

Fall 2022 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Forging New Connections: Asia in the First Millennium of the Common Era
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Consolidation of Power and Visual/Material Culture in the Nara and Heian Periods of Japan

Materiality and Power of Hidden Buddhist Scriptures

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Relevant Japanese era names:

- Asuka period first half of the sixth century-710 CE
- Nara period 710-784
- Heian period 794-1192
- Kamakura period 1192-1333

Key historical figures:

- Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147-1199)
- Princess Abe (718-770) = Sovereign Kōken (first reign; 749-758) = Sovereign Shōtoku (second reign; 764-770)
- Fujiwara no Nakamaro (706-764)
- Sovereign Shōmu (701-756; r. 724-749)
- Monk Dōkyō (d. 772)
- Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1027/1028)

Key sites in Nara prefecture:

- Tōdaiji
- Hōryūji
- Saidaiji
- Mt. Kinpu (Kinpusen)

Key terms:

- Hyakumantō dhāraṇī (One-Million Pagodas and Incantations)
 - A set of one million miniature wooden pagoda, each containing a printed scroll with a Buddhist incantation taken from the *Dhāraṇī of the Pure Immaculate Light* (
 - Sovereign Shōtoku initiated their production in 764, following the successful subjugation of Fujiwara no Nakamaro's coup
 - Completed in 770
 - The oldest datable prints
- *Muku jōkō dai-darani kyō* (*Dhāraṇī of the Pure Immaculate Light*)
 - Translated into Chinese in 704 CE
 - Mitraśānta (C. Mítóshān; J. Midasan), in collaboration with Fazang
 - One volume; Expounds six incantations that promise to prolong life and guarantee protection from the guardian deities

- *Mappō* (Latter Day of the Law)
 - The final stage of the three stages of degeneration of Buddha's teaching
 - The period when the Buddha's teaching still survives, but the actual practice died out, thus no one can attain awakening on one's own
 - In Heian Japan, the first year of *mappō* was calculated to be 1052 CE.
 - Resulted in a boom in the Amida and Maitreya worship
- Amida Buddha
 - Reside in his Western Pure Land
 - Most desirable destination during *mappō* while one waited for Maitreya to be awakened
- Maitreya (J. Miroku; as a Bodhisattva and Buddha)
 - The next Buddha-to-be after Śākyamuni (patriarch of Buddhism)
 - Buddha-in-training for 5.6 billion years as a bodhisattva
- Wish-granting jewel (*mani hōju*)
 - Transformed state of the relics of the Buddha

Further readings:

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- Kornicki, Peter. "The *Hyakumantō Darani* and the Origin of Printing in Eighth-Century Japan." *International Journal of Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2012): 43-70.
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- Moerman, D. Max. "The Death of the Dharma: Sutra Burials in Early Medieval Japan." In Kristina Myrvold, ed. *The Death of Sacred Texts: Ritual Disposal and Renovation of Texts in the World Religions*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2010.