

Hagiography and History: The Image of Prince Shōtoku

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Perhaps no figure in Japanese history has had more written about him, when so little is actually known, than Shōtoku Taishi (Prince Shōtoku; 574–622). Shōtoku Taishi became crown prince during the reign of his aunt, Empress Suiko (r. 592–628), overseeing the affairs of state from 593 until his death in 622. He is noted for his wise rule and his profound understanding of and devout engagement with Buddhism. These details of Shōtoku's life can be gleaned from the several extant biographies of Prince Shōtoku, including the two accounts translated here. Surprisingly, though, these biographies provide few details about Shōtoku the person, such as his personality, considering his importance throughout Japanese history. A study of the texts dealing with the life of Shōtoku situates the reader at the intersection of history and hagiography. These texts purport to tell us the historical facts about the life of Prince Shōtoku, but they also reveal how he has been idealized as the father of the Japanese nation and the founder of Japanese Buddhism.

The two biographies of Prince Shōtoku translated here are the sections on Shōtoku taken from the *Nihon shoki* (or *Nihongi*; *Chronicles of Japan*, 720 C.E.) and a text called the *Jōgū Shōtoku hō teisetsu* (*The Imperial Record of Shōtoku, Dharma King of the Upper Palace*). The *Imperial Record* is the oldest biography of Shōtoku Taishi that is not part of some other text and was composed mostly during the eighth century; its author is unknown. A concluding section, which recounts the five generations after Emperor Kinmei, was likely composed during the tenth century. The *Chronicles*, the first of the Six National Histories, was compiled by members of the court and aristocracy at imperial command some one hundred years after the death of the prince. These two biographical texts are particularly important because they have served as the foundation for most subsequent interpretations—ancient and modern—of Shōtoku's life and times, although they focus on different aspects of his life and are organized in different ways.

The sections on Shōtoku Taishi in the *Chronicles* are but a small part of this very long text, which recounts the history of Japan from the age of the gods to the abdication of Empress Jitō in 697 C.E. The *Chronicles* places Shōtoku within the larger context of the political and religious struggles occurring in early Japanese history. The text is organized chronologically, lending credibility to the veracity of its historical claims. But the *Chronicles* accounts of Prince Shōtoku are not simply historiographical; there is strong textual evidence that this version of the life of Shōtoku Taishi is a compendium of historical, literary, legendary, religious, and other materials placed within this chronological framework. Because the *Chronicles* was written at imperial command, in part to legitimate claims of the imperial family's right to rule, the narrative of the life of Shōtoku Taishi represents an "authorized biography." This portrayal of Shōtoku meshes the image of Shōtoku as statesman with that of Shōtoku as devout Buddhist.

The *Imperial Record* was composed in the eighth century, though, like the *Chronicles*, some of the accounts concerning Shōtoku Taishi were likely derived from earlier sources. The *Imperial Record* also reveals the importance of Shōtoku as both ruler and Buddhist. Arguably, unlike the *Chronicles* account, the *Imperial Record* is primarily a Buddhist biography because it emphasizes Shōtoku's Buddhist activities, such as temple building and sūtra study. Shōtoku is but one important moment in the *Chronicles*' expansive treatment of Japan's entire history up to 697 C.E. By contrast, the *Imperial Record* features Shōtoku Taishi as its main protagonist, conveying Shōtoku's prodigious capabilities as both Buddhist and ruler. Ultimately, because both texts were written at least one hundred years after Shōtoku's death, we must be careful not to confuse claims about historical fact with the valorization of the Prince's political and religious accomplishments. What, if anything, can we discover about the "true" Shōtoku from the *Chronicles* and the *Imperial Record*? Even if we can never recover the historically factual Shōtoku Taishi, we can learn something about what his image has meant in different historical periods, and how this image was utilized to promote religious practices and political agendas.

The composite image of Shōtoku Taishi that we hold today was crafted over many centuries and embellished and elaborated on in the many "tellings" of Shōtoku's life over the centuries. In the Nara and Heian periods alone, numerous narratives existed that chronicled the life of Prince Shōtoku in addition to the two texts translated here. These narratives, along with modern interpretations of their meaning and significance, reflect mostly idealized representations of Shōtoku. The prince is shown to be a great and compassionate statesman and nation-builder, and a wise and holy Buddhist in two of the most common constructions of his image. Such representations of Shōtoku can be discerned in varying degrees in the two biographies translated here, as well as in many modern interpretations.

The view of Shōtoku as statesman emphasizes Shōtoku's statecraft, particularly his authorship of the Seventeen-Article Constitution (*Jūshichijō kempō*, 604), his creation of the twelve-cap court rank system, and his embrace of Confucian values as a cornerstone for the administration of government. The image of Shōtoku as statesman is derived in part from the view that he was a great scholar who studied

the Confucian and Taoist classics extensively in addition to the subtleties and profundities of Buddhist doctrine.

In the *Chronicles* and the *Imperial Record* biographies, Shōtoku the statesman and Shōtoku the Buddhist are interrelated images because Buddhism and the state had become inextricably linked in early Japan. During Shōtoku's lifetime and after, Buddhism was utilized, at least in part, to legitimate and secure the power and authority of the imperial family. Aristocratic families, like the powerful Soga, also embraced and promoted Buddhism around this time. The rising popularity of Buddhism among some of the aristocracy necessitated imperial control over this powerful ideology, which was itself becoming a central part of the imperial family's claim to the throne. The imperial embrace of Buddhism was epitomized by Shōtoku's prodigious faith, which secured the importance of this religious tradition in Japan.

In Shōtoku's time, Japan was beginning to emerge as a nation under imperial rule. As the accounts below indicate, Shōtoku was given administrative control over the government, and thus he played an important role in articulating the rhetoric of the imperial family's claim to dominance over Japan. The imperial family wielded the religious power believed to reside in Buddhist texts, images, and rituals as another way of justifying their ruling authority. One of the most conspicuous examples of the connection between Buddhism and ruling power occurs in the depiction of the political struggle between the Soga and Mononobe. The Mononobe were associated with the worship of the indigenous kami, while the Soga family supported Buddhism. Shōtoku's pivotal role in the military defeat of the Mononobe involved his vow to build a temple for the worship of the Four Heavenly Kings—Buddhist protective deities. The temple was promised in exchange for the kings' divine assistance in securing a Soga victory over Moriya's Mononobe troops, and hence, Soga influence at court. The Soga victory occurred, we are told, because of the efficacy of Shōtoku's Buddhist rituals. The imperial family, aided by the Soga family, was thus able to claim legitimacy as Japan's sovereigns because the Buddhist deities favored them with victory in battle. This intimate connection between Buddhism and politics is a central component of the rhetoric of the *Chronicles* and the *Imperial Record*. In passages like those summarized above, Buddhist rituals often have both spiritual and political implications, and Shōtoku is depicted as a master of both the political and religious realms.

The *Chronicles* and *Imperial Record* also focus on the sincerity of Prince Shōtoku's personal Buddhist faith and the depth of his understanding of the Buddha's teachings. This wise and pious image of Shōtoku has been further promoted by some modern interpreters. He is described, for instance, as the first Japanese truly to understand the profundity of the Buddhist message because he was said to have read Buddhist sutras for their meaning rather than simply chanting them for their salvific efficacy, as was often done in his day. It is sometimes suggested by modern scholars that Shōtoku Taishi was a lone beacon of knowledge and insight in the dim cultural backwater of sixth- and early seventh-century Japan.

Shōtoku's sutra commentaries, mentioned in the texts translated here, are considered evidence of his Buddhist erudition. A careful examination of these commentaries, however, reveals that they are mostly glosses or paraphrases of Chinese commentaries studied by Shōtoku under the tutelage of Korean Buddhist monks. While Shōtoku may have been a great and sincere Buddhist genius with a profound understanding of Buddhism, no specific evidence survives to substantiate this view. The influence of Chinese and Korean Buddhism on Shōtoku's faith is one of the most revealing details to be gleaned from his commentaries, a fact often glossed over in evaluations of Shōtoku's Buddhist expertise. Aside from the depth of his understanding of the Dharma, the *Chronicles* and *Imperial Record* passages also indicate that Shōtoku and his coterie were concerned with the magico-religious efficacy of Buddhist rituals. They commissioned the construction of temples and Buddhist images and ordered sutras expounded in hopes of curing illnesses and effecting favorable rebirths for the newly deceased.

Although there are many similarities between the accounts in the *Chronicles* and the *Imperial Record*, they do not always agree on the details of Shōtoku's life, or they present details missing from the other. These discrepancies reflect the variety of oral and textual sources for these two biographies and attest to the different religious and political agendas of their authors.

The *Chronicles* is important for understanding the official attitude of the state toward Buddhism, and the extent to which Shōtoku Taishi is understood to have effected that relationship and promoted Buddhism to undergird nationhood. Because the *Chronicles* was written at imperial command to legitimate claims to ruling authority, we can assume that the portrayal of Shōtoku Taishi was directed in part toward validating those claims. To the extent that the *Chronicles* made a case for Shōtoku's brilliance and holiness, the political goals of the imperial family were also justified. Perhaps Shōtoku was personally able to keep his Buddhist spirituality out of his politics, but the compilers of the *Chronicles* took special interest, for political reasons, in securely connecting Shōtoku's temporal power with the salvific power of Buddhism.

The *Chronicles* account is also important because it is the only place where the articles of the Seventeen-Article Constitution are actually listed. The *Imperial Record* only mentions that Shōtoku wrote the Constitution but provides no other details (it should be noted also that the date offered by the *Imperial Record* for the promulgation of the Constitution differs slightly from the date given by the *Chronicles*). The Seventeen-Article Constitution seeks to establish an ethical foundation for the bureaucratic governance of the emerging Japanese nation. It delineates a three-tiered social hierarchy: the lord or sovereign (in this case, the Japanese emperor), bureaucrats, and the people. The seventeen articles that comprise the Constitution delineate the proper actions and attitudes that ideally operate between and within these three statuses. When propriety is established among these three, it asserts, concord will flourish in the nation.

The Constitution is usually described as a mix of Confucian and Buddhist ideas, reflecting, from a Western perspective, the syncretic nature of Japanese religion.

One of the foundations for Shōtoku's ethical bureaucracy was the concept of harmony (*wa*). Many scholars suppose that this concept was derived from the Confucian notion of harmony, which carries with it the idea of acting in consonance with others according to one's social status. Those who would see a Buddhist inflection in the Constitution's notion of harmony claim it is derived from the Buddhist notion of benevolence. The Buddhist content of the Constitution—explicit reference to Buddhism is limited to the second article—is stressed by scholars who wish to draw a comparison between Shōtoku and the Indian king Aśoka, who established a Buddhist state in India in the third century B.C.E. Shōtoku Taishi's enterprise was on a decidedly lesser scale, however. Even when Shōtoku Taishi's authorship of this ethico-legal document is called into question, it is often said that it nevertheless reflects his thinking. How this is known is unclear, but it is part of the historical valorization of Shōtoku.

The *Imperial Record* presents details missing from the *Chronicles* account, just as the *Chronicles* has inclusions neglected in the *Imperial Record*. Descriptions of Buddhist rituals performed at the illness or death of members of the imperial family are of particular interest. The *Imperial Record* documents the interrelationship between Buddhist vows made to assure the curing of an illness or a good rebirth in the next life and the crafting of Buddhist images. These images were the currency with which the faithful hoped to purchase fulfillment of their desire for a cure or good rebirth. Similar circumstances surrounded the creation of images such as the Śākyamuni (the historical Buddha) and Yakushi Nyorai (the Healing Buddha) statues found in the main hall (*kondō*) of the Hōryūji Temple, and the Tenjukoku mandala embroidery, originally in the Hōryūji but now housed in the Chūgūji Nunnery.

According to the *Imperial Record*, the image of Yakushi was constructed after the death of Emperor Yōmei, Shōtoku's father, by Shōtoku and Empress Suiko in 607 C.E. This image may or may not exist today—the one in the Hōryūji is likely a late seventh-century reconstruction replacing the original thought to have been lost in the Hōryūji fire of 670 C.E. The Śākyamuni image was fashioned as a result of a vow made by Shōtoku's followers seeking his recovery from the illness that eventually took his life. Shōtoku died, but the image was finally completed a year after his death in order to ensure his rebirth in the Pure Land and immediate enlightenment. This bronze image, cast by the famous Buddhist sculptor Tori Busshi, is still found in the Hōryūji today.

The *Imperial Record* also records the reasons for the execution of the Tenjukoku mandala embroidery. When Shōtoku died, two embroidered tapestries were crafted by his consort and her attendants to depict his life in paradise, where he was believed to have been reborn. The Tenjukoku (Land of Celestial Immortality) mandala exists today in fragments at the Chūgūji Nunnery adjacent to the Hōryūji. It depicts a scene of paradise, probably either the paradise of Amida, the Buddha of the Western Paradise, or Miroku, the Buddha of the future. In its original form, the embroidery depicted one hundred tortoises with four Chinese characters written on the back of each one. Of this total of four hundred characters, only twenty-nine remain on the surviving fragments. The *Imperial Record* account is important

because it preserves these four hundred characters in its description of the Tenjukoku mandala, which is apparently a transcription of the characters from the embroidery itself.

The *Chronicles* and the *Imperial Record* sometimes nuance the same historical events by describing them in differing degrees of detail, sometimes offering different dates as well. For instance, the *Imperial Record* (along with the *Gangōji garan engi narabini ruki shizai chō* [A History of the Gangōji Temple Complex and a List of Its Treasures]) gives a date of 538 C.E. for the introduction of Buddhism to Japan (see chapter 29 in this volume). This differs from the date of 552 C.E. stated in the *Chronicles*. It may be that an earlier date for the introduction of Buddhism to Japan was meant to lengthen the duration of the relationship between the imperial family and Buddhism, thus strengthening their claim of control over this religion. The description of the conflict between the Soga and the Mononobe is recounted in considerably more detail in the *Chronicles*, suggesting a greater concern with establishing the supremacy of the Soga over the Mononobe. The *Chronicles* account develops Soga no Umako's role in these events, whereas the *Imperial Record* account solely emphasizes Shōtoku's role. Shōtoku's death is also treated in different ways: the *Imperial Record* devotes considerably more attention to Shōtoku's illness and death.

Whether or not Shōtoku Taishi did and said everything that is attributed to him in the *Chronicles* and the *Imperial Record*, we can safely assume that his biographies represent an idealized Shōtoku and the ideal of the period in which the biographies were written. The portrayal of Shōtoku Taishi as a holy person, or *hijiri*, evidences the extent to which Shōtoku was esteemed by the eighth century. It also reveals the hagiographic process through which Shōtoku's persona was constructed and he was set apart from others because of his holy nature and miraculous powers. The conception we hold today of Shōtoku Taishi represents an aggregate image that articulates the mystique of the person originally represented in the *Chronicles* and the *Imperial Record*.

Passages translated from the *Nihon shoki* are taken from *Nihon shoki*, vol. 2, *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 68, ed. Sakamoto Tarō et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965). The *Jōgū Shōtoku hōdō teisetsu* translation is taken from *Shōtoku Taishi shū*, *Nihon shisō taikei* 2, ed. Ienaga Saburō et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975). Bureaucratic ranks, lists of names of otherwise unknown people, alternative readings for names, and other editorial deletions have sometimes been made from the translations in the interest of readability. These translations use the Japanese pronunciation of Korean names and places.

Further Reading

W. G. Aston, tr., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956 [tr. 1896]); Hanayama Shinshō, "Prince Shōtoku and Japanese Buddhism," *Philosophical Studies of Japan* 4 (1963): 23–48; Kanaji Isamu, "Three Stages in Shōtoku Taishi's Ac-

ception of Buddhism," *Acta Asiatica* 47 (1985): 31–47; Robert E. Morrell, "Shōtoku Taishi," in *Great Thinkers of the Eastern World*, ed. Ian P. McGreal (New York: HarperCollins, 1995): 291–294; Nakamura Hajime, "The Ideal of a Universal State and its Philosophical Basis—Prince Shōtoku and His Successors" (Chapter 1), in *A History of the Development of Japanese Thought I* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1967); Charles S. Terry, "Legend and Political Intrigue in Ancient Japan: Shōtoku Taishi," in *Great Historical Figures of Japan*, ed. Murakami Hyoe and Thomas J. Harper (Tokyo: Japan Culture Institute, 1978): 1–15; Tsunoda Ryusaku et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition I* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1958 and 1964): 48–51; Alex and Hideko Wayman, tr., *The Lion's Roar of Queen Sṛīmālā* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

Chronicles of Japan

586 C.E. SPRING, 1ST MONTH, 1ST DAY

Anahobe no Hashihito, the imperial princess, was made empress. She gave birth to four sons. The first was called Prince Umayado [Stable Door, i.e., Shōtoku Taishi]. (He was also called Toyomimito [Excellent Discernment and Wisdom] Shōtoku, Great Dharma King Toyotomimi [Excellent Wisdom and Discernment], and Dharma Master King.) Prince Shōtoku first resided at the Upper Palace and later moved to Ikaruga. During the reign of Empress Suiko, he resided at the Eastern Palace, serving as crown prince. He administered the government on behalf of the empress. These words appear in the Imperial History of Empress Suiko.

587 C.E. AUTUMN, 7TH MONTH

Soga no Umako counseled the imperial princes and government officials to plot the destruction of Mononobe no Moriya. Umako and the others, leading an army, advanced to attack Moriya. . . . Moriya himself led an army of family and servants. They built a fortress from bales of rice and engaged in battle. . . . Moriya's army fought furiously. . . . The army of the imperial princes and government officials was seized with fear, and three times they retreated. At this time, Prince Shōtoku . . . reflected on the course of the battle: "Will we not be defeated? Unless we make a vow, it will be difficult to achieve victory." So saying, he cut down a sacred *nuride* tree and quickly fashioned images of the Four Heavenly Kings, Buddhist guardian deities. He affixed the images to his hair and made a vow: "If we are allowed to defeat our enemy, I will build a temple and stūpa to the Four Heavenly Kings who protect the world." Soga no Umako also made a vow: "If we obtain the benefit of being saved and protected by the Four Heavenly Kings and the protector deity Daijinnō, I vow to build a temple and stūpa to them, and to propagate Buddhism." Having made these vows, they prepared their army and urged them into battle. A man named Tomi no Obito Ichii shot at Mononobe no Moriya from up in a tree, killing Moriya and his children. Consequently, Moriya's army was quickly routed. . . .

After this conflict had been suppressed, the Four Heavenly Kings Temple (Shitennōji) was constructed at Tsunokuni. Half of Mononobe no Moriya's servants were made to serve as the servants of this temple, and Moriya's estate was made into the private rice fields of the temple. Also, 490 acres of rice lands were presented to Tomi no Obito Ichii. Soga no Umako, in keeping with his vow, constructed the Hōkōji Temple in Asuka.

593 C.E. SUMMER, 4TH MONTH, 10TH DAY

Shōtoku Taishi was designated crown prince. He governed the affairs of state and was completely entrusted with its administration. Shōtoku was the second child of Emperor Yōmei. His mother, the empress, was named Anahobe no Hashihito. On the day Shōtoku was born, she went around the imperial palace inspecting each of the government offices. When she came to the Bureau of Horses she entered as far as the stable door. Suddenly, and without any pain, she gave birth. Shōtoku was able to speak at birth and possessed the wisdom of a holy person. When he reached adulthood, he could listen to the lawsuits of ten people at the same time and judge them without error. He was also able to know things that were going to happen before they occurred. He learned Buddhism from the Korean monk Eji and studied the Confucian Classics with the scholar Kakuka. He made an exhaustive study of both areas. The emperor loved his son and had him to take up residence in the south upper hall of the palace. Thus, he was praised as the Prince Born Before the Stable Door, Residing in the Upper Hall, Gifted with the Power of Great Discernment.

594 C.E. SPRING, 2D MONTH, 1ST DAY

Empress Suiko issued an imperial edict to Shōtoku Taishi and Soga no Umako instructing them to promote the Three Treasures (Buddhism). At that time, all of the lords and ministers, in order to repay their debt of gratitude to the empress and their parents, competed with each other to build Buddhist dwelling places. These were called "temples."

595 C.E. SUMMER, 5TH MONTH, 10TH DAY

The Korean monk Eji came to Japan and became Shōtoku's Dharma teacher. Another Korean monk, Esō, also arrived in Japan in the same year. These two monks propagated the Buddha's teachings and together became the upholders of the Three Treasures.

601 C.E. SPRING, 2D MONTH

Prince Shōtoku began construction of a palace at Ikaruga.

603 C.E. WINTER, 11TH MONTH, 1ST DAY

Prince Shōtoku addressed the officials, saying, "I possess a sacred Buddha image. Who will take this image and reverently worship it?" Hada no Miyakko Kawakatsu stepped forward and said, "I will worship it." He immediately received the Buddha image and built the temple Hachinooka-dera (Kōryūji) to enshrine it.

This month, Prince Shōtoku asked Empress Suiko for permission to make large shields and quivers, and also to paint images on banners [for use in rituals].

604 C.E. SUMMER, 4TH MONTH, 3D DAY

Shōtoku Taishi personally set down the Seventeen-Article Constitution for the first time.

Article 1

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.

Article 2

Fervently revere the Three Treasures: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Monastic Community (*sangha*). They are the final refuge of all living beings, and the supreme principle in the world. Is there anyone in any age who does not revere the Dharma? People who are extremely bad are rare. They, too, can be taught to follow Buddhism. If they do not take refuge in the Three Treasures, how will they correct their wickedness?

Article 3

When you receive imperial decrees, you must heed them. The ruler is like heaven; the government official is like earth. Heaven covers and earth supports. The four seasons move in an orderly fashion, and all things in the world develop accordingly. If earth desires to cover heaven, then only destruction will result. Therefore, when the ruler makes commands, the government official must carry them out. The superior acts; the inferior follows. Therefore, receive imperial decrees with the necessary humility. Without humility, things will naturally fail.

Article 4

All government officials should follow the principle of propriety. The principle of governing the people must be found in propriety. When there is no propriety above, there will be disorder below. When there is no propriety below, offenses will necessarily result. Therefore, if the government officials maintain propriety, there will be no confusion about the order of ranks. If the people maintain propriety, the state will govern itself naturally.

Article 5

Abstain from gluttony and abandon desire. Fairly judge legal matters. The legal matters of the people number as many as one thousand in a single day. Although there may be this many in a single day, how many more will there be over a number of years? These days, those who decide legal matters are in the habit of obtaining a profit, hearing lawsuits after receiving a bribe. Consequently, the lawsuits of the wealthy are like throwing stones in the water—they will be favorably received, while the lawsuits of the poor are like throwing water on stones—they will not be favorably received. Therefore, what are poor people to do? The duty of the government official is deficient here.

Article 6

Punish bad and encourage good—this is a good and ancient rule. Therefore, do not conceal the good in people, and when you see bad, correct it. People who flatter and deceive are sharp swords who undermine the state and destroy the people. Flatterers like to explain the errors of inferiors to superiors, and when they meet with inferiors, they emphasize the errors of the superiors. These kinds of people are neither loyal to their lord nor benevolent to the people. This is the source of great civil disorder.

Article 7

Every person has a responsibility. There must not be disorder in the conduct of government. When a wise person is appointed to office, voices of praise sound immediately. When a wicked person holds office, repeated disorder occurs in the world. In this world, few people are naturally wise—it is through careful deliberation that they become sages (*hijiri*). Regardless of the relative importance of any state matter, if the right person is appointed, peace will necessarily prevail. Whether it is a time of emergency or not, if you meet with a wise person, the world will naturally be well-ordered. Owing to this, the state will long endure and be free from danger. Therefore, the sage-kings of old sought good people for government offices; they did not seek government offices for favored people.

Article 8

All government officials should arrive at court early and leave late. There is no leisure time in the conduct of government business. Even working all day long does not exhaust the business to be done. Therefore, if government officials arrive late at the court, they will not be able to deal with emergencies. If they leave early, business will not be completed.

Article 9

Sincerity is the foundation of righteousness. All things possess sincerity. The essence of good and bad and of success and failure is found in sincerity. If government officials together are sincere, what cannot be accomplished? If they are not sincere, all matters will end in failure.

Article 10

Refrain from hatred and angry looks. Do not be irate when people disagree with you. All people have hearts, each with their own deep attachments. If you are right, then I am wrong; if I am right, then you are wrong. I am not necessarily a sage and you are not necessarily a fool. We are both only ordinary people. Who can decide for certain what is right and what is wrong? Both of us are alternately wise and foolish, like an endless circle. For this reason, although other people become angry, I, on the contrary, fear my own errors. Even if I alone fully comprehend, I will follow the others and act like them.

Article 11

Clearly discern merit and demerit, and apply the necessary reward or punishment. Recently, reward has not been applied to merit and punishment has not been applied to wrongdoing. Government officials in charge of these matters should fairly apply rewards and punishments.

Article 12

Provincial and local officials must not extort the people. There are not two sovereigns of the country and there are not two lords of the people. The emperor is the lord of the people. Appointed officials are retainers of the emperor. How can they extort the people while at the same time conducting the affairs of the government?

Article 13

Those appointed to various offices must endeavor to fulfill their duties. Whether because they are ill or because they are away on business, there will be times when they cannot attend to work. However, on days when they can work, they should be in accord with their colleagues and endeavor to catch up on the work they missed while absent. Do not refuse to do official business just because it has not been entrusted to you.

Article 14

Government officials must not be jealous. If you are envious of people, they will also be envious of you. The affliction of jealousy knows no limit. Therefore, we are displeased when others are wiser than us, and we are jealous when others surpass our ability. Thus, it is not until after five hundred years pass that we finally encounter a wise person, and even with the passage of one thousand years it is difficult to find a sage. If we can find neither a wise person nor a sage, how can we govern the country?

Article 15

The duty of the government official is to turn away from private benefit and to turn instead toward the public good. If people are concerned with private benefit they necessarily feel resentment. When there is resentment, disagreement necessarily arises. If there is disagreement, the public good is obstructed for the sake of private benefit. If resentment arises, it conflicts with the system of rules and destroys the law. Therefore, the first article stated that superior and inferior should be harmonious and congenial. The meaning of these two articles is similar.

Article 16

People should be forced to do public service work during suitable times of the year—this is a good and ancient rule. Therefore, it is good to employ the people in public service when there is free time during the winter months. From spring to autumn, when the people labor at agriculture and sericulture, they must not be made to do public service. What would we eat without agriculture? What would we wear without sericulture?

Article 17

Important matters should not be decided by one person alone. They must be discussed together with many people. Less important matters need not be discussed with others. In the discussion of important matters, there is concern that mistakes will be made. Therefore, discussion with many people leads to the proper course of action.

605 C.E. SUMMER, 4TH MONTH, 1ST DAY

Empress Suiko issued an imperial decree to Shōtoku Taishi and Soga no Umako and to the princes and ministers commanding them to vow together to begin crafting one copper and one sewn Buddha image. She also commanded Kuratsukuri no Tori to supervise the making of these images. At this time, the Korean King Daikō heard that the empress of Japan was making Buddha images so he gave 300 ryō [1 ryō = 37.5 grams] of gold as tribute.

606 C.E. AUTUMN, 7TH MONTH

The empress requested Shōtoku Taishi to lecture on the *Queen Śrīmālā Sūtra* (Shōmangyō, Śrīmālādevīsī**mhanāda-sūtra*, T 353). He expounded on it for three days. This year, Prince Shōtoku also lectured on the *Lotus Sūtra* (Hokekyō; Saddharma puṇḍarīka, T 262) at the Okamoto Palace. The empress, greatly rejoicing at this, presented Shōtoku with 100 *chō* [1 *chō* 2.45 acres] of rice fields in Harima Province. Accordingly, Shōtoku offered this land to the Ikaruga Temple (Hōryūji).

607 C.E. SPRING, 2D MONTH, 15TH DAY

Prince Shōtoku and Soga no Umako led the government ministers in worship of the deities of heaven and earth.

613 C.E. WINTER, 12TH MONTH, 1ST DAY

Prince Shōtoku traveled to Kataoka. At that time, a starving man was lying by the side of the road. Accordingly, the Crown Prince asked him his name, but the man did not respond. Shōtoku, observing this situation, provided the man with food and water and removed the coat he was wearing and covered the starving man with it. He said to him, "Lie there in peace." Shōtoku then sang this verse:

On Mount Kataoka,
the poor traveler,
collapsed, starving for food.
Were you raised without parents?
Are you without a lord prospering like the bamboo?
The poor traveler,
collapsed, starving for food.

2D DAY

Prince Shōtoku dispatched a messenger to check on the starving man. The messenger returned, saying, "The starving man has already died." The crown prince was extremely saddened by this. Accordingly, he immediately had the starving man buried at the place by the side of the road. The grave was firmly sealed. Several days later, Shōtoku summoned his attendants and said to them, "The starving man who was lying by the side of the road the other day was no ordinary man. He must surely have been a holy person (*hijiri*)." Shōtoku dispatched a messenger to investigate. When he returned, the messenger said, "When I went to see the grave the earth covering it had not been moved, but when I opened the grave and looked inside the corpse was not there. Only your coat was there, folded and placed on top of the coffin." At this, Shōtoku

sent the messenger back to retrieve his coat. The crown prince then wore the coat again as before. People at this time thought these events most strange and remarked, "It is true that only a holy person (*hijiri*) knows a holy person (*hijiri*)." They were all the more awed by this situation.

620 C.E.

This year, Prince Shōtoku and Soga no Umako consulted together and recorded the *History of the Emperors*, the *History of the Nation*, and the *True Record of the Omi*, the *Muraji*, the *Tomo no miyakko*, the *Kuni no miyakko* [titles for government ranks], the 180 occupational families [*be*], and the people.

621 C.E. SPRING, 2D MONTH, 5TH DAY

Shōtoku Taishi died in the middle of the night at the Ikaruga Palace. At this time, the princes, ministers, people of the nation, and all the old people, who felt as if they had lost a beloved child, did not even taste the flavorful food in their mouths. Children, as if a dear parent had died, raised their voices in sorrowful anguish that could be heard in the streets. Farmers stopped ploughing and the women who pounded the rice stopped pounding. Everyone said, "The sun and the moon have lost their brilliance, and heaven and earth have fallen into ruin. Henceforth, on whom can we depend?"

This month, Shōtoku Taishi was buried in the Shinaga imperial mausoleum. At this time, the Korean monk Eji was greatly saddened upon hearing that Prince Shōtoku had died. He requested the Buddhist monks to hold a vegetarian meeting (*sai-e*) as a memorial to Shōtoku. Accordingly, on that day Eji expounded sūtras, vowing, "There is a holy person in Japan named Shōtoku Taishi. Heaven granted him a superior nature. Endowed with the immeasurable virtue of a holy person, he was born in the country of Japan. He propagated the way of the ancient wise and virtuous rulers and continued the great projects of the former emperors. He revered the Three Treasures and saved the people from their hardships. He was truly an august holy person (*hijiri*). Now the Crown Prince is dead. Although I am from a foreign country, it is difficult to sever the emotional bond between us. What is the use of living alone? I will, without fail, die next year on the fifth day of the second month [the one-year anniversary of Shōtoku's death]. I will join Prince Shōtoku in the Pure Land and together we will spread the Buddhist teachings to all sentient beings." Eji died on the day he vowed he would. The people of that time remarked to one another, "Prince Shōtoku is not the only holy person. Eji is also a holy person."

Imperial Record of Shōtoku, Dharma King of the Upper Palace

Emperor Yōmei married his half sister, Anahobe no hashihito no miko, and she became the empress. She gave birth to Shōtoku Taishi, Kume no Miko,

Uekuri no Miko, and Manda no Miko. Emperor Yōmei also married the daughter of Soga no Iname, Ishikina no Iratsume, who gave birth to Tame no Miko. The emperor also married the daughter of Katsuragi no Tagima no Kurabito-hiroko, Ihiko no Iratsume, who gave birth to Omaroko no Kimi and Sukateko no Miko (this princess worshipped the kami at the Ise Shrine during three imperial reigns). In all, Shōtoku Taishi's siblings numbered seven princes and princesses.

Shōtoku Taishi married the daughter of Kashiwade no Katabuko no Omi, named Hokikimi no Iratsume, who gave birth to Tsuishine no Miko, Hatsuse no Miko, Kuhata no Miko, Hatori no Miko, Sakikusa no Miko, and others—eight children in all. Shōtoku also married Tojiko no Iratsume, the daughter of Soga no Umako, who gave birth to Yamashiro no Ohine no Miko (this prince had a wise and noble heart, threw away his own life, and had compassion for the people—later generations mistakenly confused him with his father, Shōtoku Taishi), Takara no Miko, Hiki no Miko, and Kataoka no Oka—four children in all. Shōtoku also married Inabe no Tachibana no Miko, the daughter of Ohari no Miko, who gave birth to Shirakabe no Miko and Teshima no Miko. In all, Shōtoku Taishi had fourteen children.

Yamashiro no Ohine no Miko married his half-sister, Tsuishine no Miko, who gave birth to Naniwa no Maroko no Miko, Maroko no Miko, Yuge no Miko, Sasa no Miko, Mishima no Miko, Kōka no Miko, and Ohari no Miko.

Shōtoku Taishi's half brother, Prince Tame no Miko, after the death of their father Emperor Yōmei, married Shōtoku's mother, Anahobe no Hashihito no Miko, who gave birth to Princess Saho no Miko.

Emperor Kinmei (Shōtoku Taishi's grandfather) married Ishihime no Mikoto, the daughter of Emperor Senka, who gave birth to Emperor Bidatsu (Shōtoku Taishi's uncle). Emperor Kinmei also married Kitashihime no Mikoto, the daughter of Soga no Iname, who gave birth to Emperor Yōmei (Shōtoku Taishi's father) and his younger sister, Empress Suiko (Shōtoku Taishi's aunt). Emperor Kinmei also married Oane no Mikoto, Kitashihime no Mikoto's younger sister, who gave birth to Emperor Sushun (Shōtoku Taishi's uncle) and his older sister, Anahobe no Mashihito no Miko (Shōtoku Taishi's mother).

The five emperors and empresses mentioned above ruled successively without interruption. (Actually, Emperor Sushun was the fourth and Empress Suiko the fifth in order.)

During the reign of Empress Suiko, Shōtoku Taishi, along with Soga no Umako, assisted in the administration of government, promoted Buddhism, constructed temples such as the Gangōji and the Shitennōji, and instituted the twelve-cap ranking system, which consisted of the following ranks: Greater Virtue, Lesser Virtue, Greater Benevolence, Lesser Benevolence, Greater Propriety, Lesser Propriety, Greater Faith, Lesser Faith, Greater Righteousness, Lesser Righteousness, Greater Wisdom, and Lesser Wisdom.

When Anahobe no Hashihito, Emperor Yōmei's empress, went out to the stable door, she suddenly gave birth to Shōtoku Taishi. Prince Shōtoku was

wise from a very young age. When he became an adult, he was able to listen to the statements of eight people simultaneously, and to differentiate their points. He heard one thing and understood many. Accordingly, he was called Prince Stable Door, Gifted with the Power of Great Discernment, Eight Ears.

Emperor Yōmei loved his son, Shōtoku Taishi, the crown prince, very much. Because the emperor had Shōtoku live in the south upper hall of the palace, he was called Prince Upper Palace.

Shōtoku Taishi took the Korean monk Eji as his Dharma teacher. Shōtoku was able to understand the principle that nirvana is immutable and unchanging, and that there are five kinds of buddha-nature. He also clearly discerned the meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra* teaching concerning the three vehicles and the two kinds of wisdom. He perceived the import of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra's* teaching of the wondrous nirvana. Moreover, Shōtoku knew the Hīnayāna teachings known as the Sautrāntika and the Sarvāstivāda. He also knew the meaning of the three profound Chinese teachings and the five Chinese Classics. At the same time, he also studied astronomy and geography. He wrote seven volumes of commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra* and other sutras. These are called the "Upper Palace Commentaries."

Once, Shōtoku asked a question his teacher could not answer. That evening, Shōtoku dreamed that a gold-colored person appeared and taught him the meaning of what he did not understand. After he awoke, Shōtoku was able to explain the point. When he explained it to his teacher, he, too, was able to understand it. This kind of thing occurred several times.

Shōtoku Taishi built seven temples: Shitennōji, Hōryūji, Chūgūji, Tachibana-adera, Hachiokadera (also known as Kōryūji), Ikejiridera, and Kazurakidera.

On the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the sixth year (598) of Empress Suiko's reign, the empress requested Shōtoku Taishi to lecture on the *Queen Śrīmālā Sūtra*. Shōtoku's appearance was like that of a monk. Many princes, princesses, government dignitaries, and others heard this lecture, gained faith, and were greatly overjoyed. The lecture ended after three days.

The empress made an offering to Shōtoku Taishi of 15,000 *shiro* of land at Iiho no kohorisase, in Harima-kuni. The prince gave this land to the Hōryūji.

Shōtoku Taishi's teacher, the monk Eji, took Shōtoku's three sūtra commentaries and returned to Korea (Koma), where he had these texts disseminated. In the middle of the night on the twenty-second day of the second month of the thirtieth year (622) of Empress Suiko's reign, Shōtoku Taishi died. When Eji heard this, he had sūtra lectures conducted and made a vow, saying, "I met Shōtoku Taishi and he wished to receive an education. I, Eji, will die next year on the twenty-second day of the second month, and I will necessarily meet Shōtoku in the Pure Land." At last, just as Eji had said, the following year on the twenty-second day of the second month, he became ill and died.

When Emperor Yōmei became ill during the first year of his reign (586), he summoned Suiko and Shōtoku, and made this vow: "I desire to be cured of my disease. Therefore, I command you to build a temple and enshrine there an

image of Yakushi." However, the emperor died at that time and the construction did not take place. In the fifteenth year of Empress Suiko's reign (607), the empress and Shōtoku carried out the construction following the emperor's command. The above is the inscription on the back of the halo of the Yakushi image enshrined in the Golden Hall (Kondō) of the Hōryūji. It is the initial reason for building this temple.

In the twelfth month of the first year of Hōkō gansei (621 C.E.), the empress dowager, Shōtoku Taishi's mother, Anahobe no Hashihito, died. On the twenty-second day of the first month of the following year (622 C.E.), Shōtoku Taishi became ill. Unfortunately, on account of this, the Kashiwade Empress, Shōtoku's wife, became exhausted and took ill. Both became bedridden. At this time, queens, princes, and various retainers—Dharma friends—with great sadness together made the following vow: "Because of our reverence for the Three Treasures, we will make an image of Śākyamuni with the body proportions of Shōtoku Taishi. Receiving the power of this vow, we hope that Shōtoku's illness will be cured, his life extended, and he will live peacefully in the world. Should it be that he dies because of karmic consequence, we hope that he is born into the Pure Land and quickly ascends to the realm of enlightenment."

On the twenty-first day of the second month, the Kashiwade Empress died. The following day, Shōtoku Taishi also died. In the middle of the third month of the thirty-first year of Suiko's reign (623), as had been vowed by the Dharma friends, an image of Śākyamuni with attendants and decorative implements was reverently completed. Sharing this bit of good fortune, these Dharma friends, who had faith in the way of the Buddha, reverently followed these three (the empress dowager, Shōtoku Taishi, and the Kashiwade Empress) even now peaceful in death. They promoted the Three Treasures, desiring finally to reach the other shore [enlightenment] together. Also, they hoped that the deluded sentient beings everywhere in the samsaric cycle would escape from their painful karmic connections and proceed to the world of enlightenment. The image of Śākyamuni was made by Shiba Kuratsukuri no Tori [Tori Busshi]. The above is similar to the account on the inscription on the back of the halo of the Śākyamuni image enshrined in the Golden Hall of the Hōryūji.

When Shōtoku Taishi died, his consort Tachibana no Ōiratsume, stricken with grief, respectfully addressed Empress Suiko: "I fear that I cannot stop my feelings. As was expected, Shōtoku Taishi and his mother have died. There is nothing to compare with my sadness. Our dear Prince Shōtoku said, 'The world is ephemeral, only the Buddha is real.' When we appreciate this teaching, Shōtoku Taishi will be born into Tenjūkoku [paradise]. However, this country's appearance is difficult to visualize. I pray I will see Prince Shōtoku's condition of rebirth."

Empress Suiko heard this and sadly replied, "Prince Shōtoku's words are true." She issued an imperial order to the palace women and others to create two embroideries. The artists were Aya no Maken from Japan, and Kasei and Aya no Nukakori from Korea. The project supervisor was Kurahitobe no Hata

no Kuma. Shōtoku Taishi's words are written on the back of a tortoise shell on the embroideries which is stored at the Hōryūji Temple.

When Shōtoku Taishi died, Kose no Mitsue no Machigimi composed three poems:

If the Tomi stream in Ikaruga should cease to flow
our great prince's name would be forgotten.
Flowers growing on Mount Tabasami where the gods eat;
People grieve for our great prince.
The branches of the mountain trees hang down surrounding Ikaruga
like a fence,
We desire to tell our lord a wish that won't be realized.

Around the sixth or seventh month of the second year of the reign of Emperor Yōmei (587 C.E.), when Soga no Umako battled with Mononobe no Moriya, Umako's troops fled without victory. Consequently, Shōtoku Taishi constructed images of the Four Heavenly Kings in front of the troops and vowed, "If we can destroy Moriya, I will build a temple for the Four Heavenly Kings and reverently worship there." Thereupon, Umako's troops were victorious, killing Moriya. Because of this, the Temple of the Four Heavenly Kings was constructed at Naniwa. This occurred when Prince Shōtoku was fourteen years old.

During the reign of Emperor Kinmei, in the tenth month of the twelfth day of 538 C.E., King Myōdō, of the Korean kingdom of Kudara, for the first time offered as tribute Buddhist images, sūtras, and monks. By imperial edict, Soga no Iname received these things and propagated Buddhism.

In 570 C.E., a fire destroyed a Buddha Hall. The Buddha Hall was thrown into the Naniwa canal.

In the thirteenth year of the reign of Empress Suiko (605 C.E.), Shōtoku Taishi planned with Soga no Umako to construct a Buddha Hall and propagated Buddhism. Thereupon, in conformity with the teaching of the five elements, Shōtoku Taishi established the twelve-cap court rank system. In the seventh month, he wrote the Seventeen-Article Constitution.

Shōtoku, Dharma King of the Upper Palace, also known as King Dharma Master, was born in 574 and died on the twenty-second day of the second month of 622. He was forty-nine years old. He served as Empress Suiko's crown prince. His mausoleum is located in Kōchi no shinaga no oka.