

The Buddhist Monarch: Go-Shirakawa and the Rebuilding of Tōdai-ji

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In the last month of the fourth year of Jishō (1180),¹ the great Nara temple Tōdai-ji 東大寺 was set aflame by the armies of the Taira. Destroyed or severely damaged were the major buildings of the temple, including the Daibutsuden, and the eighth-century image of Roshana Buddha within. The project to reconstruct Tōdai-ji, begun the next year, was primarily the work of two individuals, the retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa 後白河 (1127–1192, r. 1155–1158) and a heretofore little-known Buddhist monk named Chōgen 重源 (1121–1206).² With Go-Shirakawa's encouragement, Chōgen sought financing for the project through a nationwide *kanjin* 勧進 campaign, which sought to raise voluntary contributions from the public.

Complex and costly, the reconstruction of Tōdai-ji took many years to accomplish; but the first step, the recasting of the image's head, was finished in 1185, shortly before the victory of the Minamoto over the Taira in the Genpei War. The earliest stage of the project, in short, was completed while the country was still in the throes of civil conflict and in dire economic straits. Moreover, though Nara's second great temple, Kōfuku-ji, had been destroyed at the same time, it never became the object of a nationwide restoration effort.

¹ According to the current Western calendar, the corresponding date actually falls in January 1181, since a year in the old Japanese lunar calendar system began about a month later than in our solar calendar system. Japanese and Western years are treated here as if they corresponded exactly.

² An account of Tōdai-ji's reconstruction and Chōgen's role can be found in MINO 1986.

Tōdai-ji had priority: constructed by the Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (r. 724–749) as both a symbol of imperial power and a mechanism for the exercise of that power, it could not be left in ruins. The restoration, moreover, was especially important for a monarchy buffeted by war and by challenges to its prerogatives by an upstart warrior class, and for a civilian aristocracy that depended on the institution of the monarchy for its political power.

The use of a *kanjin* campaign to raise revenue for Tōdai-ji's restoration was intended to bolster the power and authority of the throne. For one thing, the campaign was reminiscent of a similar effort to finance the founding of Tōdai-ji in the mid-eighth century, when the monarchy was at the height of its political power. Moreover, in requesting the voluntary help of all the people to rebuild a monument to imperial glory, the throne involved the public in an integrated project that transcended the divisions of early medieval society. In effect, the rebuilding of Tōdai-ji—and the way in which revenue was sought for the project—was meant to strengthen the throne's claim to jurisdiction over all Japan, in contrast to the more limited claims of the *bushi* (warrior) houses involved in the Genpei War.

Tōdai-ji and the Throne

The Japanese throne was a complex institution, supported ideologically by both indigenous and foreign concepts. Legitimacy came, first of all, from the claim that the monarch was descended from Amaterasu, kami (deity) of the sun and the highest figure in the native pantheon. During the process of the centralization of power in the seventh and eighth centuries, the monarch was also promoted as a Chinese-style political ruler in charge of land and official appointments, as a Confucian ruler who nurtured his people, and as a link between cosmos and people, nature and nation, also in Chinese style.

In addition, the monarch derived legitimacy from Buddhism, which served several important functions in the process of state formation in the seventh and eighth centuries. Buddhism “protected the nation”: monks performed ceremonies meant to guarantee both the personal welfare of the monarch and his ministers, and the security and prosperity of the nation as a whole. Through patronage of Buddhist institutions, the monarch could demonstrate the largesse

and the grandeur of the throne. Devotion to Buddhism enhanced the image of the monarch as a virtuous ruler. Perhaps most important, however, was that Buddhism—if its institutions and symbol system were monopolized—could help to unify Japanese society under the throne.

This can be illustrated most powerfully by the Emperor Shōmu's construction of an integrated system of state Buddhism with Tōdai-ji at its center (see PIGGOTT 1987, pp. 5–6; MATSUNAGA and MATSUNAGA 1974, pp. 120–23). Shōmu, in fact, was attempting to create two parallel systems, one Buddhist and the other political. In the first, Tōdai-ji occupied the center of a radiating system, with provincial temples (*kokubunji* 國分寺) on the outer ring. Tōdai-ji's centrality was further symbolized by its main object of worship, a gigantic image (Daibutsu) of Roshana Buddha, from whom all phenomena were said to emanate. The political scheme placed the throne at the center of a similarly radiating system, and provincial and local governments on the outer rings. Shōmu's adoption of "Roshana" as his religious name at the Daibutsu's dedication ceremony (MATSUNAGA and MATSUNAGA, p. 121) confirms that he saw his own position as analogous to that of the Daibutsu.

Even Shōmu's choice of methods to finance the casting of the image were apparently motivated by his desire to integrate the nation with the throne at the center. Construction expenses were met in part by a campaign for public donations. In his proclamation of 743 authorizing the project, Shōmu declared, "If there are those whose hearts are moved to donate even a twig, a blade of grass or a clump of earth to help in the construction of this image, these offerings should all be accepted. The provincial and district officials must not intrude on the people for the sake of this project, and forcibly exact donations from them" (KUROITA 1935 [hereafter *SN*]), p. 175 [743/10/15]³). The edict, in short, stipulated the collection of donations of any size, but only if they were voluntary. A few days later, the evangelist Gyōgi 行基 and his followers were dispatched to gather contributions (*SN*, p. 176 [743/10/19]).

By inviting Gyōgi's participation, Shōmu made use of a popular religious leader who some decades earlier had vexed the government with his unauthorized and supposedly subversive preaching, and had

³ The edict is translated in TSUNODA, DE BARY and KEENE 1958, pp. 104–105. My translations of the edict follow this version but occasionally depart from it.

once been accused of fomenting popular discontent against the government (SN, pp. 68–69 [717/4/23]). In so doing, Shōmu rejected the option of financing the project through taxes alone, which might have aroused popular protest led, perhaps, by Gyōgi himself. The emperor's motives for inviting Gyōgi's participation may be variously interpreted. Perhaps he believed that he could defuse any objections to the expense of the grand project with the help of someone close to the people, and with at least the appearance that the image had public and voluntary support. Or he may, as Joan R. PIGGOTT suggests (1987, pp. 99–100), have embraced Gyōgi's Mahāyāna ideal of evangelizing all humankind. In either case, it appears that the choice of both the method to finance the image and the man to implement that method fit one of Shōmu's purposes in launching the project in the first place: to transcend internal conflict through claiming sacred legitimation (see PIGGOTT 1987, p. 5).

We have no way of knowing how successful Gyōgi's campaign was, or what percentage of the expenses for the image was, in fact, met by voluntary donations. According to *Tōdai-ji yōroku*, compiled in the early twelfth century, more than two million donors contributed rice, wood, metal, and labor to the project (quoted in PIGGOTT 1987, p. 128). Whether this is true or not is beside the point. What is important is that it *appeared* to be true, and Gyōgi and his campaign for voluntary donations became part of the story of Tōdai-ji's initial construction as it was utilized by a later generation of builders. Thus Tōdai-ji symbolized not only the glory of a particular emperor, but also the link between the emperor and his people, who were described as willing participants in its founding.

In subsequent centuries, both Tōdai-ji and the throne failed to live up to Shōmu's conception of them as powerful centers of radiating systems. In 822, when the court permitted monks to be ordained at the Tendai center at Mt. Hiei, Tōdai-ji's earlier monopoly over entry into the clergy was broken. Perhaps even more important was the dissolution of the entire system of state control over Buddhism in the Heian period: scores of unofficial temples were founded, unauthorized monks moved freely among the people, and the structure of official Buddhism was severely weakened. Tōdai-ji remained an important temple and became a powerful landholder and political force, but it was no longer the center of an integrated structure. As for the throne, first the emperor himself was weakened and manipulated by his Fujiwara relatives, and then the rise of

virtually tax-free estates in the provinces deprived it of much of its income. Nonetheless, it had retained its institutional primacy, as the ultimate source of official appointment and the confirmation of land rights.

In 1180, however, that primacy must have seemed in danger from the expanding power of the *bushi* clans. The head of the Taira, Kiyomori 平清盛, had been ensconced in Kyoto since 1159. His attempt to dominate the throne, while patterned after Fujiwara methods, was much more heavy-handed than theirs had ever been: Kiyomori went so far as to place the Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa under house arrest at one point, and even moved the capital briefly to his own power base at Fukuhara. In eastern Japan, Minamoto Yoritomo 源頼朝 was expanding his hegemony over the area, perhaps even planning to establish an independent rebel state (HURST 1982, pp. 5–6). In short, the throne was at a crisis point in 1180, even before the destruction of Tōdai-ji. When Go-Shirakawa set out to restore the temple, he was not only attempting to rebuild an important Buddhist institution, he was also restoring a powerful symbol of imperial rule.

Go-Shirakawa and the Tōdai-ji Kanjin Campaign

Go-Shirakawa has not fared well in history, nor was he honored in his own time.⁴ Minamoto Yoritomo called him “Japan’s greatest *tengu*,” and an oracle circulated during his lifetime evaluated him thus: “The retired emperor’s character is not sincere; he follows fashion and is inconstant; his heart is not at peace; while such a situation prevails, uprisings will not cease in the realm” (TAKEUCHI 1978, p. 272). The creators of *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 depicted him as sly and wily, playing one *bushi* and noble against another, with constant thought of his own advantage. Even his own man Fujiwara Michinori 藤原通憲 (Shinzei 信西), who conducted the affairs of the Retired Emperor’s office until his own death in the Heiji 平治 War of 1159, characterized Go-Shirakawa as an unenlightened ruler “without parallel in the history of China and Japan” (SANSOM 1958, p. 267). His alleged inconstancy and manipulative-

⁴ Biographical information on Go-Shirakawa has been taken from the following sources: GOMI 1984, HURST 1976 and 1982, McCULLOUGH 1988, SANSOM 1958, TAKEUCHI 1978.

ness, however, can also be seen as pragmatism in defense of the throne's prerogatives.

In addition, though it was thought proper for monarchs to patronize literature and religion, Go-Shirakawa was criticized for excessive devotion to both (TAKEUCHI 1978, pp. 267, 273). Because he had been absorbed since his childhood in *imayō* 今様, a form of popular poetry, his father the Retired Emperor Toba 鳥羽 considered him unworthy to take the throne, and he became emperor only because there was no other suitable candidate upon Emperor Konoe's 近衛 sudden death in 1155. He retained his interest in *imayō* throughout his lifetime, collecting the poems—many on Buddhist themes—in the anthology *Ryōjin hishō* 梁塵秘抄, and inviting even prostitutes and street minstrels to his palace if they were *imayō* reciters (KWON 1986, p. 275). Conservative courtiers must have looked askance at this unseemly interest in the lower orders of society; yet it may have helped give him the broad perspective necessary to envision a public campaign to rebuild Tōdai-ji that appealed not only to the aristocracy, but to ordinary folk as well.

Go-Shirakawa's piety was well known, attracting the attention of such observers as Jien 慈円, the Tendai cleric who compiled the history *Gukanshō* 愚管抄 in the thirteenth century (BROWN & ISHIDA 1979, p. 105). Critics claimed, however, that his devotion had gone too far, encouraging the depredations of monastic armies and exhausting government resources in the patronage of both Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines (TAKEUCHI 1978, p. 273). He made thirty-two pilgrimages to Kumano 熊野 shrine and built several shrines and temples, donating landholdings to support them. His best-known construction project prior to the Tōdai-ji rebuilding was Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂 (Rengeō-in 蓮華王院), built in the capital in 1164 and famous for its 1,001 images of the Thousand-armed Kannon. For this project Go-Shirakawa turned to Taira Kiyomori, who defrayed the costs through assessments on Bizen province, where the Taira had extensive holdings (BROWN and ISHIDA 1979, p. 118).

After the Taira victory in the Heiji uprising of 1159, Kiyomori and Go-Shirakawa had formed an uneasy alliance that lasted for twenty years. At first it appears that Kiyomori deferred to the retired emperor (see MASS 1974, pp. 127–33)—the financing of Sanjūsangendō may be one example of this—but the *bushi* leader cleverly established an independent route to power, marrying his daughter

to the regnant emperor and becoming, in 1178, the grandfather of the future Emperor Antoku 安徳. By that time relations between Kiyomori and Go-Shirakawa had become quite uncomfortable: neither had forgiven the other for his role in the Shishigatani affair of 1177, in which associates of the retired emperor had plotted against Kiyomori and had been discovered and harshly punished. Kiyomori had even reprimanded Go-Shirakawa himself. In 1179, clearly recognizing Kiyomori's maternal connections to the throne as a threat, Go-Shirakawa seized Taira land rights and rejected Kiyomori's candidate for high office; Kiyomori responded with a coup d'état in which the retired emperor was placed under house arrest. This act became the pretext for rebellions on the part of the Minamoto, rivals to the Taira. Faced with this agitation, Kiyomori restored Go-Shirakawa to his position as the head of the *in-no-chō* 院庁 (Retired Emperor's Office) in 1180, but Go-Shirakawa remained under the Taira leader's thumb until the latter's death in early 1181.

It is against this background that Go-Shirakawa's concern with rebuilding Tōdai-ji must be evaluated. A restored Tōdai-ji could serve as a monument to the renewed glory of the throne, as well as to the perfidy of the Taira (a factor that must have also attracted Yoritomo's cooperation later in the rebuilding process). But where could Go-Shirakawa obtain funding for such a massive project?

State support for Tōdai-ji, like other important Buddhist institutions, had been provided initially by land allotments and tax revenues from designated sustenance households. When revenue from these sources became unreliable, Tōdai-ji increased its efforts to develop *shōen* 荘園 (private estates) which it could control more directly (PIGGOTT 1982, pp. 52–3). But for purposes of repair, official temples such as Tōdai-ji could still lay claim to state funds (YASUDA 1983, p. 66). Thus Tōdai-ji had two possible sources to fund its reconstruction project: it could milk its own *shōen*, and it could receive public assistance through taxes. But it appears that early in 1181, sufficient revenue could be obtained from neither source.

In addition, though the destruction of Tōdai-ji caused much distress in the imperial court, little could be done to repair the damage as long as the government and Go-Shirakawa himself were under Kiyomori's control. Moreover, the Taira had forced the confiscation of Tōdai-ji estates (KUJŌ 1908 [hereafter *GY*] I:2, p. 463 [1181/1/6]), thus cutting the temple off from its income. It was not until Kiyomori died in the intercalary second month of 1181 that

reconstruction activities could be initiated. Even then Go-Shirakawa proceeded cautiously, blaming not the Taira but “bad elements” at Tōdai-ji and Kōfuku-ji for the burning, and only tentatively suggesting that the temples’ estates be restored (*GY* I:2, p. 489 [1181/intercalary 2/20]). Though the holdings were returned shortly,⁵ Tōdai-ji’s financial problems were not solved, as Kujō Kanezane, then Minister of the Right, affirmed in his diary *Gyokuyō* 玉葉 .

The only truly contemporary account of the early stages of Tōdai-ji’s reconstruction is found in this diary, compiled between 1164 and 1200. While for the most part this information can be accepted as accurate, Kanezane seems to have taken little interest in the detailed planning of the project. Thus the account must be supplemented by other sources that date from somewhat later times, such as CHŌGEN’s *Namu Amida Butsu sazenshū* (1934 [hereafter *SZS*]), written in 1204, and *Hyakurenshō* (KUROITA 1937), a chronicle written in the late Kamakura period. The most detailed and polished account, however, appears in *Tōdai-ji zoku yōroku*, compiled in the late thirteenth century (KOKUSHO KANKŌKAI 1907 [hereafter *TZY*]). In this version, the *kanjin* campaign is described as a purposeful and well-planned effort initiated by determined and pious individuals. In both its tone and some of its factual information, however, this account disagrees at times with Kanezane’s. (See Table on facing page.)

According to both *Zoku yōroku* and *Gyokuyō*, serious plans for reconstructing Tōdai-ji got underway in the third month of 1181. It was then that Fujiwara Yukitaka 行隆, an official of Go-Shirakawa’s *in-no-chō* and the *kurōdo* 藏人 (Imperial Secretariat), arranged with bronze casting masters to remake the Daibutsu image (*TZY*, p. 198). A few days later when he visited Kanezane on Go-Shirakawa’s behalf, Yukitaka suggested that an imperial order be issued to *chishiki* 知識 (Buddhist faithful) to implement the casting of the image (*GY* I:2, p. 496 [1181/3/21]). The use of the word *chishiki* suggests that this was to be a request for donations, though there is no indication that a nationwide *kanjin* campaign was considered at this time.

⁵ Both HORIIKE (1976, p. 4) and ASAI and ASAI (1986, p. 14) state that temple lands were restored on 1181/3/1, without citing a source for this information. The fact that the conversations between Yukitaka and Kanezane reported in *Gyokuyō* cease to make an issue of the problem after 1181/intercalary 2/20, suggests that, in fact, the lands were restored.

FIRST STEPS IN THE RESTORATION OF TŌDAI-JI

1180/12/28	Nara temples burned (<i>GY</i> , <i>TZY</i>)
1181/intercalary 2/5	Kiyomori dies (<i>GY</i>)
1181/intercalary 2/20	Yukitaka and Kanezane discuss the possibility of restoring temple <i>shōen</i> (<i>GY</i>)
1181/3/17	Yukitaka contacts casting masters (<i>TZY</i>)
1181/3/21	Yukitaka suggests an imperial request for donations (<i>GY</i>)
1181/4/9	Chōgen volunteers his services (<i>TZY</i>)
1181/6/26	Yukitaka is appointed construction superintendent (<i>GY</i>)
1181/6/?	Imperial edict orders a <i>kanjin</i> campaign (<i>TZY</i>)
1181/7/13–15	Yukitaka & Kanezane discuss reconstruction financing (<i>GY</i>)
1181/8/?	Chōgen issues his <i>kanjin</i> appeal (<i>TZY</i>)
1181/10/6	Casting of the Daibutsu is set to begin on this day (<i>GY</i>)
1181/10/9	Chōgen collects donations in Kyoto (<i>GY</i>)

At the end of the sixth month, government officials met to decide on details of the construction project (*GY* I:2, p. 509; *TZY* pp. 197–98). Yukitaka was appointed construction superintendent, and several other officials of the retired emperor's staff were chosen to assist him (ASAI and ASAI 1986, p. 16). Following the recommendations of the *On'yōryō* 陰陽寮 (Bureau of Divinations), construction work was set to begin in the eighth month. According to an order passed on from Yukitaka to officials of Tōdai-ji and of Yamato province, Tōdai-ji's sustenance households and *shōen* would finance the project.

Even so, funding was still a significant problem, and there was considerable danger that the project would not get underway as planned. *Gyokuyō* reports a conversation that took place on 7/13 between Kanezane and Yukitaka, who bore a message from Go-Shirakawa. The retired emperor complained that the nation had been plagued by a series of calamities—drought, famine and

insurrection—as well as by mysterious events, including a comet and the appearance of two flowers on one stem of a lotus plant, an omen of bad fortune. How, Go-Shirakawa asked, can we govern virtuously so that good will prevail over evil? Go-Shirakawa's complaint was vague, but the destruction of the Nara temples—and the failure of the court to set about immediately to rebuild them—must have been seen as at least one cause of the disasters and bad omens that had befallen the nation. Kanezane's answer implied that this was the case. While sympathizing with the retired emperor's concerns, Kanezane, in his own account the benevolent Confucian minister, refused to consider raising taxes: "Whether we are discussing the restoration of the two temples [Tōdai-ji and Kōfuku-ji] or provisions for warriors of our defending army, if we lay the expenses on the people it would really be quite a burden for them. Even in good years, these farmers lead hard lives; how much more so when they are dying of starvation!" (GY I:2, p. 514 [1181/7/13]). Kanezane and messengers from Go-Shirakawa debated the issue for the next two days, without reaching any firm decision.

That autumn, apparently, a decision was made to finance Tōdai-ji's reconstruction in part through a *kanjin* campaign. Though such campaigns had become quite common by the late twelfth century, they were not the standard means to meet expenses at major religious institutions. As private efforts rooted in popular religious beliefs, campaigns were more suitable for small and medium-sized temples that obtained their main support from the populace at large, than for a great institution such as Tōdai-ji, established by imperial order as a religious underpinning for the state. In the difficult times of 1181, however, it must have seemed necessary to seek revenue from every possible source. Even though Tōdai-ji's *shōen* had once more become available, the temple's economic base had been weakening for some time, and the problem was exacerbated by continuing disputes with Kōfuku-ji over holdings in Yamato province (ASAI and ASAI 1986, p. 16). In addition, it appears that the traditional mechanism for accomplishing repair work had long since failed the temple (NAGAMURA 1981, p. 64). Repairs had originally been the responsibility of the *bettō* 别当 (administrator), but from late Heian times that office had been filled by Shingon monks who did not live at the temple and sometimes neglected their duties. Thus the resident monks at the temple had to look elsewhere, and this prepared the way for the *kanjin* campaign as an alternate revenue source.

Looking Back to Shōmu

Such explanations are certainly valid, but I think yet another factor should be considered: the desire of the court, especially Go-Shirakawa, to use Tōdai-ji's reconstruction to enhance the power and prestige of the throne. If a nationwide *kanjin* campaign were used to collect revenue for the project, it would be a concrete testament to the power of the throne to mobilize people and resources from anywhere in Japan, and thus to lay claim as no *bushi* leader could to jurisdiction over the entire nation.

Calling for a nationwide campaign may have been economically necessary; politically it was a bold step. The Taira still held power in the capital, and Go-Shirakawa and Kanezane had to be careful not to offend them. This may be one reason why, in conversations between Kanezane and Go-Shirakawa's messengers in the seventh month of 1181 (*GY* 1:2, pp. 514–15), temple reconstruction was joined to two other questions: how to deal with "bad monks"—presumably the ones that had invited the retribution of the Taira—and how to finance the Taira war effort. It seems as if Go-Shirakawa and Kanezane were ready to offer the Taira a *quid pro quo*: do not interfere with our efforts to rebuild Tōdai-ji and Kōfuku-ji, and in exchange we will keep monastic armies under control and provide for your soldiers.

To investigate the *kanjin* campaign itself and Chōgen's role in implementing it, we must turn to *Zoku yōroku* (*TZY*, pp. 195–209). According to this source, Chōgen approached Yuktaka in the fourth month of 1181, explaining that a dream oracle had sent him to visit Tōdai-ji, where he had lamented the destruction of the Dai-butsu. Yuktaka, recognizing help when he saw it, suggested that an imperial order authorizing a *kanjin* campaign might be obtained. Such an order was promulgated in the sixth month, and two months later, we are told, Chōgen built six one-wheeled carts, and he and his followers canvassed "the seven circuits and all the provinces," requesting donations through a written appeal (*TZY*, p. 199). The imperial order and Chōgen's *kanjin* appeal are reproduced in this text, along with a document written in 1185 by Chōgen which corroborates the earlier account.⁶

⁶ Translations of the imperial order and Chōgen's appeal into modern Japanese can be found in HASHIMOTO and HORIIKE 1940, pp. 119–20.

Reminiscing many years later, Chōgen wrote in *Namu Amida Butsu sazenshū*:

Some twenty-three years have passed between the time when, at age sixty-one, I received the imperial order to rebuild Tōdai-ji, and now, when I have reached the age of eighty-three. After six years the construction of the Daibutsu was accomplished, and the retired emperor Go-Shirakawa paid an Imperial visit on the day of the eye-opening [the dedication of the image] . . . (SZS, p. 49).

The reference to the imperial order is, to my knowledge, the earliest independent confirmation of the *Zoku jōroku* account. The account is also supported by a passage in the late-Kamakura history *Hyakurenshō* (KUROITA 1937, p. 106): “On the 26th day [of the sixth month of 1181], the decision to rebuild Tōdai-ji was made, and a petition for assistance was circulated among the Buddhist faithful.”

The edict (TZY, p. 199; HASHIMOTO and HORIIKE 1940, pp. 118–19) was clearly the work of Go-Shirakawa, though it was formally promulgated by the reigning Emperor Antoku, a small boy who of course had nothing to do with it. After the death of Kiyomori, however, Go-Shirakawa had reassumed partial control of the state apparatus; thus it was doubtless he who dictated the edict, a contention that can be supported by its laudatory treatment of him. Throughout the document, parallels are drawn between Shōmu’s original construction of the temple, and the throne’s current restoration plans. The edict sometimes quotes directly from Shōmu’s proclamation (direct or near-direct quotations are printed in italics).

The document opens with a pious expression of reverence for the imperial line and concern for its preservation:

Tender of age as we are, we gratefully laud [past] imperial achievements, rely upon the protection of our ancestors, and earnestly pay heed to the safety of the imperial line. In regard to this, in Yamato province Sofunokami 添上 district, there was constructed a great temple with a *jōroku* 丈六⁷ gilt bronze image that Emperor Shōmu had cast in the Tenpyō era 天平. The roof of the temple soared to the heavens, and the sacred brilliance of the image surpassed that of the full moon; truly there is nothing to compare with it in Japan or China. . . .

When the fires of the Taira lay waste to the temple,

⁷ Sometimes mistakenly translated as sixteen feet, or more accurately, sixteen meters (the Daibutsu was actually more than fifty-three feet tall). Buddhist images are often described as *jōroku* in height, the mythical height of the historical Buddha.

Zenjō Sen'in 禅定仙院 [Go-Shirakawa] heard of the matter and, deeply moved, had the temple's foundation stones preserved in their original arrangement, trees to reconstruct the building cut in the mountains, a casting mold made by skilled artisans, and copper obtained from the provinces. He desired to rebuild the temple with these materials, and the intent of his imperial vow truly suffices as a grateful response [to Shōmu's establishment of the temple]. *It is We who possess the wealth of the land; it is We who possess all power in the land. With this wealth and power at Our command, we shall certainly assist others to achieve meditative power and wisdom⁸ and shall, moreover, act in accord with the desire expressed long ago by the sainted founder of the temple.*

Turning to the matter of financing the rebuilding project, the edict states:

We ought to appeal to both clergy and lay believers for donations, for everyone from royalty and ministers of state down to palanquin bearers and low-class servants *should pay homage daily to the image of Roshana, so that with constant devotion we can construct the image ourselves.* Long ago the Emperor Shōmu fervently desired the salvation of all creatures. In his chambers he prayed to the Shinto kami, and publicly he encouraged the world to follow the Buddhist law, graciously issuing imperial orders and accomplishing many good deeds. We must follow such ancient practices and restore this venerable monument! Those who give alms for this purpose, even though it be only a grain of rice, a half penny, a small tool or a log one foot in length, shall prosper forever and everywhere through the power of their good deeds. . . .

The edict goes on to emphasize the value of small donations to the project, likening them to small particles that form a great mountain, or tiny brooks that make up the ocean. After promising good karma and salvation to donors, and peace and prosperity in the realm, the edict, like that of Shōmu, warns its executors: "The officials of the Kinai, the seven circuits and all the provinces *must not intrude on the people for the sake of this project.*"

In summary, the edict recalls Shōmu's role in the founding of Tōdai-ji and quotes directly from his proclamation to emphasize the parallel between him and Go-Shirakawa. Furthermore, the edict implies a connection between the welfare of the imperial line and the reconstruction of Tōdai-ji; it also points out the responsibility that

⁸ Two of the six *haramitsu* (*pāramitā*), the practices through which the bodhisattva attains nirvāṇa.

everyone bears for the project, and specifies a broad-based voluntary *kanjin* campaign to finance it.

The *Zoku yōroku* narrative which contains the edict also establishes a second parallel, between Chōgen and Gyōgi (*TZY*, pp. 198–200). According to the account, when Chōgen first approached Yukitaka to volunteer his services, Yukitaka replied, “In the Tenpyō era, Gyōgi Bosatsu was given the imperial order [to rebuild Tōdai-ji] and thus proceeded to conduct a *kanjin* campaign.” In his *kanjin* appeal, moreover, Chōgen declares that when Tōdai-ji was founded, “Gyōgi Bosatsu brought to fruition the devotion of Buddhist believers”—much, it is implied, as Chōgen himself intends to do.

Though most Japanese scholars tend to accept the *Zoku yōroku* account, there are reasons to doubt its complete accuracy. Chōgen’s appeal carries a bogus date, the eighth month of the first year of Yōwa; the Yōwa era did not begin until the tenth month. (The imperial order, however, is dated correctly.) While this may have been a copyist’s error, it may also mean that the appeal itself was composed somewhat later, perhaps in order to help form a logical story. In addition, the *Zoku yōroku* account shows none of the floundering that becomes apparent when we read Kanezane’s diary. In *Zoku yōroku*, the *kanjin* campaign began officially in the eighth month but the imperial order was dated in the sixth month, indicating that this method of raising revenue had been chosen. But in *Gyokuyō*, Go-Shirakawa is still wringing his hands in the middle of the seventh month. Kanezane mentions nothing about Chōgen and the *kanjin* campaign until the tenth month, when he notes that the “Tōdai-ji alms-collecting *shōnin* 聖人 went around to all houses in the capital asking for donations—beginning with the retired emperor—and not asking whether a household be noble or base. The Nyoin 女院 [Sutoku’s 崇徳 empress and Kanezane’s sister, Kōkamon’in 皇嘉門院] contributed ten catties of bronze, and others gave a thousand *kanmon* 貫文 of cash or six *ryō* 兩 of gold” (*GY* I:2, p. 532 [1181/10/9]). It may have been his sister’s substantial gift that interested Kanezane in the Tōdai-ji campaign, rather than any importance that he attributed to the *kanjin* effort itself.

Gyokuyō’s record of the stumbling efforts of Go-Shirakawa and Kanezane in the middle of 1181 seems somewhat more true to life than the decisive steps described in *Zoku yōroku*; yet the later account should not be dismissed out of hand. Both *Sazenshū* and *Gyokuyō* indicate that an imperial order authorizing a *kanjin* campaign was

in fact promulgated sometime in midyear. The *Zoku yōroku* version is probably how the entire effort was meant to be seen, perhaps by Tōdai-ji, perhaps by Chōgen, perhaps by Go-Shirakawa, but most likely by all three. It was Go-Shirakawa, in fact, who had the biggest stake in creating a story of a unified, purposeful effort—a story in which Chōgen played the part of Gyōgi and he himself took the role of the Emperor Shōmu.

The association of Gyōgi with the collection of donations for Tōdai-ji, though based on an accepted historical account, seems to have become part of the popular Gyōgi legend only after Chōgen's campaign. Heian period sources such as *Hokke genki* 法華驗記 and *Konjaku monogatari shū* portray Gyōgi as a miracle-worker and popular evangelist who helped people in practical ways, such as building roads and bridges, and whose virtues eventually attracted imperial patronage. He appears at the Tōdai-ji dedication, but not in his *kanjin* role (DYKSTRA 1983, pp. 27–9 [Tale 1:2]; NAGAZUMI and IKEGAMI 1966–1968, Vol. 1, pp. 13–7 [Tale 1:2]; pp. 27–9 [Tale 1:7]; Vol. 3, pp. 74–7 [Tales 17:36, 37]). But *Shasekishū* 砂石集, written in the early fourteenth century, identifies him as the “Subscription Saint who took up collections for the construction of Tōdai-ji” (MORRELL 1985, p. 181 [Tale 5B:11]). It is my conjecture that sometime in the process of Chōgen's campaign, the Gyōgi legend was embellished with a little-known item from the *Shoku Nihongi*, in an attempt to use popular veneration of Gyōgi to validate a widespread *kanjin* effort.

It is unclear to what extent Chōgen was successful in obtaining donations from ordinary people. His appeal echoes the request for small donations in the imperial edicts of 1181 and 743. Yet there is little information on what ordinary people actually gave; the initial donations noted in *Gyokuyō*, one thousand *kanmon* of cash or six *ryō* of gold, are a far cry from a length of cloth. Perhaps the ocean indeed could be formed from the water of tiny brooks, but the contributions of major rivers would fill it up much more efficiently. In addition, if the peasants were as close to starvation as Kanezane claimed, then they would not have had anything to give. It is likely that Tōdai-ji received small donations from the general populace, but that the most important donors from a practical point of view were people such as Minamoto Yoritomo, who contributed silk, gold dust, and ten thousand *koku* 石 of rice (HAYAKAWA 1923: I, p. 112). If the true purpose of the *kanjin* campaign, however, was to unite

people around the throne to rebuild a monument to imperial glory, then it was more important for the campaign to look like a popular effort than it was to actually be one.

The Selection of Chōgen

If Go-Shirakawa was the catalyst that launched the reconstruction of Tōdai-ji, then Chōgen was the force that drove the project to its successful conclusion. His appointment put him in charge not only of the collection of donations, but also of the entire construction process at the temple, a position of great power and influence. The appointment turned out to be a fortunate one for Tōdai-ji, since Chōgen was a perspicacious man skilled not only in *kanjin* methods, but also in shepherding artists, managing revenue, and setting the project's priorities.

The selection of Chōgen requires some explanation. He was an aging monk who had attained no distinguished ecclesiastical rank, had written no commentaries on the scriptures or sophisticated doctrinal treatises, and had no previous connection to Tōdai-ji. On the other hand, he had already supervised the construction of two temple buildings, and had conducted smaller-scale *kanjin* campaigns, winning the patronage of provincial notables and the devotion of ordinary people.⁹ In other words, his technological skill and his ability to attract a wide spectrum of potential donors overcame his relatively low social position and recommended him to court officials such as Yuktaka.

Little is known about Chōgen's life prior to his Tōdai-ji appointment. His autobiography, *Namu Amida Butsu sazenshū*, primarily concerns his "good deeds" (*sazen*) of constructing temples, images, and baths, but contains a few details about his early life (SZS, pp. 42–51). Another source is the commentary that he wrote in 1185, on the occasion of the Daibutsu's dedication (TZY, pp. 208–9). Several scholars have used that information, inscriptions, hagiography and anecdotes to patch together a sketchy picture of his life.¹⁰ He is said to have been born in the capital to a branch of the Ki family with connections to both the *kurōdo* and the Retired Emperor Toba's

⁹ For an overview of Chōgen's building projects, see TANAKA 1976.

¹⁰ Biographical information on Chōgen has been taken from the following sources: AMINO 1975, FUKUDA 1967, GOMI 1984, GORAI 1975, KOBAYASHI 1971, NAKANODŌ 1975.

guards. Chōgen took Buddhist orders as a boy, perhaps as young as age thirteen, entering the Shingon temple Daigo-ji 醍醐寺 on the outskirts of Kyoto. When he was still quite young he undertook Shugendō practice, traveling to sacred mountains in central Honshū, Shikoku, Kyūshū, and the Tōhoku region, and reciting and copying the *Lotus Sūtra*. He claimed to have traveled to China three times, and it may have been on these travels that he obtained the technological skill that enabled him to design the Daibutsuden.

Like many of his contemporaries, Chōgen was devoted to Amida throughout his lifetime. He took credit for making thirty-seven images of Amida and he eventually adopted the name of Namu Amida Butsu, the invocation (*nenbutsu*) recited by followers of the Pure Land faith (KOBAYASHI 1971, pp. 13–6). In particular, he advocated chanting the *nenbutsu* while bathing, and had baths established at temples and elsewhere, combining practical good work that promoted cleanliness and good health with a ritual that both propagated the *nenbutsu* and symbolized spiritual cleansing (GORAI 1975, pp. 182–85). Biographies of the Pure Land school founder Hōnen claim close connections between him and Chōgen; indeed, both had similar faith in the *nenbutsu* and a similar concern with popular preaching. Chōgen is most closely associated, however, with the *nenbutsu hijiri* 聖 (ascetics) at Mt. Kōya, where he took up residence sometime before 1176. Scholars have questioned Chōgen's lineage, his exact relationship with Hōnen, and his journeys to China, but the rest of this information is generally accepted, and provides us with a picture of an unexceptional religious figure of the *hijiri* type so common in late Heian Japan: one who combined mountain asceticism, devotion to Amida and the *Lotus Sūtra*, and construction work that benefited both temples and the general populace (see GOODWIN 1989). According to some sources in the Pure Land tradition (e.g., *Kurodani Genkū shōnin den* 黒谷源空上人伝, quoted in KOBAYASHI 1971, p. 64), the first choice for the Tōdai-ji *kanjin* position was Hōnen, who declined but recommended Chōgen instead. Though this may be an invention of Hōnen's hagiographers, it suggests that one important qualification for the head of the *kanjin* campaign was closeness to the people, of the type that Hōnen and Chōgen had established. Both men, moreover, had developed ties with court functionaries as well as with ordinary folk. In other words, they were not merely vagabond *hijiri* unworthy of official notice, but potential intermediaries between court and populace.

In particular, Chōgen seems to have attracted the patronage of Minamoto Moroyuki 師行, Minister of the Treasury, a *zuryō* 受領 (provincial governor) and client of the Retired Emperor Toba (GOMI 1984, pp. 402–3). Moroyuki was the main contributor to a *kanjin* campaign that Chōgen conducted for the construction of a temple building at Daigo-ji. In 1176 Chōgen conducted another campaign for a bronze bell at Kōya's Enju-in 延寿院, dedicated to persons identified as Moroyuki and two of his sons, and to an unidentified nun, perhaps another family member. One of the sons to whom the bell was dedicated was a monk at Tōdai-ji's Tōnan-in 東南院 (KOBAYASHI 1971, p. 46), and he may very well have suggested that Chōgen undertake the restoration *kanjin* project. More generally speaking, the mediation of a powerful provincial functionary must have stood Chōgen in good stead in establishing a relationship with the court.

Another useful connection for Chōgen was with the *kurōdo*, in which Yukitaka held an important position. The connection may have been established through Chōgen's own family or through Moroyuki, who had contacts with the bureau. The *kurōdo* had charge of important iron casters groups, one of which participated in the reconstruction of the Daibutsu and also assisted Chōgen later with such projects as the casting of bath cauldrons at Daigo-ji and an iron pagoda at Suō's 周防 Amida-dera 阿弥陀寺 (AMINO 1975, p. 365).

Important as Chōgen's connections may have been, it was his *muen* 無縁 status—his lack of *permanent* connections to any single temple, patron, or government office—that also made him an appropriate choice to head Go-Shirakawa's *kanjin* campaign. Prior to his appointment at Tōdai-ji, Chōgen resembled *muen hijiri*, itinerants who wandered from temple to temple performing services such as alms collection. Even after he assumed responsibility for the Tōdai-ji campaign, he remained an outsider whose priorities for reconstruction differed from those of the regular monks (NAGAMURA 1981, p. 72). Free of entanglements and able to move freely from one social milieu to another, Chōgen—like other *muen hijiri*—was in an ideal position to attract donors. In addition, his *muen* status may have been of value in establishing ties with Go-Shirakawa, since *muen* people had a special relationship to the throne.

According to AMINO Yoshihiko (1978), the category *muen* included not only *hijiri* but also vagabond craftsmen and peddlers, as well as

the roads they traveled and the ports and markets where they sold their wares. By the late Heian period the throne had established its jurisdiction over *muen* people and places. For example, it granted licenses to certain craftsmen to travel freely, without the payment of tolls assessed to most people (AMINO 1975, pp. 358–60, 366–67). In fact, vagabond craftsmen often sought the status of *kugonin* 供御人 or purveyors to the imperial household, because it would free them from the jurisdiction of any entity *but* the throne. Chōgen's right to travel nationwide to collect donations was of the same order as a *kugonin*'s rights (AMINO 1975, p. 367).

Amino's ideas intersect with those of the anthropologist YAMAGUCHI Masao (1977, pp. 152–57), who associates both *hijiri* and monarch with the mythical figure of the stranger (*marōdogami* 客神 or *hitogami* 人神) who brings both bounty and danger to the isolated village community. As the Japanese terms indicate, the stranger was considered to be no ordinary human being, but one who possessed the charisma of a kami. His ability to transcend the structures of individual communities gave him power and freedom that no one within the community could muster, and *kanjin hijiri*, as I have pointed out elsewhere (1989, pp. 146–47), often used this ability to their advantage. Such power and freedom was also possessed in theory by the emperor, with his command over the places and people that lay under no one else's control. In one sense these were "leftover" people and places, outside the structure of agricultural society on which *bushi* power was based. In another sense they were the nodes and channels of a communications network that helped to integrate the whole nation. And that integration, Yamaguchi argues, was precisely the monarch's duty.

YAMAGUCHI maintains, however, that the monarch "could not manifest his force directly, because it could be antisocial if it were manifested without modification" (p. 157). If this argument is applied to the events of 1181, it appears that Go-Shirakawa faced quite a dilemma. On the one hand *bushi* power, which relied more on actual control of provincial land and people than on titles granted by the throne, was threatening the throne's institutional primacy. Thus there was a need for a powerful example of the throne's ability to integrate the nation. The reconstruction of Tōdai-ji might fit this need; yet were that accomplished through taxation, it might be regarded as "antisocial," as Kanezane's objections indicate. The choice of a *kanjin* campaign which appeared to be both voluntary

and widespread, can be understood in this light. Chōgen, who stood outside the fractured social structure that Go-Shirakawa was attempting to transcend and perhaps even to unify, thus appears to be a logical selection to head the campaign.

The Daibutsu Opens Its Eyes

The reconstruction of Tōdai-ji was an immense task that took a century to complete. Revenues collected in Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign played only a small part in financing the project. Additional support was provided by Yoritomo, who assessed "donations" from his vassals with little pretense that they were voluntary gifts; and most importantly, by the assignment of revenues from Suō and Bizen provinces. Yet it was the voluntary *kanjin* campaign that set the tone for the reconstruction effort. For one thing, the initial step in recasting the Daibutsu's head, the construction of the mold, was funded largely through donations collected by Chōgen (*GY* I:2, p. 554 [1182/2/20]). Without the campaign, moreover, it would have been difficult for Go-Shirakawa to claim that both the throne and the people had participated in a national effort to reconstruct a monument to imperial glory.

In the eighth month of 1185, a dedication ceremony was held for the image of Roshana (*GY* II, pp. 97–8 [1185/8/28–30]). The work had been completed with the help of courtiers, *bushi*, and the common people, who gathered at the ceremony, as "numerous as the sands of the Ganges." Go-Shirakawa himself painted in the eyes of the image. One of Kanezane's companions on the trip home from Nara criticized this as inappropriate conduct: "The retired emperor has become a *busshi* 仏師 (artist-monk)! What precedent is there for this?" But another replied, "The precedent is from the Tenpyō era, when the Emperor Shōmu, retired at that time, took the brush himself and deigned to paint in the eyes [of the original Daibutsu]." It seems likely that this story, which is not the standard account, was promoted by Go-Shirakawa in an attempt to identify himself with Shōmu, and the twelfth-century throne with the throne in its glory days of the eighth century.

Religious legitimization of the throne's authority must have seemed as important to Go-Shirakawa in 1185 as it did in 1181. Despite the fact that he had eventually thrown his support to Yoritomo, Go-Shirakawa was in a precarious position after the Minamoto vic-

tory over the Taira at Dannoura. Yoritomo's refusal to permit his followers to accept court appointments clearly established his independent authority over the Kantō *bushi*. Thus Go-Shirakawa had failed to make Yoritomo his client, and a new *bushi* leader posed a challenge to court and throne. Later that year, the retired emperor turned for support to Yoritomo's brother Yoshitsune; but neither that nor the reconstruction of Tōdai-ji succeeded, as we know, in restoring the throne to the position it had held in Shōmu's day. Yet perhaps the respectful treatment of emperor and court by the early rulers of Kamakura rested in part on the knowledge that no *bushi* leader of the age could claim a relationship to all the people comparable to that of the throne.

ABBREVIATIONS

- GY: *Gyokuyō* [KUJŌ Kanezane 1908]
 SN: *Shoku Nihongi* [KUROITA Katsumi, ed. 1935]
 SZS: *Namu Amida Butsu sazenshū* [CHŌGEN 1934]
 TZY: *Tōdai-ji zoku yōroku* [KOKUSHO KANKŌKAI 1907]

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