

Buddhism in Japan

Buddhism entered Japan as early as 535 from Korea, at a time when the Japanese were suffering from some of the same difficulties the Chinese had experienced a few centuries earlier, during the fall of the Han Dynasty.

Although the Japanese borrowed Chinese traditions, they also had different orientations and different needs.

Buddhism in Japan

- Shinto deities and practices were appropriated into Buddhist ritual.
- Japanese Buddhist art shifted with the intentions of various rulers...from focus on Jataka Tales to the Lotus Sutra to transcendent Buddha to earthly ones.



Illustrated legends of Kitano Tenjin Shrine,
A set of 500 scrolls, 13th century.

- By the end of Shotoku's death, over 40 Buddhist temples had been built in Japan.
- The best known remains are Horyuji, outside the city of Nara.
- **Most of the Buddhism that Prince Shotoku** (who brought Buddhism to Korea) **supported derived from the Lotus Sutra**
- but so completely did Buddhism become associated with the native Shinto that the two appeared at times to have merged.





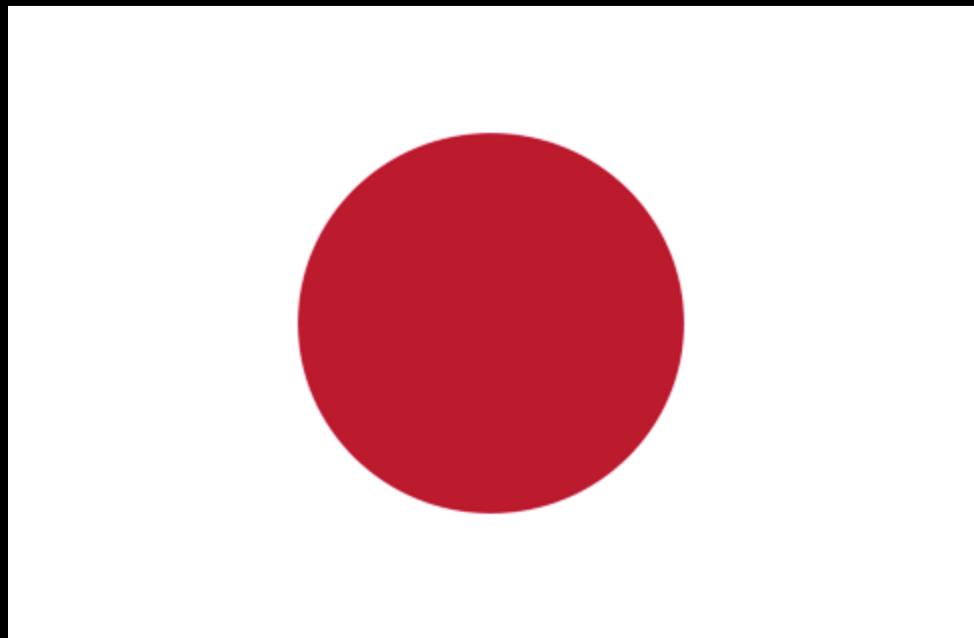
1. Buddhist values had to be placed in some relationship with the indigenous Japanese tradition that we know today as 'Shinto', or 'the Way of the Gods'.

2. Shinto is sometimes called the indigenous nature and spirit worship of Japan.



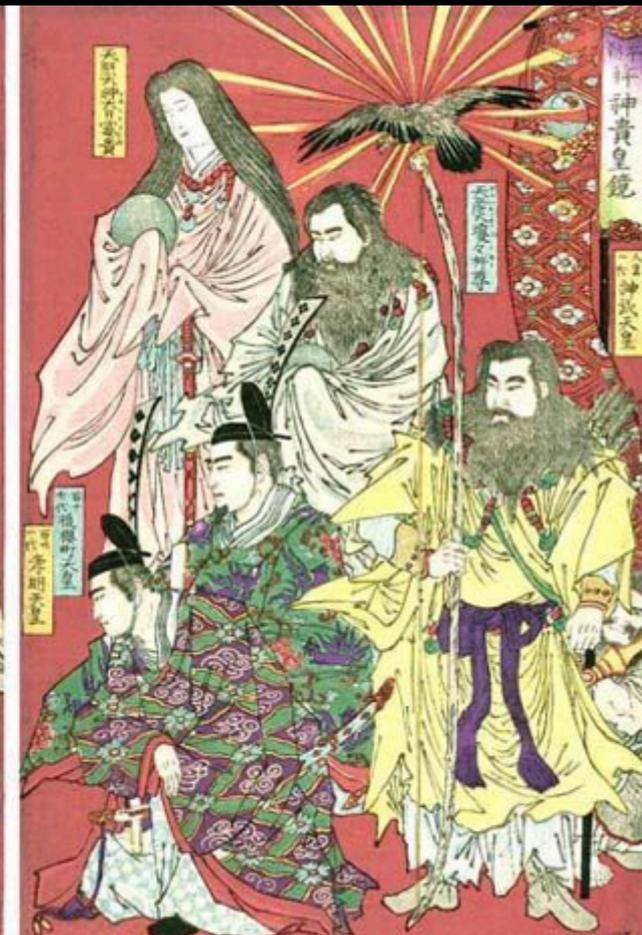
3. The most important deity in Shinto tradition is the sun goddess Amaterasu. The rising sun is the symbol of Japan, and the power of the sun goddess is understood as being present in the lineage of the emperors.

Amaterasu emerging out of a cave



- The presence of Shinto posed a challenge to Buddhism in Japan.
- When first introduced, some Japanese perceived Buddhism as a threat, but eventually the two were perceived as complementary and the kami and the Buddha's could be worshiped together.
- Kami are gods in Shinto, they are elements in nature, animals, creationary forces in the universe, as well as spirits of the revered deceased.





- Many Kami are considered the ancient ancestors of entire clans, and some ancestors became Kami upon their death if they were able to embody the values and virtues of Kami in life.
- Traditionally great or charismatic leaders like the Emperor could be kami.

Prince Shotoku (573-621) led Japan through a process of political reorganization including using Buddhism to unify the nation and promote the welfare of the Japanese people, just as Ashoka had done.

He expressed his Confucian and Buddhist values in a manifesto called the Seventeen-Article Constitution.

1. the first article shows the influence of the Confucian concept of a harmonious society:

- a. harmony is to be valued, and avoidance of wanton opposition is to be honored.

2. the second articles shows the influence of Buddhism;

- a. sincerely reverence the three treasures. The three treasures, Buddha, the Law and the Monastic orders, are the final refuge of the four generated beings and are the supreme objects of faith in all countries.



The worship of Amitabha, with its goal of rebirth in the material splendor of the Western Paradise, was evident in Japan by the late 7th century.

A fully mature Pure Land school developed later.

The Mahayana emphasis on celestial deities and heavenly rewards rather than earthly events of the Buddha.

Amida and two bodhisattvas,
Horyuji



An example of the first phase of the Japanese style.

The two dimensional quality of the figures and the elaborate mandorla and stylized drapery reflect the Chinese style.

Shakyamuni and two bodhisattvas,
or
Shaka triad, Horyuji kondo, Mara,
Japan



During the Nara period (710-84)
Buddhism had become a state
religion.

Emperor Shomu (724-49)
sponsored a building project and
gave prominence to Buddhism as
an instrument of national policy.

He constructed the **Todai-ji** (the
great Eastern Temple) as a symbol
of the relationship between
Buddhism and the Japanese state.





The temple is said to be the largest wooden building in the world and houses a colossal bronze statue of the Buddha, (the great illumination).

The grandest architecture of Japan was the kondo. Or image hall.

At Toshodai-ji from the mid-8th century, Chinese styles appeared almost immediately in Japanese art.



An interest in Aminda provided a focus on the transience of existence, a sensitivity to the passing of life and beauty in all too fleeting a world.

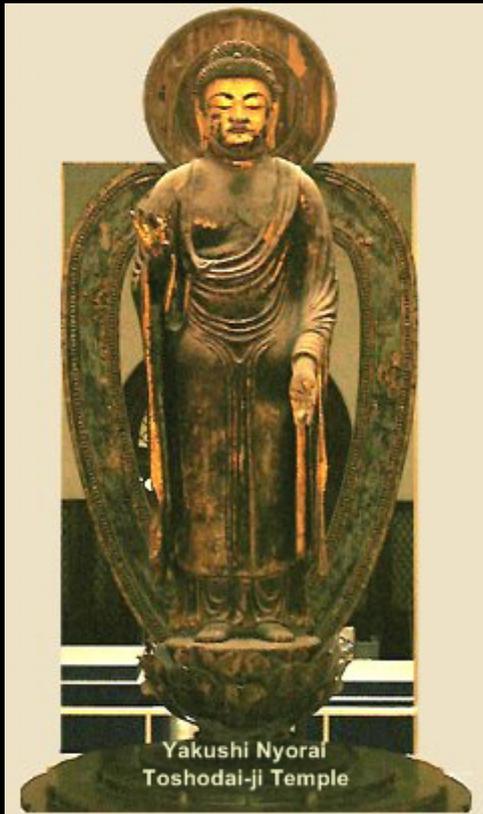
The Phoenix Hall, or Byodo-in is a miniature replica of the Western Paradise and a symbol of resurrection and immortality.



A seated Amida (the celestial Buddha, Vairochana) is found inside... radiating compassion rather than awesome power.

While the thousand-armed Avalokiteshvara and the healing Buddha (Yakushi) stand nearby.

Toshodaiji





The three major images of Toshodaiji. The celestial Buddha, Vairochana, gilded dry lacquer and eleven headed, thousand-armed Avalokiteshvara, (the far right is the healing Buddha, Bhaishagjaguru, or Yakushi.



A series of civil wars resulted in nearly 700 years of Shinto and Buddhist directions with the growth of Zen, Pure Land and Nichiren schools.



Realism emerges as with the sculpture by Unkei of Machaku... This figure Ganjin, the 8th century monk who founded Toshodai-ji... capturing his blindness and focused devotion.



Unlike the Chinese temples of enormous size, this kondo is built into the hillside to enhance its identity with nature.

Muroji kondo

The pagoda, is so small it seems almost like a dolls house.

Muroji pagoda

