[52], and has forced them to employ anachronistic materials and contorted reasoning to support their theories. She claims that although non-Buddhist motifs dominate the work and the term Tenjukoku does not appear in Buddhist texts[53], Japanese scholars have argued that Tenjukoku is a Buddhist paradise in which Shōtoku was reborn (she lists six possible Pure Lands). Among these alternatives, the Pure Land of Amida has been the most popular candidate despite the lack of evidence that an Amida cult existed in the Asuka period[54]. Pradel concludes that

[50] Como, pp. 24-5.

[51] *The Fragments of the Tenjukoku Shūchō Mandara: Reconstruction of the Iconography and the Historical Contexts* (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1997)

[52] Pradel implies in her work the existence of other potential sources of bias, writing that many Japanese studies on the topic contain pejorative statements about Koreans and about women. Pradel, p.66.

[53] Pradel notes that in the work there are Buddhist monks who appear engaged in ritual activities, and that there is also a figure emerging from a five petal lotus, an important icon in the *maṇḍala* of Amida's Pure Land. Pradel, pp.72-3.

[54] She notes, for example, that some scholars claim that the first character 天 ('heaven') is actually 无, the simplified character of 無 ('nothing'). Thus, 天寿国 ('Tenjukoku') represents 無量寿国 ('Muryōjukoku'), the land of Amitāyus, the

when the work's motifs are analyzed within the broader framework of the pan East Asian cultural sphere, it appears likely that the embroideries reflect pre-Buddhist burial practices, and thus she hypothesizes that Shōtoku was buried according to the pre-existing funerary rituals of the Kofun period[55].

In another recent study, Itō Kimio examines how Japanese cultural and nationalist impulses have led to modern reappropriations of Shōtoku and the concept of *wa*. In his work, Itō uses Hobsbawm and Ranger's concept of 'invented traditions' to argue that *wa*, often construed in modern Japan as 'a ubiquitous signifier of Japanese collectivism' from the ancient past, is, in fact, a recent invention[56]. Itō asserts that beginning in the early 1900s, governmental and scholarly elites co-opted and reinterpreted images of Prince Shōtoku and *wa* over short intervals to help unite the country by inculcating a national consciousness. During this process, Shōtoku's role as father of Japanese Buddhism was diminished, while images of him as a strong political leader and staunch supporter of both the imperial system and the Shinto religion were underscored.

Itō writes that although *wa* was not singled out for special attention in history textbooks from the early 1900s, over time it was reinterpreted to fit a shifting set of ideological and national priorities. For example, as war approached in the 1930s, *wa* became the 'basis of national consciousness and took on the ideological function of state integration' under the

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Buddha of Immeasurable Life. Pradel, pp.63-76.

[55] Pradel also writes that Buddhist funerary practices spread very slowly in Yamato, and that Prince Shōtoku was buried in a funerary mound. Empress Jitō (d.702) was the first Yamato sovereign to be cremated in accordance with Buddhist funerary ritual. Pradel, pp.189-191.

[56] Itō, p. 37. The concept of 'invented traditions', the title and subject of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, reveals how traditions of apparent antiquity are often no more than 'forgeries' of the recent past. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

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emperor[57]. With the end of the war, however, *wa* was once again recast, this time as a principle of harmonious group cooperation, the sense by which it is understood today. Itō concludes that 'The artificiality of this invention is pointed up by its variability: not only was Prince Shōtoku's reputation revised profoundly during Japan's modern period, but both the definition of *wa* and its place in the Constitution fluctuated wildly, depending on the ideological needs of the moment'[58].

In this concluding section, I will briefly introduce the direction of my own preliminary work on the *Shōmangyō-gisho*, one of the three Buddhist commentaries attributed to Shōtoku. To date, the large number of studies on this text produced by Japanese scholars have been translations, critical editions, and exegetical works (characteristics of the classical paradigm's emphasis on textual study). Many of these studies have been concerned with recovering the 'authentic' Shōtoku by determining whether Shōtoku authored the text, an approach that includes analyzing the text's structure, style, and calligraphy, and identifying the so-called 'original text' (a term that appears in both the *Shōmangyō-gisho* and the *Hokke-gisho*). Hanayama Shinshō, Kanaji Isamu, and other well-known scholars have written extensively in support of the claim that Prince Shōtoku composed the *Shōmangyō-gisho* and the two other commentaries (a position referred to as the 'true composition hypothesis')[59], while Tsuda Sōkichi, Fujieda Akira, Koizumi Enjun, Ogura Toyofumi, Fukui Kōjun, and others have rejected this claim.

Although these studies have created a large body of detailed philological data, they have generally ignored how the text has been

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[57] Itō, p. 45.

[58] Itō, p. 47.

[59] See Hanayama Shinshō, *Shōmangyō-gisho Jōgūōsen ni kansuru kenkyū*(Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1944). See also Kanaji Isamu, *Shōmangyō-gisho no shisōteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshōrin, 1971)

transmitted and used, and have failed to make connections between the text and an evolving set of religious beliefs and institutions, social processes, and political relationships. To better understand these relationships, my own study will investigate the role played by the text in creating and transmitting a Shōtoku discourse within the larger context of 'inventing' an authoritative indigenous Buddhist tradition.

To conclude, the figure of Prince Shōtoku is an illuminating point of entry, much like Zen, into the complex processes by which knowledge of Japanese religion and culture has been constructed, transmitted, and constrained. Bernard Faure writes, 'The historical narrative tends to reproduce the homogenizing effects of the traditional account by reinforcing its linearity even when it would seem to question its content. As a result, the heterogeneity or multivocality of the tradition—its tensions and divergences—is silenced. Even when they claim to be critical, scholarly writings about tradition turn out to be in league with the tradition they describe. To avoid condoning this ideological connivance, and to allow the repressed areas of Chan discourse to reemerge, these writings must themselves become multivocal and nonlinear, aware of the powerful effects of their own rhetoricity[60]'.

The critical studies I have cited challenge the 'ideological connivance' that has created the traditional account of Prince Shōtoku, and seek to recover in some way the multiple voices and diversity of this tradition. The work of Kimio Itō, for example, points up the artificiality and variability of modern reinventions of Shōtoku, while Michael Como's study seeks to recover the ethnic and religious heterogeneity of the early Shōtoku cult that lies hidden beneath the traditional account. Como's work also brings into the light a fundamental tension that exists between Japanese self representation and what Marilyn Ivy refers to as its 'alien

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[60] Faure, *Chan Insight*, p. 10.

interiority.[61]' That is, while Shōtoku stands as a quintessential representative of the indigenous self, he may also stand, paradoxically, as a figure forged from the myths and efforts of immigrants from the Korean peninsula, Japan's modern 'denigrated other'.

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[61] She writes, "Although the emperor may be seen as the very epitome of the Japanese 'thing' in that he appears to embody the unbroken transmission of Japanese culture, there is much evidence to show that the line of emperors originally in Korea—Japan's colonized, denigrated national other—and various features of emperorship as an institution lead back to China. To show how the most authoritative interior sign of native Japaneseness is originally foreign points to an essential alienation at the national-cultural core. While the emperor may merely be the most spectacular and at the same time most banal example of this alien interiority, the entire national—cultural fantasy of Japan—indeed of any nation must form around such foreign irritants. Furthermore, it is no accident that Korea constituted Japan's premier colony during its imperialist stage." Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 24.