

Chōnen's Pilgrimage to China, 983-986

The life of the Japanese monk Chōnen (春然; 938-1016) and his journey to China are to be seen as part of a period of change in the history of Sino-Japanese relations. The collapse of the centralized T'ang empire (618-907) and the emergence of short-lived regional states in the north and various independent local kingdoms in the south signaled the disintegration of the traditional Chinese tribute system, which had served for centuries as a medium for official relations between China and her East Asian neighbors. When China eventually achieved reunification under the Sung dynasty (960-1127), it faced a new East Asian world. Neighboring states withdrew recognition of China's suzerainty and were pressing for new status as equal partners with the Middle Kingdom.¹

Japan had long ceased to send "tribute-paying" missions to China as a means of obtaining knowledge about Chinese institutions, because her own centralized institutional system had already come to maturity. As official relations between China and Japan declined, however, they were replaced by a growth in the activities of private Chinese merchants engaged in trade with Japan. They opened a private channel for economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries, and their ships provided passage for Japanese monks on pilgrimage to China. Trips to the Middle Kingdom now did not need to be sponsored by the court, albeit court permission was still necessary.

Chinese cultural influence was still strong in tenth-century Japan. But indigenous Japanese culture had also developed. Centuries of social stability during the late-Heian period nourished the "national culture" (*kokufū bunka* 國風文化). Japanese scholars and monks now proudly talked about

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¹ Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生, "Higashi Ajia sekai no keisei, pt. 1, sōsetsu" 東アジア世界の形成總説, in Ienaga Saburō 家永三郎 et al., eds., *Sekai rekishi (kodai 4)* 世界歴史 (古代 4) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), pp. 1-19.

Japanese writings, which they placed on par with those from China.² Long-lasting domestic peace was instrumental in the preservation of many Buddhist as well as classical Chinese works that had been brought to Japan in earlier times. In contrast, in China devastating civil wars at the close of the ninth century and repeated dynastic changes following the end of the T'ang had reduced many cultural relics to ashes. The tenth century then ushered in a period of "inverse cultural export" from Japan to China,³ during which transcripts of Buddhist sutras, classical Chinese works, and indigenous Japanese works were reintroduced to China.

The activities of Japanese monks in China during the tenth and eleventh centuries were important for contemporary Sino-Japanese relations. They were the only Japanese individuals who were allowed to travel abroad during the court's policy of seclusion.⁴ The trips of earlier Japanese monks to China, during the Sui-T'ang period, were of a different nature. At that time, the newly established central government of Japan was attempting to use Buddhism as an ideological weapon in its favor and to speed up political and economic reforms.⁵ If their predecessors' efforts to reach China were for the sake of the state, the tenth-century Japanese monks traveled primarily for the fulfillment of personal wishes. Although self-motivated and basically on their own, they were nevertheless received as state guests by the Sung court, which, out of the desire to rebuild a China-centered world order, wishfully took them as special envoys of the Japanese court coming to pay "tribute." The special status of the monks in both Japan and China enabled them to play a unique role in Sino-Japanese relations. And their activities left lasting influence on the relations between the two countries. The story of Chōnen is to be understood in this context.

² Kimiya Yasuhiko 木宮泰彦, *Nikka bunka kōryū shi* 日華文化交流史 (Tokyo: Fūsanbō, 1955), pp. 278-80.

³ Tsuji Zenosuke 辻善之助, *Zōtai kaigai kōtsū shiwa* 増訂海外交通史話 (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki kabushiki kaisha, 1933), p. 109.

⁴ Mori Katsumi 森克己 et al., eds., *Taigai kankei shi* 對外關係史, *Taikai Nihonshi sōsho* edn. (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1978) 5, pp. 52-53. Official as well as private contacts with foreign countries were strictly prohibited by the Japanese court, which in 953 rejected the gifts of Chiang Ch'eng-hsün 蔣承勳, a private Chinese merchant who came to Japan on behalf of the king of Wu-yüeh. See Fujiwara Akihira 藤原明衡, *Honchō manzai* 本朝文粹, *Kokushi taikai* edn. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1941; hereafter, *MZ*) 7, p. 140.

⁵ George Sansom, *A History of Japan to 1334* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1958), pp. 60-66.

CHŌNEN'S LIFE AND HIS PILGRIMAGE TO CHINA

Prior to a documentary discovery in 1953, the facts about Chōnen's family background were either obscured or misleading. In a short appendix, below, I analyze that discovery and various of the philological problems presented by Chōnen's biographical notices. We can now deduce that Chōnen was born into a Hata 秦 family in Yamashiro 山城 prefecture, adjacent to the capital Heiankyō (modern Kyoto). As a boy, he was sent to the Tōji 東寺 in Kyoto, where he was a disciple of Kanri 觀理 (894-974) and studied *Three Treatises* (*sanron shū* 三論宗) Mādhyamika Buddhism. He then went to the Ishiyamaji 石山寺 in Ōtsu to study esoteric teachings under Gengō 元杲 (911-995). (On Kanri and Gengō, see the appendix.)

In 970 Chōnen began to develop his idea for a pilgrimage to China. He wanted to climb the Wu-t'ai Mountains, where Mañjuśrī 文殊 purportedly manifested himself on occasions, and then go on to Middle India to worship the holy land of Śākyamuni 釋迦摩尼.⁶ However, his long-cherished wish was not fulfilled until 983, when he finally received court permission to leave Japan for China.⁷

Unfortunately, Chōnen's pilgrimage was delayed. He received strong criticism and biting sarcasm from both monks and laymen. They cited the famous Japanese Buddhist masters Kōbō 弘法 (774-835) and Dengyō 傳教 (767-822) as examples, arguing that these monks, who went to China in search of Buddha's law, were either very powerful or of great talent. They devoted their lives to the study of Buddhism in order to revitalize Japan. A monk like Chōnen, they believed, would never be able to reach the level of learning of those great masters. They compared him instead to a ladder pointing to the sky but never able to reach it. If Chōnen was allowed to visit China, they argued, he would be regarded by the Chinese as nothing but an indication of a lack of talented people in Japan. Criticism toward Chōnen's proposed trip was so strong that it discouraged most of his

⁶ Shiban 師蛮, *Honchō kōsō den* 本朝高僧傳 (hereafter, *KSD*), in Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, eds., *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書 (Tokyo: Suzuki gakujutsu zaidan, 1970-73; hereafter *DNBZ*) 67, p. 373; *Kokan Shiren* 虎關師鍊, *Genhō shakusho* 元亨釋書, *Kokushi taikai* edn. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1950) 16, p. 235; *MZ* 13, pp. 599-600; Kōen 皇圓, *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略紀, *Kokushi taikai* edn. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1932) 27, p. 251.

⁷ *KSD* 67, p. 373; *MZ* 13, pp. 599-600.

disciples and fellow monks from openly encouraging his plan. Only a few spoke in favor of his pilgrimage, and less than ten expressed willingness to accompany him to China.⁸

Chōnen's trip was also ill timed. The Japanese court had severed its official ties with China more than 150 years earlier, when (in 838) it dispatched its last mission to the T'ang. Chōnen could not, as his predecessors had, avail himself of any official ships provided for diplomatic missions to China. He had to wait for the arrival of private Chinese merchants, whose ships were then the only available means of transport. Moreover, the court imposed strict prohibitions on individuals who planned to travel abroad.⁹ Although overseas trips by monks were not banned, nonetheless, prior court permission was required.

Faced with such odds, Chōnen was still not despondent. In his effort to gain sympathy he made courageous, diplomatic attempts to ease the resentment of his fellow monks and to eliminate their suspicion of his ambition. He hid his ambitious design for the trip deeply, deliberately playing down its significance. He carefully confined his stated aims to the paying of penance for the annulment of sin, adoration of Buddhist deities enshrined at sacred places, and gaining merit for personal salvation. In a pledge made in 982, Chōnen stated:

A person of all sins, I am fully aware of the difficulty in reaching China in order to worship the statue of Mañjuśrī. However, an ancient sage once said that if a man wished to build a big mountain, he would finally build one 10,000 feet high if he kept carrying soil one basket after another; if a person wanted to make a long journey, he would eventually reach a place 1,000 miles away if he never stopped walking step by step. What this popular saying tells us is that nothing is unattainable; no wish is unfulfillable as long as we keep gaining merit and concentrate on doing the thing we want to accomplish. How sad and painful I am when I think of leaving the home town that is so difficult for me to leave, abandoning my mother's love that is so painful for me to abandon, offering my heart to an unknown land, and staying with people of a different race. I am, however, determined to cross the vast

sea and climb the high mountains to reach China. For the sake of industriously gaining merit and gradually cutting off my sinful roots, I will cherish no desire for fame and gain, and I am willing to suffer hardship and destitution.¹⁰

Chōnen rebutted his fellow monks' suspicions with a famous quotation from *Chuang-tzu* about the relativity of knowledge. Chōnen argued that his detractors could not really understand him.¹¹ He underlined the fact that his trip was a personal endeavor, and therefore he "did not have to wait to be dispatched by the court, and would dare not seek any official position after returning from China."¹² He then turned to common human feelings – love for the motherland and longing for one's parents – to show that his decision to travel to China was a painful one. And if it was not for his mother's and other family members' encouragement he would never have arrived at his decision:

A horse from the northern steppes will neigh in excitement upon smelling a wind blowing from the north; a bird from the south will build a nest only on south-facing branches. Even beasts show attachment to their habitat; how could a human being easily abandon his homeland? Only Śākyamuni can thoroughly understand the complicated feelings in my heart. My sixty-year-old aging mother is still alive. Towards her I am deeply grateful and I feel compelled to pay my debt of gratitude. If I leave her for China, I would fail to fulfil my filial piety; if I stayed with her, I would never be able to fulfil my long-cherished wish. At first, I let this deep inner conflict beset me. But eventually I disclosed my anxiety to my mother. Instead of showing resentment towards my leaving for China, she encouraged me to embark on the pilgrimage. Her open-mindedness moved me to laughter and tears. Alas, my mother is not merely an ordinary person in the secular world, but a mother with whom I so luckily have a special relationship. If ten thousand people urge me with good inten-

⁸ *MZ* 13, pp. 600-1.

⁹ Mori Katsumi, *Nissō hōeki no kenkyū* 日宋貿易の研究 (Tokyo: Kokuritsu shoin, 1948), pp. 115-19.

¹⁰ *MZ* 13, p. 600.

¹¹ "Hui Tzu said: 'You are not a fish – how do you know what fish enjoy?' Chuang Tzu said: 'You are not I, so how do you know I don't know what fish enjoy?'" ; Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia U.P. 1968), p. 189.

¹² *MZ* 13, p. 601.

tions and kind countenance to give up the pilgrimage, I might not adopt their advice; if a relative requests with harsh words and angry expressions that I stay home, I may be able to resist his wish. But my mother, only my mother, sincerely encourages me to follow the Buddha's path. I therefore consulted with my brothers and sisters, asking them to make good use of the surplus rice accumulated from good harvests so that the family and my mother would not suffer from hunger and cold.¹³

Out of modesty, or more likely tact, Chōnen has degraded himself as a mediocre person of no ambition, even though at the time he already held the title "Great Dharma-Master Who Transmits the Lantern" 傳燈大法師. He said:

If I am lucky enough to reach T'ang, and if the Chinese ask me who I am and why I left my country for China, my answer to them will be that I am a stupid and stubborn Japanese monk of no talent and no moral conduct. I did not come to China to seek the law, but to gain merit for my salvation. If I so answer them, what shame will my pilgrimage bring to Japan?¹⁴

The real aim of Chōnen's pilgrimage to China, however, was never as personal as he so humbly and eloquently stated in this pledge. Examining Chōnen's activities both in China and after he returned home, scholars in the early-twentieth century already sensed his ambition for official titles, fame and power, all of which he categorically denied in his pledge. Chōnen's real intention of traveling to China remained somewhat mysterious until 1953, when the repair of a Buddhist statue led to an accidental discovery of historical documents sealed inside, documents that shed new light on the mystery. This is the sandalwood statue of Śākyamuni produced at Chōnen's request while he was visiting Sung China; and the documents were personally compiled by Chōnen, who carried them to China and sealed them into the statue upon its completion.

Of critical importance to our understanding of Chōnen's trip to China is one such document, entitled "Oath [of Conduct] in the Present and the

Future Worlds Taken in the Name of Buddha, Bodhisattva, Brahmā, and the Heavenly and Earthly Gods in This Universe" 十方三世諸佛菩薩梵釋諸天天神地祇現當二世結緣狀. It was drafted on March 20, 972. The document bears the signatures and seal-impressions of both Chōnen and Gizō 義藏, then a student monk at Tōdaiji, which was where the two became acquainted. They swore that "having chosen Mount Atago 愛宕 as the site, (we) shall make concerted efforts to build a temple (so as) to revitalize the law left by Śākyamuni" 是故點定愛宕山同心合力建立一處之伽藍興隆釋迦之遺法.¹⁵ This oath reveals that Chōnen and Gizō had a great ambition: they wanted to establish a new temple on Mount Atago in western Kyoto, which would stand far apart from, but facing Enryakuji on Mount Hiei in the east. This new temple was to develop into a new center of Buddhism during the campaign to revitalize the religion. Chōnen took the oath when he was thirty-five; and it was to guide him for the rest of his life. A preparatory step for the religious campaign just mentioned, of which Chōnen was self-appointed leader, was a pilgrimage to China. In a pledge made ten years later, in 982, Chōnen confessed for the first time that he "had developed an aspiration for a pilgrimage to China since the Tenroku era (970-972)" 天祿以降有心渡海,¹⁶ and thus openly admitted that he had been contemplating a trip to China for eleven years. What Chōnen did not disclose in the pledges is that the trip would go far beyond personal salvation and the annulling of his sins. It would be an endeavor to honor a solemn and secret act taken with his fellow monk Gizō; it would also be a response to his heart-felt yearning to save Tōdaiji from further decline, and to restore it to its former prestige, power, and wealth.

The Tōdaiji temple complex was located in the "southern capital" of Nara, and was the headquarters of the "Flower-Garland" school (*Kegon shū* 華嚴宗), which had enjoyed imperial patronage and lavish government support since its establishment in 728. The school's prestige was further enhanced in 741, when emperor Shōmu 聖武 (r. 724-749) decreed that

¹⁵ For a complete transcription of this oath, see Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, "Seiryōji shakazō fuzō no Tōdaiji Chōnen no shuin risseisho" 清涼寺釋迦像封藏の東大寺安然の手印立誓書, orig. pub. in *Bukkyō bunka kenkyū* 佛教文化研究 4 (1954), pp. 5-22; rpt. in *Tsukamoto Zenryū chosaku shū* 塚本善隆著作集 (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1975) 7, pp. 169-70.

¹⁶ *MZ* 13, p. 599. In a letter to the Enryakuji abbot Chōnen admitted that he had desired to go to China for "more than ten years 十餘年間有心渡海"; see Kōen, *Furō ryakki* 27, p. 251, 8th mo., 16th day, Tengen 4 (982).

¹³ *Ibid.*; also *KSD* 68, p. 373.

¹⁴ *MZ* 13, p. 601.

“provincial temples” (*kokubunji* 國分寺) be established all over Japan to protect the state and to strengthen the centralized control in provinces. With all the provincial temples under its jurisdiction, Tōdaiji remained powerful for almost 100 years, until the middle of the Heian period, when the central government started losing its grip on local affairs. Local farmers working on temple estates refused to pay rent to provincial temples, thus drastically curtailing their annual income. The financial basis of those temples was being eroded, the slippage affected even Tōdaiji. The situation further worsened during Chōnen’s time, when economic hardship forced some provincial temples to close their doors permanently. Moreover, the leadership and authority in Buddhist learning that Tōdaiji monks had once possessed were also passing to other temples. Increasingly, economic pressure pushed them into conducting Buddhist services for court nobles and members of the imperial house as a major source for revenue, leaving little time to pursue scholarly Buddhism.

Tenth-century Tōdaiji monks failed to produce major works on “true-word esoteric Buddhism,” founded by their grand-master Kūkai 空海 (774–835). As a matter of fact, the harbinger of decline in the “southern capital” came as early as 794, when the capital was moved from Nara to Kyoto, and along with it the gradual shift of imperial patronage to Enryakuji, the temple established by master Saichō 最澄 (767–822) in 785. Evidence of the decline of “southern capital” Buddhist learning and the expanding influence of the Enryakuji is the debate concerning the “salvation for the mass of the population” (*shujō jōbutsu* 眾生成佛), held in the imperial palace in 963. In attendance were monks from the Hossō sect 法相宗 of the “southern capital” on one side, and monks of the Tendai school from Enryakuji on the other. Neither side was acknowledged as winner. But during the query and response session, the eloquence of Ryōgen 良源 (912–985), an Enryakuji monk, captivated the audience. At the tenth-century Tōdaiji, Buddhist learning had obviously degenerated into mediocrity, if not humiliating inferiority.¹⁷

Chōnen’s trip to China was also motivated by a much deeper religious idea: that of the “later age of Buddha’s law” (*mappō* 末法). *Mappō* beliefs claim that after the death of Śākyamuni, the Buddha’s teaching eventually

lost the power to assist people towards salvation, and that society consequently has developed into chaos. Originally a concern only of Buddhists, the concept of *mappō* was gradually to permeate everyday life when the disintegration of the centralized government in the tenth century helped bring about social instability. Provinces slipped into anarchy, thus leaving the farming populace vulnerable in times of war, natural disaster, and hunger. The Kyoto area became infested with banditry. The imperial palace burned three times, in 976, 980, and 982, and the court had to call on the warrior Minamoto no Yorimitsu 源頼光 (948–1021) to restore and maintain order in the capital. Such upheavals convinced many Buddhist clergy, royal family members, and nobles, as well as ordinary people, that the “later age of Buddha’s law” was fast approaching. At this time, they believed, it was essential to resort directly to the power and mercy of Mañjuśrī if one wanted to annul sins and attain salvation. And the best way of doing so was to forge a direct link with Mañjuśrī by traveling to China, worshiping, and offering donations to such sacred places as the temples on Mount Wu-t’ai, where Mañjuśrī was said to have manifested himself.

Mappō thinking is absent from Chōnen’s oath of 972, but it is readily present in his pledge of 982, an indication that he had added a new dimension to his pilgrimage, something in tune with late-tenth-century popular sentiments. Whereas he cherished the idea of revitalizing Japanese Buddhism through his own efforts, Chōnen decided that his open pledge should make no mention of any ambition vulnerable to criticism. Instead, he spoke in terms of the popular *mappō* sentiment, so as to generate maximum support for the trip. Chōnen’s pledge of 982 was therefore sincere and well calculated. This strategy worked brilliantly for Chōnen. Overwhelming support came from the emperor, the empress, princes, and the Fujiwara court officials. On a list of Chōnen’s supporters (“Chōnen keinenjin kyōmyōchō” 尊然繫念人交名帳) discovered in 1953 are the names of prince Morihira 守平王 (the En’yū emperor; r. 969–984), prime minister Fujiwara Yoritada 藤原頼忠 (924–989), and other members of the Fujiwara family serving the court as regents or chancellors, such as Kaneie 兼家 (929–990), Michitaka 道隆 (953–995), Michikane 道兼 (961–995), and Sanesuke 實資 (957–1046).¹⁸ Their support seems to have been based largely on one consideration: Chōnen, on their behalf, would worship and offer donations

¹⁷ Sonada Kōyū 蓆田香融 and Tamura Enchō 田村丹澄, “Heian Bukkyō” 平安佛教, in Ienaga Saburō et al., eds., [*kwonami kōza*] *Nihon rekishi* [koda] [岩波講座] 日本歴史[古代] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967), vol. 4, pp. 182–94.

¹⁸ A full transcription of the listed names is in Tsukamoto, “Seiryōji,” p. 185.

to the famous Buddhist temples in China, thus helping to annul their own sins and gain salvation.

Chōnen's resourcefulness even won support from the rival Enryakuji, whose abbot was convinced that Chōnen merely wanted to "visit famous mountains and worship the sacred places" 歷觀名山巡禮聖跡, and that he was merely "a man of mediocrity, wishing to follow the footsteps of the ancient masters" 縱雖庸才欲追古跡. On September 6, 982, the abbot wrote a letter of reference at Chōnen's request to Kuo-ch'ing Temple 國清寺 in China,¹⁹ the origin of the Japanese Tendai school. Of course there was no particular sign that within only a few years Chōnen would return from China to pose a serious challenge to the Enryakuji. In fact, on the previous day, Chōnen also obtained a letter from a temple sympathetic to his own camp – the Tōji. This letter was addressed to Ch'ing-lung Temple 青龍寺, near Ch'ang-an 長安,²⁰ where Kūkai, the founder of Japan's "True Word" school, had visited and studied early in the ninth century. The two letters would help Chōnen gain access to and help from such famous temples during his visit to China.

In 982, an edict ordered Chōnen to go to Dazaifu, a military and administrative center in Kyūshū, in western Japan. Chōnen left Kyoto probably at the end of 982, and in Dazaifu he completed various formalities necessary before going abroad.²¹ On September 10, 983,²² Chōnen departed for China aboard a boat operated by Ch'en Jen-shuang 陳仁爽 and Hsü Jen-man 徐仁滿, two Chinese merchants who had come to Japan earlier.²³

¹⁹ Kōen, *Fusō ryakki* 27, p. 251, 8th mo., 15th day, Tengen 4 (982); Kokan, *Genhō shakusho* 16, p. 235.

²⁰ Kōen, *Fusō ryakki* 27, p. 251, date as per previous n. See also Miyoshi Tameyasu 三善為康, *Chōya gansai* 朝野群載, Kokushi taikai edn. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1938) 20, p. 462.

²¹ Jitsuyū 實祐, *Tōdaiji zasshūroku* (hereafter, *TZ*) 東大寺雜集錄, in *DNBZ* 20, p. 462; Miyoshi, *Chōya gansai* 20, p. 461.

²² Tsukamoto Shunkō 塚本俊孝, "Sōshō no Bukkyō to Chōnen" 宋初の佛教と自然, *Bukkyō bunka kenkyū* 4 (1954), p. 73; *TZ* 8, p. 158; *Tōdaiji bettō shidai*, 東大寺別當次第 (author unknown; hereafter *TBS*), *DNBZ* edn., p. 182. Jūmei 十明, *Jōsan hashiki* 盛算法師記 (hereafter *JH*), *DNBZ* edn., p. 50. The monk Jūsan accompanied Chōnen to China. In 985 he borrowed K'ai-yüan Temple's *Yu-t'ien-wang so-t'iao nan-t'an shih-chia jui-hsiang chi* 優填王所造栴檀釋迦瑞像歷記 in order to transcribe it. Upon completion, he wrote a postscript about the circumstances of the transcription that is commonly referred to as *Jōsan hashiki*, and contains descriptions of Chōnen's activities in China. It is generally regarded as the authoritative record.

²³ *TZ* 20, p. 462; also *JH*, p. 50. Another important primary source, offering unique

On board were six of Chōnen's disciples.²⁴ They spent more than two weeks on the high seas before arriving at T'ai-chou 台州, the seat of T'ai-chou prefecture (modern Chekiang province) on September 27. They lodged at K'ai-yüan Temple 開元寺.²⁵ After resting sufficiently, Chōnen headed northwest to Mount T'ien-t'ai 天台, the holy mountain of the T'ien-t'ai sect of Buddhism, which was established by Chih-i 智顛 (538–597). T'ien-t'ai was where master Saichō, the founding father of Tendai, had studied in 804. On October 17, Chōnen arrived and went immediately to visit Kuo-ch'ing Temple and also to worship Chih-i's statue²⁶ at the latter's former residence at Hsiu-ch'an Temple 修禪寺.²⁷ Later he traversed Mount Shih-liang 石梁 to visit the home of four sainted monks (*ssu-kuo* 四果) and climbed Mount Kuei-ling 桂嶺 to see the old home of three worthies (*san-hsien* 三賢).²⁸ Sometime around November, an edict was handed down to officials at T'ai-chou, ordering them to accompany Chōnen and his disciples to the capital.²⁹ Having stayed on T'ien-t'ai for a whole month,

information, is *Seiryōji monsho* 清涼寺文書, cited in Tsukamoto Shunkō's "Sōshō no Bukkyō," pp. 73–74. The original title of *Seiryōji monsho* is 入瑞像五藏文; it was written in 985 at T'ai-chou in honor of the completion of the Śākyamuni statue. It is better known as *Seiryōji monsho* because it has been preserved at the Seiryōji.

²⁴ They were Ka'in 嘉因 (or Kiin 喜因), Teien 定緣, Kōjō 康城, Jōsan 盛算, Sokan 祈乾, and Somei 祈明. See T'o-t'o 脫脫, *Sung shih* 宋史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1977; hereafter, *SS*) 491, p. 14133; L. C. Goodrich and Ryusaku Tsunoda, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories: Later Han through Ming Dynasties* (South Pasadena: P.D. & Ione Perkins, 1951; rpt. Perkins Oriental Books, 1968), p. 49; *KSD* 67, p. 373; and Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 74. Most Japanese sources mention only the first four.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73; *TZ* 8, p. 158.

²⁶ See Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, *Nyū Tō shokkaden hō* 入唐諸家傳考 (*DNBZ* edn.) 6, p. 179. Chōnen kept a diary of his trip, part of which has been preserved in the form of quotations in later Japanese sources and collected in *Nyū Tō shokkaden hō*.

²⁷ Nishioka Toranosuke 西岡虎之助, "Chōnen nikki no ibun" 自然日記の逸文, *Rekishi chiri* 歴史地理 45:3 (1925), pp. 603–4.

²⁸ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 73. "Ssu-kuo" literally means "four fruits," that is, the four grades of sainthood: 須陀洹 (Sk.: *srotāpanna*), 斯陀含 (Sk.: *sakradāgāmin*), 阿那含 (Sk.: *anāgāmin*), and 阿羅漢 (Sk.: *arhat*). It is, however, not clear who these four Chinese monks were. The "three worthies" were early-T'ang Chinese monks: Feng-kan 豐干, Han-shan 寒山, and Shih-te 拾得, all of whom lived on Mt. T'ien-t'ai and were known for their literary talent. The poems of Han-shan and Shih-te are collected in *Han-shan tzu shih-chi* 寒山子詩集 (SPTK edn.), portions transl. Burton Watson, *Cold Mountain: 100 Poems by the Tang Poet Han-shan* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1962).

²⁹ A passage in *JH*, p. 50, suggests that Chōnen and his disciples did not visit Mt. T'ien-t'ai, but stayed at T'ai-chou waiting for court permission to visit the capital. Without court permission, foreigners could not travel from prefecture to prefecture. In theory, they could tour within a given prefecture upon obtaining prefectural permission. Chōnen had with him a letter from Enryakuji to Kuo-ch'ing Temple on Mt. T'ien-t'ai, to be hand delivered. It seems plausible that Chōnen and his disciples visited Mt. T'ien-t'ai while waiting for the permission. They either returned to T'ai-chou after their visit, or more likely waited in

they left on November 15 for Hsin-ch'ang county 新昌 in Yüeh-chou prefecture (modern Chekiang province), the first stop on their way to Lo-yang 洛陽.³⁰ They arrived there early in December and worshiped the gigantic stone statue of Maitreya at Mount Nan-shan 南山.³¹

After ten days in Hsin-ch'ang county, the group left on December 18 for Yüeh-chou 越州, the southern terminal of the Grand Canal. Chinese officials frequently traveled on the Canal because of its safety and speed, and also because provisions and supplies were readily obtained from local authorities along the route. The Canal led them first to Hang-chou 杭州,³² and then to Yang-chou 揚州, a cosmopolitan city near the mouth of the Yangtze. The pilgrims stayed at K'ai-yüan Temple in the hope that they might worship a famous Buddhist image housed there.³³ This was the sandalwood image of Śākyamuni, which was said to have been made by order of Udayana (Wu-t'o yen-na 鄔陀衍那), the king of a sixth-century BC northern Indian state called Vatsa (*Pa-ts'o* 跋蹉); it was later brought to China.³⁴ Chōnen was greatly disappointed, however, when he entered the worship hall only to find it empty. A monk told him that the image, which had been preserved in the temple since the Chin dynasty, was moved by order of the Southern T'ang (937-975) ruler to Ch'ang-hsien Temple 長先寺 in his capital of Chin-ling 金陵 (modern Nanking). When the Southern T'ang was annexed by the Sung, the image was again moved, this time to Pien-ching 汴京 (modern K'ai-feng), the Sung capital, and was first relocated in the K'ai-pao ssu 開寶寺. When Sung T'ai-tsung ascended the throne, he ordered the image housed in Tzu-fu Hall 滋福寺 of the Inner Palace, where Buddhist masses were held for members of the imperial house. Chōnen was much relieved to learn that permission to worship the image might be obtained once he arrived in the capital.³⁵

T'ien-t'ai, where they were later joined by T'ai-chou officials, then headed for the capital together.

³⁰ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 73.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. The arrival date recorded in *Seiryōji monjo* seems wrong. The distance between Hsin-ch'ang and Su-chou is about 600 miles. It would have been impossible for Chōnen and his disciples to have completed the journey in just three days.

³³ *JH*, pp. 50-51.

³⁴ The image was brought to Kucha 庫車 (present-day Sinkiang province) and then to the territories of the Former Ch'in (350-394) by Lü Kuang, a Former Ch'in general sent to attack Kucha; this is recounted in *Iseng-i a-han ching* 增一阿含經 (Taishō edn., vol. 2.; Tokyo: Daizō shuppan kabushiki kaisha, 1924; rpt., 1969) 28, p. 708. For a brief discussion of its creation and its transmission from India to China, see Minamoto Toyomune 源豐宗, "Seiryōji no shakazō" 清涼寺の釋迦像, *Bukkyō bijutsu* 佛教美術 1 (1924), p. 24.

³⁵ *JH*, p. 50. ³⁶ Takakusu, *Nyū Tō shokkaden kō* 6, p. 179. See also *IZ* 8, p. 158.

Among the many Buddhist monasteries in Yang-chou, Lung-hsing Temple 龍興寺 also had a special significance for Chōnen and other Japanese monks. It had been the home monastery of Chien-chen 鑑真 (Ganjin, 687-763), a Chinese monk who had risked his life to travel to Japan in 754 and became known as the founder of the Risshō Buddhism.³⁶

From Yang-chou, Chōnen and his entourage headed for Ssu-chou 泗州 (modern Hsü-i 盱眙, Kiangsu). They arrived on January 20, 984, and stayed at P'u-kuang-wang Temple 普光王寺, where they worshiped various Buddhist statues.³⁷ After the last major stop, at Ying-t'ien 應天 (modern Shang-ch'iu 商丘), Chōnen finally arrived on January 24 in Pien-ching, the capital of the Northern Sung dynasty. He was given accommodations at a postal relay station, the usual thing for traveling officials. By then, Chōnen and his entourage had been on the road for more than three months.³⁸

The early years of the Northern Sung dynasty were perhaps the best time for foreign monks to visit China, even though the Sung period has generally been thought of as devoid of any significant developments in Chinese Buddhism.³⁹ The first two Sung emperors, T'ai-tsu (r. 960-976) and T'ai-tsung (r. 976-997), both lavishly patronized Buddhism. A devoted believer and generous patron of Buddhism, T'ai-tsu was one of the few Chinese rulers who had taken a layman's vows. Buddhism was not only the emperor's personal religious conviction, but also a political and ideological weapon that he used in reunifying China. In careful consideration of the political situation at home and abroad, he adopted a series of policies to protect and advocate Buddhism. The widespread destruction of Buddhist temples that had been carried out in north China during the Later Chou (951-960) dynasty was immediately banned. T'ai-tsu issued an edict, angrily condemning the practice as "totally against the fortunes of the nation," and ordered the protection of existing monasteries and relocation of Buddhist statues formerly in the destroyed temples.⁴⁰ Furthermore, 170,000 boys were initiated into the priesthood in 976. These policies cast the emperor in the role of a grand patron of Buddhism, and helped the

³⁷ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 73.

³⁸ Ibid. For a brief discussion of Chōnen's stop at Ying-t'ien, see Nishioka Toranosuke, "Chōnen no nyū Sō ni tsuite" 尊然の入宋について, *Rekishū chiri* 45.2 (1925) p. 558.

³⁹ Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1964), p. 389.

⁴⁰ Chih-p'an 志磐, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 佛祖統記 (Taishō edn.) 43, p. 394B.

Sung court to appease the rulers and the local people of Nan-p'ing 南平, Shu 蜀, Ch'u 楚, Nan-Han 南漢, and Wu-yüeh 吳越, after the Sung army had crushed those regimes in southern and western China from 963 to 979. Buddhism had been popular in all those areas, and various of the local rulers were devoted Buddhists. The emperor T'ai-tsu's new image apparently helped persuade the local populace to shift allegiance to the new regime.⁴¹

During the reign of T'ai-tsong, Buddhism served as a guide for both state politics and personal conduct. Once, upon displaying the newly translated sutras to his subjects, the emperor said:

The teachings of Buddha are helpful to the governance of the nation and beneficial to common people. . . . My shallow understanding of the teachings tells me that [truly] egoistic conduct for an emperor would be to uphold justice and harbor no desire for personal gain, and that altruistic conduct would be to accumulate merit sufficient to stabilize his empire.⁴²

Following the footsteps of his predecessor, the emperor T'ai-tsong used Buddhism to stabilize locales that had been recently annexed. One year after the conquest of Pei-Han 北漢 (951-979), in the first lunar month of 980, he sent Chang T'ing-hsün 張延訓 to Mount Wu-t'ai 五台 in Shansi to supervise the repair of ten local monasteries and the construction of a copper and gold statue of Mañjuśrī.⁴³ In the same year, he also sent Chang Jen-tsan 張仁贊 to Ch'eng-tu 成都, capital of the former Hou-Shu 後蜀 (933-965) to make a great statue of Samantabhadra 普賢 from the same precious materials. An edict issued by the court ordered the renovation of five monasteries on Mount E-mei 峨眉.⁴⁴

During the early Sung, translation of Buddhist sutras, which had been suspended since 811,⁴⁵ also gained momentum. The emperor T'ai-tsu was

enthusiastic about Buddhist sutras in Chinese translation. When two newly translated sutras were presented to him, T'ai-tsu granted Fa-t'ien 法天, a monk-translator from Middle India with a good knowledge of Chinese, a purple robe and permission to visit Buddhist holy mountains. Later in 980, another Indian monk, T'ien Hsi-tsai 天息災, arrived in the Sung capital. He and Fa-t'ien were received by T'ai-tsong, who showed them the Sanskrit sutras presented to the Sung court ever since 963. Having learned that the two Indians understood Chinese, the emperor conceived the idea of a translation project,⁴⁶ and as a result the Academy for Translation of Buddhist Sutras 譯經院 was established in 982.⁴⁷

Located west of T'ai-p'ing hsing-kuo Temple 太平興國寺, in the capital, the Academy consisted of a Middle Hall, East Hall, and West Hall.⁴⁸ The project received the personal attention of the emperor. To ensure reliability, the emperor granted translators complete freedom in choosing the most suitable Chinese characters for transliteration of Sanskrit terms. Some of these were used in the names of Sung emperors and royal family

court-sponsored project for translation of Buddhist sutras during the Tang dynasty, see Chi Hsien-lin 季羨林 et al., eds., *Ta-t'ang hsi-yü chi* 大唐西域記 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1985), pp. 2-16.

⁴¹ Li T'ao 李燾, *Hsi Tzu-chih t'ung-chien ch'ang-pien* 續資治通鑑長編 (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1983) 23, pp. 9b-10a.

⁴² SS 4, p. 68.

⁴³ Chih-p'an, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 43, p. 398a. The project involved Fa-t'ien 法天 and T'ien Hsi-tsai 天息災, who were assigned as directors of translation (*i-chu* 譯主), supervising Chinese monks and lay assistants. The translation of sutras went through five technical stages: 1. The director read aloud a Sanskrit sutra sentence by sentence. Sitting on his left was a philological assistant (*cheng-i* 証義), a Sanskrit-reader whose duty was to analyze the text when ambiguity arose. To the right of the director sat a language assistant in Sanskrit (*cheng-wen* 証文), who understood spoken Sanskrit. His duty was to make sure no Sanskrit word was mispronounced. They worked closely with a monk-transcriber in Sanskrit studies (*Fan-hsüeh seng shu-tzu* 梵學僧疏字), who would use Chinese characters phonetically to record what the director had read. 2. A translator (*pi-shou* 筆受) would translate the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit into Chinese, using a word-for-word style that followed strictly the Sanskrit syntax. 3. The translation was then handed to a text editor (*chui-wen* 綴文), who rearranged the words in accordance with Chinese syntax, making them accessible to Chinese readers. His work was checked twice by an associate translator (*t'an-i* 參譯), who proofread the Chinese translation against the Sanskrit original to make sure that it was accurate. 4. A final drafter (*k'an-ting* 刊定) improved the usually redundant and long sentences. 5. A final touch was added by a stylist (*jun-wen* 潤文). The entire project was administered by a supervisor (*chien-hu* 監護). See Chih-p'an, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 43, p. 398a. For a discussion of the procedure, see Walter Fuchs, "Zur technischen Organization der Übersetzungen buddhistischer Schriften ins Chinesische," *AM* 6 (1930), pp. 84-103; also Richard Bowring, "Buddhist Translation in the Northern Sung," *AM* 3d ser. 5.2 (1992), pp. 79-93. Later this complex procedure was simplified. See Jōjin 成尋, *San tendai godaisan ki* 參天臺五臺山記, Shiseki shūran edn. (Tokyo: Kondō shuppan, 1924-38) 7, p. 155, 3d mo., 28th day, Enkyū 4 (1073).

⁴¹ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 70. ⁴² Chih-p'an, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 43, p. 399a.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 397c. The ten monasteries are Chen-jung 真容, Hua-yen 華嚴, Shou-ning 壽寧, Hsing-kuo 興國, Chu-lin 竹林, Chin-ko 金閣, Fa-hua 法華, Mi-mi 祕密, Ling-ching 靈鏡, and Ta-hsien 大賢.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* These monasteries were: Pai-shui p'u-hsien 白水普賢, Hei-shui hua-yen 黑水華嚴, Chung-feng 中峰, Ch'ien-ming 乾明, and Kuang-hsiang 光相.

⁴⁵ Chung-kuo Fo-chiao hsieh-hui 中國佛教協會, eds., *Chung-kuo Fo-chiao* (Peking: Jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1980), p. 79. For a detailed discussion of the organization of the

members, and thus would normally have been tabooed by the court.⁴⁹ The project was productive, and newly translated sutras were presented to T'ai-tsung and his successors every year. By 1027 their number amounted to more than 500 *chüan*. Afterwards the pace of translation slowed due to the lack of new Sanskrit sutras. By 1111, a total of 284 Buddhist works had been translated into Chinese, totaling some 758 *chüan*.⁵⁰

On the diplomatic front, the late-tenth century saw strides made by the Sung court in establishing relations with neighboring countries that were predominantly Buddhist: Khotan (Yü-t'ien 于闐), the Uighur and Kao-ch'ang 高昌 in the northwest, Koryō and Parhae in the northeast, and San-fo-ch'i 三佛齊⁵¹ and Champa (Chan-ch'eng 占城) in the far south.⁵² The Sung emperors still dreamed of reestablishing a China-centered world system. But in a totally new international environment, Sung China was only one among peers. The Sung court needed to exercise prudence, and thus Chinese and foreign monks, rather than Chinese envoys, were employed as intermediaries for initiating contacts with certain foreign countries. These monks were entrusted with Sung state letters indicating the Sung ruler's willingness to accept "tribute." They would then set off for their destination, prepared to endure any possible embarrassment should their mission fail. From time to time, however, monk-envoys succeeded in persuading foreign rulers to dispatch reciprocal envoys to China,⁵³ some of whom were Buddhist monks.⁵⁴ The Sung court in certain instances must have understood that it was to its own advantage to treat a foreign monk as a state guest, not a private pilgrim. Even though not all of them were bearers of official messages from foreign rulers, the Sung emperor could, if he so wished, use them to convey a message back. Some of these conveyed a wish to cultivate bilateral ties, or at least a desire to maintain the current relationship.

⁴⁹ Chih-p'an, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 43, p. 398a.

⁵⁰ *Chung-kuo Fo-chiao*, pp. 80-81. For a chronology of Buddhist works translated from 982 to 1037, see Takeuchi Kōzen 武内孝善, "Sōdai honyaku kyōden no tokushoku ni tsuite" 宋代翻譯經典の特色について, *Mikkyō bunka* 密教文化 113 (1975), pp. 27-53.

⁵¹ The Sung court considered its ruler a Buddhist; see Li, *Hsü Tzu-chih t'ung-chien ch'ang-pien* 3, p. 13a.

⁵² Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 71.

⁵³ E. g., the Uighurs in 965 and the Abbāsīd caliphate (Ta-shih 大食) in 968; Li, *Hsü Tzu-chih t'ung-chien ch'ang-pien* 6, p. 16a; 9, p. 13b.

⁵⁴ See the case of Fa-yüan 法淵, who was sent by the Uighurs to China in 965; *ibid.* 6, p. 14a.

It was in this particularly favorable context that Chōnen visited the Sung court. Only two days after his arrival at the capital, he was granted a formal court audience on January 26, 984, at Ch'ung-cheng Hall 崇政殿.⁵⁵ At this occasion Chōnen presented to the T'ai-tsung emperor some ten items of bronze art and two Japanese writings: *Statutes concerning Government Officials* (*Shikiin ryō* 職員令) and the *Imperial Genealogy* (*Ō nendai ki* 王年代記), each one *chüan* in size.⁵⁶ After the brief formal reception, Chōnen was ushered into an inner hall (*pian-tien* 便殿), frequently the location of informal courts. There the conversation continued in a more relaxed atmosphere.⁵⁷ The emperor asked Chōnen about the Japanese imperial genealogy, the succession of emperors, the spread of Buddhism to Japan and the social customs of Japan.⁵⁸ Not being able to speak Chinese, Chōnen answered these queries in writing:

In my country, there are the five canons and the Buddhist sutras, and also collections of the writings of Po Chü-i in seventy *chüan*, all obtained from China. The soil is suitable for various cereals, but oats are little cultivated. Trade is carried on by means of copper coins that are inscribed "Ch'ien-wen ta-pao" 乾文大寶.⁵⁹ Domestic animals are buffalo, mules, and sheep. Rhinoceroses and elephants are numerous. [We] practice sericulture, and weave silk of lovely thinness and fine texture. Music is of two kinds - Chinese and Korean. The seasons and the temperature are generally the same as in this country. On our eastern border live barbarians whose bodies and faces are all hairy. Gold is produced in the remote regions of the east. Silver is obtained from a separate island to the west. Both (gold and silver) are used for tribute. The king of the country is called *wang* 王 from generation to generation. The present ruler is the sixty-fourth in a line. Officials and officers, both civil and military, are all hereditary.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 73; also *JH*, p. 50. However, the record concerning this event in *TZ* 8, p. 158, differs by reporting that Chōnen visited the T'ai-tsung emperor the 10th mo., 21st day, "10th" probably a miscopying of "12th."

⁵⁶ *SS* 491, p. 14131; see also Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 49.

⁵⁷ *RSD* 67, p. 373. ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; Kokan, *Genkō shakusho* 16, p. 235.

⁵⁹ "Ch'ien-wen" seems to be a mistake for "Ch'ien-yüan 乾元." The "Ch'ien-yüan ta-pao" was issued in 958.

⁶⁰ *SS* 491, p. 14131; see also Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, pp. 60-61; Chiang Shao-yü 江少虞 et al., eds., *Huang-ch'ao lei-yüan* 皇朝類苑, Sung-fen shih ts'ung-k'an ch'u-pien edn. (rpt. Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1981) 78, p. 6b.

Impressed by Japan's social stability, especially the hereditary power enjoyed by both ruler and courtier, the T'ai-tsung emperor remarked with a sigh to his premier: "They are just insular barbarians; yet their dynasty is everlasting and court offices are handed down in unbroken succession. This was indeed the way of antiquity (in China)."⁶¹ This is one of the rare occasions on which a Chinese sovereign openly praised the political system of a "barbarian" country. For T'ai-tsung, though, it was only natural, since the stability of his regime, established only twenty-four years previously, remained of great concern. Scenes of horrible social disorder caused by the chaotic dynastic changes prior to the Sung seem to have arisen in the emperor's mind: "The domains of our country have been split up. The Five Dynasties, among them Liang (907-923) and Chou (950-960), have been the most short-lived of all, and their state ministers were seldom succeeded by their heirs."⁶² The political stability of Japan, as described by Chōnen, was particularly impressive in its dynastic continuity. T'ai-tsung wanted his courtiers to follow the example of their Japanese counterparts and join him in creating a long-lasting Sung dynasty, so as "not to let the barbarians alone enjoy dynastic continuity."⁶³

We know our virtue is far less than that of our ancient sovereigns; yet we (too), morning and night, have zealously and conscientiously studied the bases of government without ever giving ourselves leisure or pleasure, in an effort to establish the foundation of a lasting dynasty, to set an example for a long time to come, and to provide for the well-being of our descendants. It is our solicitude that the successors of our state ministers shall come into the fiefs of their fathers, generation after generation. This is what I have in mind.⁶⁴

Chōnen, totally unaware that both his visit to the Sung court and his somewhat exaggerated description of contemporary Japan suited the political needs of T'ai-tsung, was overwhelmed by the courteous reception accorded him. He came as a private pilgrim, was received as a state guest, and ultimately given, among other things, the purple robe of imperial favor,

granted only to distinguished monks. After the reception, Chōnen and his party were accompanied by Chang Wan-chin 張萬進, a subofficial usher in the Visitors Bureau (K'o-sheng 客省) of the Secretariat. Their destination was the Ming-sheng kuan-yin ch'an-yüan compound 明聖觀因禪院 of T'ai-p'ing hsing-kuo Temple, where they stayed and continued to enjoy the hospitality of the court.⁶⁵

Soon thereafter, Chōnen and his disciples were granted permission to visit the monasteries in the capital. At T'ien-shou Temple 天壽 Chōnen experienced an unexpected pleasure: he met a fellow Japanese monk. At the age of eighty-five, this monk had been in China for so long that he no longer understood any Japanese. The two communicated in written Chinese, and Chōnen learned from him the stories of other Japanese monks who had ventured to the Middle Kingdom earlier. After visiting the Buddhist monasteries, Chōnen still maintained his wish to worship the sandalwood statue of Śākyamuni in the inner palace. Chōnen memorialized to the court, and his request was soon granted. Accompanied by Chang Wan-chin, Chōnen and his disciples were led into the inner palace and ushered into the Tzu-fu Hall to worship the statue.⁶⁶ This act reflected further imperial favor, since access to the inner palace was granted only to distinguished foreign guests. Chōnen was now ready to leave for the next destination: Mount Wu-t'ai, a Buddhist holy place in Tai-chou 台州 prefecture (modern Shansi province). In the beginning of April he petitioned the court for permission to travel there. Chōnen and his disciples were soon given a travel certificate (*kung-p'ing* 公憑), and local authorities along the route were instructed to provide them with supplies.⁶⁷

They left the capital on April 16. After three weeks on the road they reached Mount Wu-t'ai on May 10. The timing of their arrival could not have been better. Chōnen was informed that a bright white light had appeared on the right shoulder of the Buddhist statue housed in the P'u-sa chen-jung yüan compound 菩薩真容院 of Ta hua-yen Temple 大華嚴寺, where he was to stay. Chōnen rushed to the temple to witness this miraculous sign, which is said to have lasted for hours late in the afternoon and attracted more than 300 monks and laymen.⁶⁸ This was only one of the

⁶¹ *SS* 491, p. 14134; Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 67.

⁶² Li, *Hsi Tzu-chih t'ung-chien ch'ang-pien* 25, pp. 3b-4a.

⁶³ *SS* 491, p. 14134; also Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 67.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *JH*, p. 50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; also *TZ* 8, p. 158.

⁶⁷ *SS* 491, p. 14135; Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 56; *JH*, p. 50; Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 73.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

miraculous signs that Chōnen reported in his writing. Eight days later he visited Chin-kang Grotto 金剛窟. As he headed for the Eastern Terrace (Tung-t'ai 東臺), thunder rumbled in the distance. Sudden snow quickly changed to severe hail. Such weather was to Chōnen an indication that another miraculous sign was about to appear. The next day, he visited the Central Terrace (Chung-t'ai 中臺) and the Western Terrace (Hsi-t'ai 西臺), where a five-colored cloud and lucky birds emerged.⁶⁹ On May 26, they came to the Southern Terrace (Nan-t'ai 南臺), where, at midnight, two holy lamps appeared, hanging in front of Chōnen. He believed that they were holy spirits urging him to head for home. Having stayed about two months at Mount Wu-t'ai, Chōnen and his disciples left for Pien-ching on June 30.⁷⁰ About three weeks later, on their way back to the capital, they stopped over at Lo-yang to visit the Lung-men 龍門 Grotto and worship the statue of Shan Wu-wei 善無畏 (637-735) on July 19. Six days later, they returned to the capital, and were again warmly welcomed by court officials.⁷¹

If pilgrimage had been his sole aim, Chōnen should have felt more than satisfied with the journey to famous Buddhist temples and holy mountains. He would have been ready to return. But Chōnen stayed on and immediately began the second phase of his visit: the search for the dharma (*ch'iu-fa* 求法; J.: *guhō*), a Japanese expression used to describe Japanese monks who traveled to China to study and to acquire Buddhist sutras. Chōnen wasted no time. On the very day of his return from Wu-t'ai, Chōnen met with master Ch'ung-chih 崇智 and expressed his wish to study esoteric teachings. During the conversation the master explained to Chōnen how the teaching of the mandala was passed on from Chin-kang chih 金剛智 (669-741) to Pu-k'ung 不空 (705-774) and then to Chih-hui lun 智慧輪. He also explained that of the two mandalas, *The Diamond World* (*Chin-kang chieh* 金剛界; Sk.: *Vajradhātu*) and *The Womb World* (*T'ai-tsang chieh* 胎藏界; Sk.: *Garbhadhātu*), he had studied only the former. The conversation seems to have convinced Chōnen that it was not worth his time to study under a third-rate Buddhist scholar, and he turned elsewhere. Having barely recovered from his tiring journey, late in the summer Chōnen

began studying the two esoteric mandalas under master Ch'ing-chao 清照. He also studied the "three mysteries" (*san-mi* 三密): secret incantations, secret gestures and thoughts, and baptism by means of the five vases representing Buddha-wisdom (*wu-p'ing kuan-ting* 五瓶灌頂). The study, however, continued for only two months, a period too brief for any serious attempt to acquire esoteric teachings.

But to Chōnen, "searching for Buddha's law" was not confined to scholarly study of the Buddhist canon. It included all the activities necessary for the revitalization of Buddhism in Japan, and in particular the realization of Chōnen's oath. Thus, Chōnen requested that two of his disciples should undergo full ordination (*chū-tsu chieh* 具足戒) through Chinese masters. He not only wanted them to acquire the status of certified Buddhist priests, but also to familiarize themselves with the ordination ceremonial in order to conduct it in Japan. The ceremony was held on November 20, which was the T'ai-tsung emperor's birthday and had been designated as the "Ch'ien-ming Festival 乾明節." The ordination of monks was carried out annually on this day at T'ai-p'ing hsing-kuo Temple in the capital.⁷² Chōnen's two disciples also received Chinese names: Ch'i-ming 祈明 and Ch'i-ch'ien 祈乾,⁷³ the Chinese characters "ch'ien" and "ming" chosen to honor T'ai-tsung's birthday. Full ordination for his disciples was a step towards consolidation of Chōnen's personal following. It was also a preparation for expanding his following into a new sect in the Japanese Buddhist community.

A prerequisite for the establishment of a new Buddhist sect was the introduction of new teachings and sutras from China. Chōnen was aware of the fact that whoever brought sutras back to Japan became influential in Buddhist circles. Thus he petitioned the Sung court to be granted a set of the recently printed Tripitaka and other new sutras produced by the court-sponsored translation project.⁷⁴ On March 25 a second imperial audience was held in honor of Chōnen and his fellow monks before their departure for home. The emperor had arranged for presentation of the 5,048-*chüan* Tripitaka packed in 481 slipcases, and forty-one *chüan* of new Buddhist sutras. Moreover, the emperor composed a eulogy in celebration of the printing of the Tripitaka. Chōnen also received silk cloth and gifts

⁶⁹ Ibid. ⁷⁰ Ibid.; also SS 491, p. 14135; Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 56.

⁷¹ On these last dates, see Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," pp. 73-74. Shan Wu-wei was an Indian monk whose Sanskrit name was Subhākarasimha. He arrived in China in 716 for the purpose of translating Buddhist sutras, subsequently moving to Lo-yang in 724.

⁷² Hsü Sung 徐松, *Sung hui-yao chi-kao* 宋會要輯稿 (Peking, Chung-hua, 1957) 200, p. 788g.

⁷³ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 74. ⁷⁴ SS 491, p. 14135.

that the Sung court routinely bestowed on foreign guests,⁷⁵ as well as the title "Grand Master of Fa-chi 法濟大師," done perhaps at his own request. On imperial orders, officials at the capital made detailed arrangements for Chōnen's trip home. Boats, laborers, and allowances were provided for Chōnen and his entourage for travel via the Canal to T'ai-chou, from which they would sail for Japan. They were allowed to stay overnight at governmental relay stations and have porters supplied by prefectural authorities.⁷⁶

Chōnen and his party reached T'ai-chou on July 17. They were received by Cheng Yüan-kuei 鄭元龜, acting reminder of the left in the office of the prefect of T'ai-chou (*T'ai-chou chih-chou hsing tso-shih-i* 台州知州行左拾遺), who was a devout Buddhist, and Ching-yao 景堯, the local Buddhist superior (*seng-cheng* 僧正). The reception was as cordial as it had been upon arriving three years earlier.⁷⁷ Chōnen stayed in T'ai-chou for another year, making preparations while a ship was built.

The long, satisfying pilgrimage in China was about to come to an end. Chōnen reflected upon how he should express his gratitude towards Śākyamuni, whose blessings and protection had made the pilgrimage a success. The story of Udayana, the Indian king who had a sandalwood image of Śākyamuni made for the same purpose, came to mind. He decided to sell his "robe and rice bowl," following the ritual gesture of Buddhist monks, to raise money for sandalwood and for the artisans needed to produce the replica. Two brothers, Chang Yen-chiao 張延皎 and Chang Yen-hsi 張延襲, were hired. It took them more than a year, finishing the image on September 5, 985.⁷⁸ Thereupon, Chōnen stated the

reason for his sponsorship of the carving: "The land where the sun rises (Japan) is in a corner (of the world), far away from China; I missed Śākyamuni so much but had no chance to worship his image."

To Chōnen, the production of the replica was his greatest merit in "repaying a debt of gratitude to my parents for having brought me up, to the Chinese Buddhist masters for their instruction, to the (Japanese) emperor for his patronage, and to various Buddhas for their blessings." Moreover, the image was considered a major instrument designed to "carry forward the authentic teaching of Buddhist laws, and to promote the school of the Great Vehicle (in Japan)." The replica would serve as the central image for the new sect. Chōnen vowed that he would "exert every effort to revitalize Buddhism for the benefit of both the (Japanese) ruler and the commoners,"⁷⁹ sounding more like an arrogant savior than "a stupid monk of no talent and moral conduct," as he had described himself before his trip to China.⁸⁰ But he had good reasons to be optimistic about the future: he was the only person among his contemporaries who had been received by the Sung emperor; he held the title "Grand Master of Fa-chi" bestowed by the Sung court; he had made a pilgrimage to Buddhist holy places in China, studied the most recent esoteric teachings under Chinese masters, acquired the newly printed Tripitaka, and had commissioned a sandalwood Śākyamuni. There seems to have been little doubt in Chōnen's mind that he was now the most qualified person to lead Japanese Buddhism.

With wonderful dreams and ambitious plans in mind, Chōnen and his disciples left T'ai-chou for Japan in July of 986 aboard a boat operated by Cheng Jen-te 鄭仁德, a Chinese merchant from Ning-hai county 寧海, T'ai-chou prefecture (in present-day Chekiang).⁸¹ They arrived at Dazaifu in Kyūshū on August 9.⁸² Eight days later, local officials dispatched a report of Chōnen's arrival to the court.⁸³ On October 1, an imperial edict ordered

⁷⁵ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," pp. 73-74; also *SS* 491, p. 14135; Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 56. Jōjin, *San tendai godaizan ki* 7, pp. 247, 254. Oya Tokujō 大屋徳城, "Sōhan Issaikyō no shōrai to Chōnen oyobi Chōgen" 宋版一切經の請來と必然及び重源, in his *Nihon Bukkyō shi no kenkyū* 日本佛教史の研究 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1987) part 1, pp. 283-96.

⁷⁶ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," pp. 73-74.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74; Kimiya Yukihiko 木宮之彦, *Nyū Sō sō Chōnen no kenkyū* 入宋僧自然の研究 (Tokyo: Kashima shuppankai, 1983), pp. 127-28. The Japanese sources vary in regard to the date and place of the carving. *JH* p. 50, and *TZ* 8, p. 158, mention that it was carved at the Sung capital after Chōnen came back from Mt. Wu-t'ai. But an inscription on the base of the statue reads: "Monk Pao-ning of the K'ai-yüan Temple, T'ai-chou, T'ang" 唐國台州開元寺...僧保寧. This has led some Japanese scholars to believe that the statue was carved at K'ai-yüan Temple in T'ai-chou. But Minamoto Toyomune cautioned that since the Chinese usually referred to their country as the "Great T'ang," not simply "T'ang," the inscription might not have been written by a Chinese monk. He further pointed out that the calligraphy

is of a late-Heian or early-Kamakura style. It is therefore possible that the inscription was added to the statue after its move to Japan. See Minamoto Toyomune, "Seiryōji no shakazō," *Bukkyō bijutsu* 1 (1924), pp. 23-35. In the 1950s, the discovery of the 入瑞像五藏文 (see n. 23, above), which was sealed into the statue, convinced most scholars that the image was carved in T'ai-chou, not in the Sung capital.

⁷⁹ Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Sōshō no Bukkyō," p. 74: "歸到本國興隆佛法利益王民."

⁸⁰ *MZ* 13, p. 601.

⁸¹ *JH* p. 51; *KSD* p. 373; *TZ* 8, p. 158. Kokan, *Genhō shakusho* 16, p. 235.

⁸² *TZ* 8, p. 158; *KSD* 67, p. 373.

⁸³ Kōen, *Fusō ryakki* 27, p. 256; *TZ* 8, p. 158, mistakenly records the month as the ninth.

Chōnen and his disciples to travel to the capital.⁸⁴ The edict reached Dazaifu only on November 19.⁸⁵ But twenty-two days later Chōnen was on the road for Kyoto. The journey back to the capital lasted into the New Year. On February 17, 987, Chōnen reached the Kawayōkan 河陽館, an imperial palace built for emperor Saga (r. 809–823) outside Kyoto on the north bank of the Yodogawa River.⁸⁶

At this point, an unexpected event presaged the direction Chōnen's later years would take. The authorities of Yamashiro 山城 province (in the present-day Kyoto area) refused to carry out the order to provide transportation for the huge amount of goods that Chōnen brought back from China. They complained to the court that a recent levy had already impoverished the local people; they requested that the duty be shared equally by neighboring provinces. The news worried Chōnen. Several days later he rushed to the capital to see two powerful Fujiwara officials, Kaneie and Sanesuke, who had both supported his pilgrimage.⁸⁷ Chōnen asked not only for arrangements for transportation, but also a state reception and mammoth parade in celebration of the arrival of the statue, the Tripitaka, and, by extension, himself. These would constitute the prelude to his religious campaign.

Carried by some 300 laborers from Yamashiro, Kawachi 河内, and Settsu 攝津, the prized items arrived at Kyoto on March 13. In contrast to the lack of enthusiasm from the Yamashiro authorities, such treasures aroused a sensation among the townspeople in Kyoto. "Monks and laymen awaited (the statue and the sutra) with cheers; dukes and earls welcomed (them) with adoration."⁸⁸ A grand parade was planned. Leading the procession was a group of musicians from the Music Bureau (Gagaku ryō 雅樂寮). They struck up a Korean tune, signaling the official commencement of the parade. After the musicians came a pagoda made of seven precious metals and stones in which a Buddhist relic was housed. It was followed by the

Tripitaka packed in 500 trunks. Wishing to be blessed by the Buddha, many onlookers eagerly lent their hands to the laborers, helping them carry the trunks. Next, an imperial carriage carried the life-size sandalwood statue of Śākyamuni. Now another group of musicians appeared in the procession, playing T'ang court music.⁸⁹ Chōnen, in his Buddhist robe, and eight of his disciples showed up, all on foot. A temporary ceremonial arch was erected in front of the Suzakumon Gate 朱雀門 of the imperial palace, where some twenty monks greeted the procession, chanting their praises of the Tripitaka.⁹⁰ The procession eventually reached the Rendaiji 蓮臺寺 in Kitano 北野, northern Kyoto. There the treasures were temporarily housed.⁹¹ The court ordered the Music Bureau to perform music in the temple and the Palace Kitchen Supplies Bureau (Ōi ryō 大炊寮) to offer daily sacrifices to the sandalwood image of Śākyamuni.⁹²

The "sandalwood image fever" lasted well into April of 987. Imperial family members, court nobles, generals, and local officials came to worship and make lavish donations and sacrifices to the temple.⁹³ Riding high on this public sentiment, Chōnen pushed ahead with his ambition. On September 13, 987, he requested of the court that Mount Atago be named Godai after the Chinese Buddhist holy mountain Wu-t'ai, and that the Great Seiryōji 大清凉寺 (named after Ch'ing-liang Temple 清凉寺 in China) be built there. Located in the northwest area of Kyoto, Mount Atago and its adjacent lands were a stronghold of the Hata clan, to which Chōnen's family belonged. Chōnen obviously counted on fellow clansmen to support his project. Another major source of support came from monks in the Tōji of Kyoto, especially Gengō, then the Grand Buddhist Dignity (Daisōzu 大僧都), under whom Chōnen had studied esoteric teachings. Over the years, a relationship had been forged between the two, the closeness of which can be seen in their exchange of poems.

⁸⁴ Ninsei Kiren 壬生季連, *Zoku sajōshō* 續左聖抄 (Kokushi taikai edn.) 1, p. 3; Kōen, *Fusō ryakki* 27, p. 257. Yamazaki Tomoo 山崎知雄, *Nihon kiryaku gōben* 日本紀略後篇 (Kokushi taikai edn.) 9, p. 160, dates it to the 27th.

⁸⁵ Ninsei, *Zoku sajōshō* 1, p. 3; Yamazaki, *Nihon kiryaku gōben* 9, p. 160; Kōen, *Fusō ryakki* 27, p. 257, dates it as the 13th.

⁸⁶ Yamazaki, *Nihon kiryaku gōben* 9, p. 160.

⁸⁷ *Shōyūki shō* 小右記抄, 1st mo., 21st and 24th days, Eien 1 (987), cited in Tsukamoto Zenryū, "Seiryōji," p. 185.

⁸⁸ Yamazaki, *Nihon kiryaku gōben* 9, p. 161; *KSD* 67, p. 373; *SS* 491, p. 14135; Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 57.

⁸⁹ For a recent study of T'ang court music, see Laurence Picken and Noël J. Nickson, eds., *Music from the Tang Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1990).

⁹⁰ *Shōyūki shō*, 2d mo., 11th day, 987, cited in Sasaki Reishin 佐佐木令信, "Nyū Sō sō Chōnen no kikyō ni kansuru oboegaki" 入宋僧杳然の歸京に關する覺書, *Ōtani gakuho* 大谷學報 61.4 (1982), pp. 29–30.

⁹¹ *KSD* 67, p. 373; Yamazaki, *Nihon kiryaku gōben* 9, p. 161; Kōen, *Fusō ryakki* 27, p. 257; *TZ* 8, p. 158; Eiyū 永祐, *Teiō heinen ki* 帝王編年記 (Kokushi taikai edn.) 17, p. 264.

⁹² *TZ* 8, p. 158; Yamazaki, *Nihon kiryaku gōben* 9, p. 161.

⁹³ *Shōyūki shō*, 2d mo., 16th, 24th, 29th days, Eien 1 (987); 3d mo., 2d day, Eien 1 (987), cited in Tsukamoto Zenryū, "Seiryōji," p. 187.

Chōnen's plan, however, was not free of miscalculations. He had overestimated the support that he could garner from the Hata clan. The clan remained influential, but its early-Heian political and economic power had long been overshadowed by the Fujiwara family. Even Chōnen himself had to claim membership in the Fujiwara family to boost his prestige in the eyes of Sung court officials. He had also overestimated his ability to preach new Buddhist teachings and to persuade fellow monks to accept him as a new religious leader. Chōnen attempted to establish a "school of the three studies" (Sangakushū 三學宗). Used often as the basic curriculum for education of young monks and nuns, the "Three Studies" (Triśikṣa) teach the Buddhist rules and discipline (*chieh-hsüeh* 戒學) in order to ward off bodily evil, meditation (*ting-hsüeh* 定學) to calm mental agitation, and wisdom (*hui-hsüeh* 慧學) to eliminate delusion. These teachings are generally associated with Mahāyāna Buddhism, and were broad enough to have included virtually all the basic rules and practices of Buddhism. Chōnen was apparently not the ideal teacher. His pilgrimage in China had been too short to make him profoundly learned in the awesome body of Buddhist teachings. It is also debatable whether Chōnen actually ever intended to introduce such teachings to Japan, where monastic Buddhism was already losing ground and secularization was on the rise.

Preaching new Buddhist teachings was primarily a means for Chōnen gradually to develop a personal following. And sometimes the teachings were not new at all. For example, he also asked the court for permission to promote the Zen Buddhist teaching of Daruma 達磨 (Bodhidharma).⁹⁴ But our sources indicate that Chōnen had had no contact with Chinese Zen monks. The Chinese monks that Chōnen encountered in Sung were

⁹⁴ The founder of this sect was Bodhidharma (Daruma; ?-528), a monk from southern India who emphasized the practice of meditation and intuition in understanding one's own Buddha-nature and achieving Buddhahood. He traveled to China in the 520s and was patronized by the emperor Wu (r. 502-548) of Liang (502-557). He then went to the Northern Wei court, residing at Shao-lin Temple 少林寺. He built a following and was regarded as the founder of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism. For a study of Daruma, see Seikiguchi Shindai 關口真大, *Daruma no kenkyū* 達磨の研究 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1967); Yanagida Seizen 柳田聖山, "Daruma no goroku" 達磨の語録, in *Zen no goroku* 禪の語録 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969) 1, pp. 1-21; also Charles Lachman, "Why Did the Patriarch Cross the River? The Rushleaf Bodhidharma Reconsidered," *AM* 3d ser. 6.2 (1993), pp. 237-68, which summarizes the historiographical and iconographical problems surrounding Bodhidharma's life. For a study of the spread of Ch'an Buddhism in China, see Lewis Lancaster and Whalen Lai, eds., *The Early History of Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983).

associated either with the Mahāyāna or the esoteric school. He may have just relabeled the "Three Studies" as the teachings of Daruma. No wonder the Kamakura-period (1183-1333) work *Promulgation of Zen as a Defense of the Nation* (*Kōzen gokoku ron* 興禪護國論) reports that Myōan Yōsai 明庵榮西 (1141-1215), founder of the Rinzaï Zen, categorically denied any relationship between the "Three Studies" and Zen Buddhism:

Zen Buddhism and Sangakushū are different both in name and purpose. Contemporary Zen Buddhism is called "Ch'ing-ching ju-lai ch'an" 清淨如來禪, not Sangakushū. From the Liang dynasty onward, there has been only one Zen Buddhism. And there is no other name for this teaching.⁹⁵

When Chōnen's memorial was presented to the court for discussion, sympathetic courtiers drafted an approval. But a group of monks challenged Chōnen, claiming that his version of both "Three Studies" and the teachings of Daruma was ambiguous, and nothing new when compared with other Buddhist teachings in Japan. Consequently, the draft was never officially issued.⁹⁶

Chōnen's eventual setbacks do not mean that he was of no importance in Japanese Buddhism. His demonstrations of salvation, merit, and obeisances at famous Chinese monasteries bear resemblance to the crucial concept in Kamakura-period Zen Buddhism of "self-power" (*jiriki* 自力), which advocated attainment of Buddhahood by chiefly meditative endeavor. Chōnen was, as some modern scholars have suggested, instrumental to the development of Japanese Zen Buddhism, and he strove to spread Zen teaching under the umbrella of the "Three Studies," a term that he deliberately chose to disguise the real core of Zen.

Chōnen failed to convince his contemporaries enough to become an acknowledged founder of either "Three Studies" or Zen Buddhism in Japan. A fourteenth-century Japanese writer, Kokan Shiren 虎關師鍊 (1278-1346), appropriately evaluated Chōnen's activities and his position in the history of Japanese Buddhism. His 1322 book *The History of Genkō-Era Buddhism* (*Genkō shakusho* 元亨釋書) listed Chōnen under the category of

⁹⁵ Nishioka Toranosuke, "Chōnen to sangakushū no kenritsu" 自然と三學宗の建立, *Rekishi chiri* 46.1 (1925), p. 87.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

"energetic Buddhist travelers" (*rikiyū* 力遊). Explaining the differences between that and "disseminators of the wisdom of Buddha" (*tenchi* 傳智), Shiren pointed out that monks of the latter category had extraordinary talent and virtue. They traveled to foreign countries to introduce new Buddhist laws into Japan, and were able to create and sustain a sect of their own. In contrast, "energetic Buddhist travelers," having ventured to foreign lands, were either unable to establish a distinctive sect in Japan, or failed to sustain it.⁹⁷

To a certain extent, Chōnen's failures were self-inflicted. He seems to have been too eager for success. Less than half a year after returning to Japan, on March 10, 987, Chōnen petitioned the court for permission for two of his disciples, Ka'in 嘉因 and Sokan 祈乾, to travel to China.⁹⁸ His memorial boasted that he himself was a monk who had "toured and performed rites at [China's temples] and achieved merit in transmitting the dharmas [to Japan]" 致巡禮傳法之功. But he regretted that his long-held wish to donate to the holy temples on Mount Wu-t'ai had not yet been fulfilled. He therefore wanted to send Kain, who had accompanied him to China, studied both esoteric and exoteric teachings, and was fluent in Chinese, to make these offerings and to "acquire newly translated Buddhist sutras."⁹⁹ Once again, Chōnen was able to generate truly astounding support from the court nobles, who not only granted his request but also generously donated a large sum of precious gifts to the Sung court and the Wu-t'ai monasteries.¹⁰⁰ Chōnen knew too well that the Kyoto aristocrats

would not miss this opportunity to open their purses and annul their sins. He also knew that the lavish Sung imperial gifts that Kain would bring back would please Japanese courtiers, thus generating further support. If monks from other temples were sneering at Chōnen's self-praise, they nonetheless could see that Chōnen was winning imperial favor. They must have panicked at news that Chōnen had also requested construction of an altar of ordination in the new temple on Mount Atago.

Court permission for a temple to establish an altar of ordination was official acknowledgment of its authority to initiate laymen into the monkhood. As the basis on which a Buddhist sect could build and expand power, the granting of permission to a particular temple often became a contentious issue in Japanese Buddhist circles.¹⁰¹ By requesting such permission, Chōnen was in fact sending out a clear message: he intended to challenge the power and authority of Enryakuji. A few years before Chōnen had been able to solicit support from the Enryakuji abbot by disguising the real aim of his pilgrimage. This time the premature disclosure of his intentions invited immediate criticism and opposition from other temples. In 991, the court rejected Chōnen's appeals. He thus temporarily housed the sandalwood image at Seikaji 棲霞寺.¹⁰² But the court granted his request to send Ka'in and Sokan to China. The two left for the Middle Kingdom in 988.¹⁰³

Opposition from rival temples was not the only factor that brought Chōnen's plan to a complete halt. On August 13, 989, Chōnen had been ordained the fifty-first Tōdaiji abbot in Nara, taking him away from the capital and his plans there. One month after his appointment, fierce winds devastated Tōdaiji. Many temple buildings, including the south gate, suffered heavy damage. The arduous task of funding and organizing the repairs must have diverted Chōnen's energies. Chōnen remained as abbot for only three years, from 989 to 991.¹⁰⁴ And the Japanese primary sources are basically silent about this period and about the rest of Chōnen's life. It

⁹⁷ Kokan, *Genkō shakusho* 16, p. 235. For a discussion of Chōnen's classification as "energetic traveler," see Hinoshita Taichi 日下大痴, "Chōnen hōshi no shōden" 壽然法師の小傳, *Rokujiō gakuho* 六條學報 56 (1906), p. 44.

⁹⁸ Ninsei, *Zoku saijōsho* 1, p. 4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ On behalf of Chōnen, Ka'in presented to T'ai-tsung "a sea-green [sutra] case, containing a Buddhist sutra; a flower-shaped flat box inlaid with shell and metal, containing a pair of rosaries, one made of amber and of green, red, and white crystals, and one of pink and black wood and seeds of the Bodhi tree; a woven basket containing two drinking cups inlaid with shell; a basket made of vine stems containing two conch shells; twenty pieces of stained leather; a gold and silver lacquered box containing two wigs; and another box containing the two scrolls of the autograph of To Sari, state counselor of the senior fourth rank, together with a scroll containing a list of the gifts, also a scroll of the memorial; a gold and silver lacquered box containing a golden ink-stone, a deer-hair brush, an ink-stick made of pine soot, a water container, and a knife; a gold and silver lacquered box containing twenty cypress-wood fans; two folding fans; a pair of comb cases inlaid with shell, one containing 270 combs of red wood, and the other ten pairs of bone-work fans; a writing stand inlaid with shell; a bookstand inlaid with shell, a flat gold and silver lacquered box containing a badger-skin vest; a saddle and bridle inlaid with shell; copper and iron stirrups; a crop of crimson thread; a dust protector; a pair screens with Japanese painting; and 700

catties of sulphur in lumps"; *SS* 491, p. 14136; Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 58.

¹⁰¹ E.g., in the early-Heian period Saichō's effort to establish an ordination altar in the Enryakuji triggered opposition from monks in Nara. It was not until the year of his death, 822, that permission was granted to build the altar.

¹⁰² *TZ* 8, p. 158; *KSD* 67, p. 373; Eiyū, *Teiō hennen ki* 17, p. 264; Ichijō Kanera 一條兼良, *Kachō yosei* 花鳥餘情, Kokubun chūyaku zensho edn. (Tokyo: Ofusa, 1978) 10, p. 226; *Nisonin engi* (*DNBZ* edn.), p. 297.

¹⁰³ *SS* 491, pp. 14135-36; Yamazaki, *Nihon kiriyaku gōben* 9, p. 163.

¹⁰⁴ *TBS*, p. 182.

seems that in his later years, this once overly ambitious and energetic monk perhaps made no major achievements in rejuvenating Nara Buddhism. Chōnen died on April 7, 1016, leaving his unaccomplished plan to a disciple, Jōsan 成算.

But the political circumstances at court had already changed with the passage of time. The power once held by such supporters as Fujiwara no Kaneie had been transferred to Michinaga 道長 (966–1027). To win the support of the new masters of the court, Jōsen decided to present all the Buddhist sutras that Chōnen had brought back from China to Michinaga, who was then contemplating the establishment of his own temple, Hōjōji 法成寺, in northern Kyoto. When the sutras were being moved out of Seikaji on February 14, 1018, snow fell in big flakes as though the deceased Chōnen was expressing disapproval of his disciple's decision.¹⁰⁵ But Jōsan's move paid off. One year later, an imperial edict ordered Shakadō Hall 釋迦堂 inside the Seikaji renamed Seiryōji, and Jōsan was put in charge of it. At long last, Chōnen's dream was partially realized by his disciples.

Finally, Chōnen exerted important influence in a relatively indirect way. For many centuries, the transmission of Buddhism from China to Japan had depended primarily on handwritten copies of Buddhist canons. Repeated transcription by its very nature introduced miscopying and other distortions to the original texts, making many Buddhist works in Japan of inferior quality. This unnecessary barrier to the study of Buddhism was largely removed thanks to Chōnen, who brought back a set of *The K'ai-pao Era Imperially Printed Tripitaka* (*K'ai-pao ch'ih-pan Ta-tsang ching* 開寶敕版大藏經). This engraving was the first government-sponsored project to have printed all the Buddhist sutras extant in China. The work began in 971 in I-chou 益州 (present-day Chengtu, Szechwan province) under the direct supervision of an imperial envoy, Chang Ts'ung-hsin 張從信.¹⁰⁶ The block cutting alone took twelve years, producing some 13,000 blocks. It was printed in 983,¹⁰⁷ the year of Chōnen's arrival in China. The Tripitaka that Chōnen brought back to Japan must have been one of the first imprints of the K'ai-pao edition, and was unusual among the others for its folding style

of binding. The K'ai-pao Tripitaka far exceeds the 3,224 *chüan* of sutras brought to Japan by the eight Japanese masters who had traveled to T'ang China. It was also far superior in quality compared to that of the K'ai-yüan edition, an earlier handwritten Tripitaka compiled in the eighteenth year of the K'ai-yüan period (730) personally by the monk Chih Sheng 智昇. For centuries, sutras available to Japanese monks were mostly transcriptions of the K'ai-yüan, which was brought to Japan by Genbō 玄昉 (?–746), who had spent almost twenty years (716–735) in T'ang China. The K'ai-pao also incorporated many sutras translated into Chinese after the completion of the K'ai-yüan. Moreover, sutras in the K'ai-pao Tripitaka had fewer mistakes and misprints.¹⁰⁸

The K'ai-pao Tripitaka was housed at Hōjōji after having been donated to Michinaga. In the pursuing ninety years, the version served as the master copy for all Buddhist sutras. Monks coming from all over Japan went to the temple with their own copy of a sutra in hand, and consulted the text of the K'ai-pao in order to resolve various problems. Sutras preserved at Ishiyamaji 石山寺, Horyūji 法隆寺, and Takayamaji 高山寺 all testify to such activity. Some of them bear corrections made with specific reference to the K'ai-pao Tripitaka, and some are handwritten copies of sutras preserved in it.¹⁰⁹ The arrival of the K'ai-pao also rekindled a zeal among Japanese nobles for sponsoring the reproduction of Buddhist sutras, a tradition long suspended since the printing of the *Wu-kou ching-kuang t'o-lo-mi* 無垢淨光陀羅密 in 770. Abdicated emperors, members of the imperial house, and court nobles in Kyoto began sponsoring sutra printing again, donating thousands of copies to Buddhist temples.¹¹⁰

Not just engraved text, but also engraved image acted as a means of transmitting Chōnen's influence. The sandalwood statue of Śākyamuni introduced to Japan a totally new style of Buddhist image. The statue displays a distinctively Indian appearance, with an artistic style different from that of other contemporary Chinese and Japanese Buddhist statues.¹¹¹ The influence

¹⁰⁸ Kimiya Yasuhiko, *Nikka*, pp. 281, 304.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 282. See also Jōjin, *San tendai godaisan ki* 7, pp. 247–48, 3d mo., 23d day, Enkyū 4 (1073). It reads: “昨雍熙元年日本僧然來朝蒙太宗皇帝賜號法濟大師三年還歸賜大藏經一藏及新譯經二百八十六卷見在日本法成寺藏內。”

¹¹⁰ Of the numerous donated, printed sutras, seven were most popular: *Lotus Sutra*, *Sutra of Innumerable Meanings*, *Sutra of Meditation on Bodhisattva Universal Vow*, *Heart Sutra*, *Benevolent King Sutra*, *Amitābha Sutra*, and *Sutra of the Master of Healing*. A chart of the names of donors and the numbers of donated copies is in Kimiya Yasuhiko, *Nikka*, pp. 305–6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 285–86.

¹⁰⁵ Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長, *Midō kanpaku ki* 御堂關白記 (Tokyo: Nihon koten kankōkai, 1926), *ch. hsia*, p. 233, 1st mo., 15th day, Kannin 2 (1018); trans. Hirail Francine, *Midō Kanpaku ki: Notes journalières de Fujiwara no Michinaga, ministre de la cour de Heian* (995–1018) (Geneva: Droz, 1987–1988).

¹⁰⁶ Chih-p'an, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 43, p. 396A.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 398C.

of the paintings of the sixteen Arhat that Chōnen brought from China also found expression in Japanese Buddhist paintings, in particular the paintings of the Takuma school 宅磨派, which was centered in Kyoto and was famous for its creative style.¹¹²

It should be noted, finally, that Japanese monks were also "cultural ambassadors" to China. They took back lost copies of Chinese and Buddhist classics, thus making them available again for scholars.¹¹³ By presenting to the Sung emperor the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Hsiao ching* 孝經) in the annotated version by Cheng Hsüan (127-200) and volume fifteen of the T'ang prince Yüeh's *New Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* (*Hsiao-ching hsin-i* 新義),¹¹⁴ Chōnen made a personal contribution to the Sung court's effort to enrich its war-damaged imperial book collection. These two books were no doubt particularly valuable, considering that the Japanese court had prohibited any Chinese works preserved in Japan to be exported to China.¹¹⁵ But Chōnen was not merely a private donor of Chinese books. By introducing the Japanese *Imperial Genealogy* (*Ō nendai ki*) and *The Statutes on Government Officials* to China, he made a distinctive contribution

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 286.

¹¹³ The well-known monk Jōjin (1011-1081) also visited Sung China; see Charlott von Verschuer, "Le voyage de Jōjin au Mont Tiantai," *TP* 77.1-3 (1991), pp. 1-48.

¹¹⁴ *SS* 491, p. 14136; Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 58; Wang Yao-ch'en 王堯臣, *Ch'ung-wen tsung-mu* 崇文總目, SKCS chen-pen pieh-chi edn. (Taipei: Shang-wu, 1975) 2, pp. 9a-b; Wang Ying-lin 王應麟, *Yü hai* 玉海 (Taipei: Hua-wen shu-chü, 1967) 41, pp. 33b-34a. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Chikusa Masaaki 竺沙雅章, "Sōdai ni okeru higashi Ajia Bukkyō no kōryū" 宋代における東アジア佛教の交流, *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū* 佛教史學研究 31.1 (1988), pp. 25-46. Prince Yüeh was the eighth son of T'ai-tsung; biog. in Liu Hsiu 劉昫, comp., *Chiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975) 76, pp. 2661-63; Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修, *Hsin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975) 80, pp. 3575-77.

¹¹⁵ In his poem "Jih-pen tao ko 日本刀歌," Ou-yang Hsiu, one of the compilers of *Hsin Tang shu* (see previous n.), said that the original 100 sections of *Shang shu* 尚書 were still extant in Japan. But the Japanese court strictly prohibited the spread of these texts from Japan to China: 逸書百篇今尚存令嚴不許傳中國; *Ou-yang Wen-chung-kung wen-chi* 歐陽文忠公文集 (SPTK edn.) 54, p. 7a. Most likely the prohibition applied to a wide range of other Chinese books. Authorship of the poem, however, has been disputed in T'an Pi-an 譚彼岸, "Jih-pen tao ko tso-che hsin-k'ao" 日本刀歌作者新考, *She-hui k'o-hsüeh chan-hsien* 社會科學戰線 2 (1981), pp. 290-92, which claims that this poem and another, titled "Ho Chün-i 和君倚 Jih-pen tao ko," attributed to Ssu-ma Kuang, are in fact the same poem, the author of which being Ch'ien Kung-fu 錢公輔 (?-1074; h. Chün-i). Ch'ien was the prefect of Ming-chou prefecture, where trading between China and Japan was very active during the Northern Sung. Ch'ien's position enabled him to contact and purchase from Japanese traders high quality Japanese swords. Ch'ien's biog. is in *SS* 321, p. 10421. For Ssu-ma Kuang's poem, see his *Wen-kuo wen-cheng Ssu-ma kung wen-chi* 溫國文正司馬公文集 (SPTK edn.) 3, p. 16a.

towards mutual understanding in the realms of government and court culture.¹¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Chōnen represents a new generation of Japanese monk that lived in a transitional period in both Japanese Buddhism and Sino-Japanese relations. Brought up in a famous Buddhist institution in the "southern capital" of Nara, and rigorously trained by Buddhist masters,¹¹⁷ Chōnen was traditional, and in many ways favored monks of the older generation. As an adult, Chōnen witnessed the gradual decline of monastic scholarship, and the eclipse of the Tōdaiji by the Enryakuji. Those new developments beset Chōnen, and influenced his emulation of ancient Japanese Buddhist masters, who had risked their lives to try to reach Buddhist temples in China, to seek the Buddhist laws, and to study Buddhism under the personal guidance of established Chinese masters. Chōnen was determined to revitalize Japanese Buddhism through the great energy spent in pursuing such a program. But times had changed. A new tide was rising among tenth-century Japanese monks. They concerned themselves less with doctrine than with personal salvation through meditation and merit. Chōnen followed this program as well, seeking salvation for himself and his mother. Consequently, he failed to become a sect leader, was criticized by other monks, and his further plans were rebuffed by the court.

But the activities of Chōnen and his disciples served as a pipeline for bilateral economic and cultural intercourse. Their gifts to the Sung court introduced articles of Japanese handicraft to China, which were to become the most favored of Japanese merchandise among the thirteenth-century Chinese. Chōnen was also a pioneer in the process of introducing authentic Japanese works by educated Japanese to China. Thus he moved Japan one step forward from passively absorbing Chinese learning to actively bridging the two cultures.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed study of *Ōnendai ki*, see Wang Zhenping, "The Use of Japanese Records in Sung Official Histories," *The East Asian Library Journal* 7.1 (1994), pp. 43-71.

¹¹⁷ Among the masters under whom Chōnen studied were Kanri (894-974) of the Sanronshō school, and Gengō (911-995) of the Shingonshō school.

APPENDIX

Biographical Notes on Chōnen

The exact year and date of Chōnen's birth were unclear until 1953, when the repair of a Śākyamuni image led to the discovery of certain items sealed inside a small square inside the image. Chōnen had had the Śākyamuni produced while in China and upon completion personally sealed up the items. The latter include a piece of paper bearing Chōnen's handwriting, which specifies that he was born on February 25, 938. Another document, drafted by Chōnen, gives the same date of birth.¹¹⁸

Also while in China, Chōnen claimed that he was a member of the influential Fujiwara family, and that his father was a court noble holding a court rank of the fifth grade.¹¹⁹ This claim has confused historians. For instance, *Sung shih* (491, p. 14131) reads: "Chōnen's father held the title of 'chen-lien 真連,' which was equivalent to the fifth-grade rank."¹²⁰ Modern Japanese scholars have disputed the interpretation of the phrase "chen-lien" in *Sung shih*. One argument is that it was never an official title in the Japanese ranking system, and that the term might have been the first name of Chōnen's father.¹²¹ *Kōsō den* 67, p. 373, uses a different term, "seika 菁華," to describe Chōnen's ancestors. Although the terms in *KSD* and *SS* differ, they both seem to have indicated the social status of Chōnen's family. "真連" is probably a miscopying of "菁華," which is in turn an analogue for "清華." In literary Chinese the latter refers to nobles.¹²² In Japanese it is basically the same, referring specifically to nine prominent noble families whose members served the Japanese court as chancellor, minister of the left, and minister of the right, but not regents. These families were: Sanjō 三條, Saionji 西園寺, Tokudaiji 德大寺, Kazan-in 花山院, Ōimokado 大炊御門, Kuga 久我, Imadegawa 今出川, Hirohata 廣幡, and Daigo 醍醐. The first five descended from separate branches of the Fujiwara.¹²³

In *Azuma hagami* 吾妻鏡,¹²⁴ the term appears in a slightly different form: "清花." Thus "chen-lien" is probably neither the first name of Chōnen's father nor a Japanese office title. It is a general term, equivalent to "seika," used by Chōnen

to refer to his purported noble background.¹²⁵ Ryusaku Tsunoda, however, regards "真連" as an error for "muraji 連," a hereditary title given to clan-chief-tain descendants of the gods (*shimbetsu* 神別). "Muraji" was one of the eight titles in the *kabane* system created by Temmu Tennō in 682.¹²⁶

The doubt concerning Chōnen's family was cleared up in 1953, in the light of the discovery mentioned above. In a document Chōnen wrote: "[My] secular [last] name is Hata" 俗姓秦氏. The Hata clan consisted of immigrants from China, the majority living in the Kyoto basin.¹²⁷ Relating himself to the influential Fujiwara family, Chōnen simply made a false claim of family background in order to boost his image in the eyes of Chinese courtiers.

Chōnen's birth place is not specified in Japanese primary sources. That his family may have lived in Yamashiro prefecture is based on the fact that he later chose Mt. Atago, a Yamashiro locale, for a temple site. Modern scholars believe that he did so in the hope that he could generate building donations from local Hata clansmen.¹²⁸

Chōnen's teacher Kanri was born into the Taira family in Nara. He was ordained at the Kōfukuji where he studied the Hossō 法相 school of Buddhism, the "Three Treatises" and esoteric teaching. He was made abbot (*zasu* 座主) of the Daigoji in Kyoto in 960 (*KSD* 67, p. 373; *Kokan*, *Genkō* 16, p. 235). Gengō was master of the "True Word" school of Buddhism. He became the head (*chōrō* 長老) of the Tōji in Kyoto in 983 (*Kōen*, *Fusō ryakki* 27, p. 251, 8th mo., 16th day, Tengen 4 [982]).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>DNBZ</i>	<i>Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho</i> 大日本佛教全書
<i>JH</i>	Jūmei, <i>Jōsan hashiki</i> 盛算法師記
<i>KSD</i>	Shiban, <i>Honchō kōsō den</i> 本朝高僧傳
<i>MZ</i>	Fujiwara, <i>Honchō monzui</i> 本朝文粹
<i>SS</i>	<i>Sung shih</i> 宋史
<i>TBS</i>	<i>Tōdaiji bettō shidai</i> 東大寺別當次第
<i>TZ</i>	Jitsuyū, <i>Tōdaiji zasshūroku</i> 東大寺雜集錄

¹¹⁸ See Kimiya Yukihiko, *Nyū Sō sō Chōnen no kenkyū*, pp. 110, 125-26. The date of Chōnen's death is given in *TBS*, p. 182.

¹¹⁹ See *KSD* 67, p. 373. See also *Huang-ch'ao lei-yüan* 78, p. 6a; *SS* 491, p. 14131.

¹²⁰ See also Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 49.

¹²¹ See Kimiya Yasuhiko, *Nikka*, p. 254; also Kimiya Yukihiko, "Nyū Sō sō Chōnen no jiseki" 入宋僧自然の事蹟 (上), *Nihon rekishi* 133 (1959), p. 88.

¹²² See Li Yen-shou 李延壽, comp., *Nan shih* 南史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975) 25, p. 677; and idem, *Pei shih* 北史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1974) 40, p. 1460.

¹²³ See Terajima Ryōan 寺島良安, *Wakan sansai zue* 和漢三才圖會 (Tokyo: Nihon zuihitsu taisei kankōkai, 1929), p. 96.

¹²⁴ *Kokushi taikēi* edn. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1937) 50, p. 795, 8th mo., 14th day, Kōchō 1 (1261).

¹²⁵ See Nishioka, "Chōnen no nyū Sō," p. 423.

¹²⁶ See Goodrich and Tsunoda, *Japan*, p. 61, n. 4.

¹²⁷ See Kimiya Yukihiko, *Nyū Sō sō Chōnen no kenkyū*, p. 133. For a discussion of the Hata family, see Seki Akira 關晃, *Kikajin* 歸化人 (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1966), pp. 90-107; also Ueda Masaaki 上田正昭, *Kikajin* (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1965), pp. 135-43.

¹²⁸ See Mori Katsumi, "Tōdaiji sō Chōnen no nyū Sō e no shikō" 東大寺僧自然の入宋への志向, *Zen kenkyūshō kiyō* 禪研究所紀要 6.7 (1977), p. 236.