

Architecture

General Plan of the Sanctuary

Buddhist sanctuaries and East Asian sanctuaries in general are not buildings but rather "precincts." Such precincts consist of several buildings of different shapes and sizes with different functions and rankings which in their sum total constitute the complete ensemble of a temple.²⁹ In its totality this ensemble is the result of a hierarchical structure joined to form a temple complex which is almost always also a monastery. Temple complexes do not consist of a unified building complex complete within itself but rather consist of groupings of individual buildings which are, however, arranged to conform to a definite plan. A typical basic plan in terms of numbers, type, shape, and arrangement of those individual buildings can be found underlying all Buddhist temple precincts but allows certain variations with respect to numbers and size of the components as well as to their spatial disposition. Such variations reflect particular Buddhist teachings, historical periods, or in part also the topography of a particular site.

In East Asia a sacred precinct is normally aligned along a central axis. This holds true for Buddhist and Taoist precincts just as it does for the precincts belonging to China's state cult and "universism" and for Shintô "shrines" in Japan. Even imperial palaces and burial complexes--both essentially also sacral compounds--follow this basic pattern. This central axis frequently consists of a long sacred path leading in graduated stages from the outside, the "world," deeper and deeper into the innermost part of the sanctuary. It reaches its final destination in the inner sanctum where it comes to rest. To the believers on their pilgrimage along this sacred path every step, every stage, signifies an increasing detachment from the profane world and an ever increasing inner purification or degree of holiness. The movement from the outside to the interior corresponds to--or at least contributes decisively to--a personal spiritual process of spiritual advancement. But the path of the *linea sacra* leads not only from the "outside" to the "inside." It also leads "upward." It is an ascent to ever higher stages and levels of existence and ever purer spirituality. After the highest and innermost point (in a spatial as well as in a religious sense) has been reached,³⁰ the return to the world can begin. But the returning pilgrim finds himself now in a spiritually transformed state. This spatial-spiritual order of the Buddhist sanctuary and the sequence of its buildings and

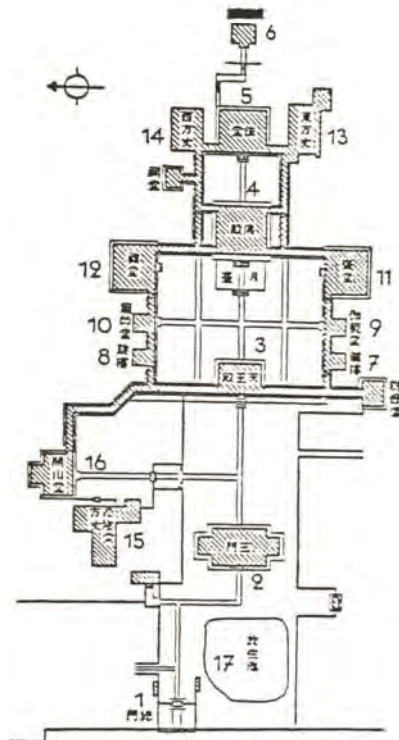
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images in their religious significance has been described by Erwin Rousselle in a profound and attractive study.³¹

The central axis of East Asian sanctuaries, and also that of practically all the region's architectural complexes—including the secular ones—usually runs from south to north, with variations wherever special conditions require them. According to Chinese cosmology or, better, cosmosophy—called universism by de Groot³²—the architectural axis represents the axis of the earthly world, which, in turn, is in alignment with the cosmic axis and is linked to the basic polarity of Yang and Yin. This polarity, in turn, is divided into a complex system of correspondences between directions, elements and potentialities, between yearly and daily periods and many other such entities. In the case of Buddhist temples, symbolic ideas taken from Indian cosmology are included (Mount Sumeru as world axis, etc.). The south-north axis undoubtedly also owes its prominence to geographic and climatic factors.

A pilgrim arriving from the south and passing through a number of gates will thus gradually enter the temple complex (2*). The buildings, arranged along the axis, face him frontally. In East Asia their broad side therefore always faces south. At one of the highest places is enthroned the main cult image with its back to the north; behind it the sacred precinct is bordered by a protective wall, a sacred grove,

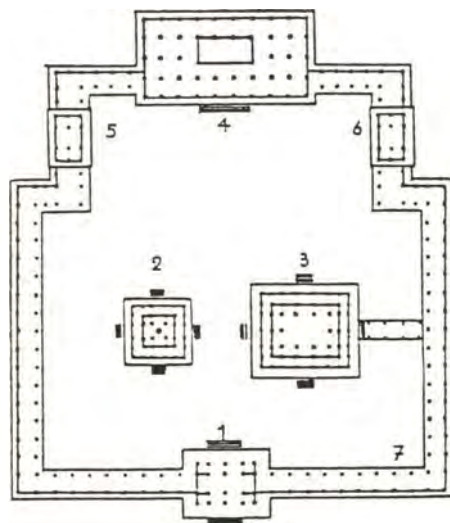
2* Ground plan of a Zen monastery building of the Chinese type (Mampukuji near Kyôto).



and a mountain slope. In palace complexes, this position is occupied by the emperor and his throne in the audience and ceremony hall. The Buddha, too, is regarded as a world ruler (cakravartin), and his sanctuary is treated as an image of the spiritual mystic cosmic empire whose "empty" ground embraces him from behind.

A second structural principle for such precincts consists of an arrangement which has the main buildings, joined by symmetrically arranged side buildings, lining the central axis. This, too, follows the arrangement of the imperial palace and was obviously inspired by it. The result is a series of building complexes, each running at a right angle to the central axis and consisting of a dominating central structure flanked by wing structures. The principle of the axial arrangement is therefore complemented by those of symmetric balance and mirror image. This use of a dominating central block and two lateral links is both differentiated into individual elements and bound into a uniform pattern and seems to reflect ancient Chinese world views in spatial-symbolic form. In particular, it seems to echo the division of the primordial Unity or Absolute into the polar potentialities, Yang and Yin, whose interaction gives rise to the world and its cyclical movements. This symmetric axuality as a cosmic symbol is found in other cultures as well.

A third principle is employed to form subcomplexes: The buildings are not simply lined up along the axis or symmetrically arranged in relation to it, but rather are grouped in more or less complete, separate complexes. These are frequently surrounded by walls, fences, or corridors which join them as clearly defined groups and, at the same time, set them apart from neighboring groups (3*/4*). However,



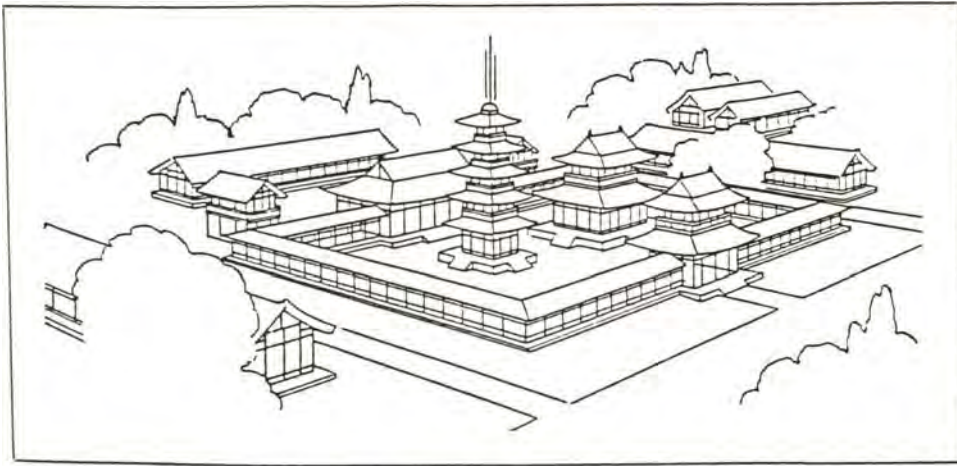
3* Plan of the central precinct
of the Hôryûji.

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the presence of such elements as linking corridors and side passages or passages leading through the central hall itself preserves an overall cohesion. In a manner characteristic of East Asia, a large temple precinct is thus composed of several precincts or court yards. These are joined lengthwise and sideways and traversed by the *via sacra*. The axis bestows unity because its progression fuses all these self-contained building complexes into one, while its own rhythmic pattern is derived from the structured alignment of these complexes.

What, then, are the individual buildings, forming the temple precinct? Putting aside all less important structures, particularly those which merely serve the purely economic activities of the monastery, we must primarily consider the following structures, in the sequence of their position from the entrance at the southern gate to the last of them in the north: 1. An exterior gate serves as entrance to the entire precinct; it is also called the "main gate," or "great southern gate;" 2. A "central" gate marks the entrance to the inner, main or nuclear precinct; 3. Inside this gate is located the most prominent building, the Buddha Hall, where the main cult image and its accompanying figures are venerated. In China, this hall is called the *ta-hsiung-pao-tien*, "Treasure Hall of the Great Hero" (the Buddha here is considered as World Ruler), or simply the *ta-tien*, "Great Hall." In Japan, this building is usually called *kon-dô*, "Golden Hall" (because of the gold-covered cult figures and splendid interior); 4. In Chinese temples it is frequently preceded by The Hall for the Four Heavenly Kings and for the Future Buddha, Maitreya; 5. Behind the Buddha Hall there is the Sermon Hall or Dharma Hall where sacred scriptures are interpreted and disputations and general meetings are held; 6. Behind this hall are often found the living quarters of the abbot, and occasionally the extensive residential halls of the monks. This section corresponds to the living quarters of the emperor in Chinese palaces, which are also located north of (i.e., at the rear) of the last "official" hall. Another arrangement, popular particularly in China, places the living quarters of the monks at both sides of the temple yard; 7. Of particular importance to the central precinct are the pagodas, whose number and locations may vary (see below); 8. Finally, the inner group of the main buildings is joined by two pavilions for bell and drum symmetrically arranged to the left and right. One of them may also serve as a repository for sacred scriptures (*Sûtras*, etc.)

Many of these buildings are connected by covered walkways or enclosed by them, i.e., are joined to form yards or courts. Outside these buildings, which are closest to the central axis in larger temple precincts, we also find clusters of other buildings whose emplacement follows no particular pattern: the Meditation Hall, the most important structure in a Zen monastery; chapel-like halls for the performance of special rites or for the veneration of particular Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other beings, usually Arhats and sponsors of the sanctuary (mostly priests who had founded the temple or monastery), and for the performance of initiation ceremonies; and storage buildings to house sacred scriptures, cult implements, requisites for festivals, and art treasures. All these also are part of a complete complex. The special halls or chapels and the living quarters, in turn, may constitute secondary precincts--each with its own axis, gates, and enclosures and joined to the central precinct in a more or less strict manner.



4* Reconstruction of the original plan of the Hôryûji central precinct.

Since Buddhist temples were frequently also designed for study and education--the official name of Hôryûji near Nara, for example, is *Hôryû-gakumon-ji* = "Study Monastery for the Promotion of Buddhist Teaching (dharma)"--or carried out extensive charitable work, buildings serving such practical purposes were loosely grouped around the central cult buildings.

The Buddhist temples of East Asia adopted in their architectural conception both the basic form as well as many of the details of the layout of ancient Chinese palaces and residences. Their original Indian form had created two rather different architectural types. The first was the Vihâra (or Sanghârâma), consisting of a central yard or room with one or more stûpas at its center, lined by cells and occasionally placing a sanctuary on the side opposite to the entrance. The second type was the Caitya Hall which had its nave supported by columns and a free standing stûpa placed in the "apse" as ritual center. Both types can be found as free-standing structures and as cave temples carved out of cliff rocks.

Neither the Vihâra nor the Caitya Hall could simply be transplanted to Chinese soil and be created with Chinese architectural means. For this reason, and also because the more elaborate cultic requirements of Mahâyâna--primarily its veneration of cult images--called for different types of buildings, Buddhists eagerly made use of the already existing forms of Chinese palace complexes and palace halls. Though these originally served different purposes and had different meanings, they could easily be adapted to suit Buddhist purposes.

In some instances, the form of the Indian cave temple, transmitted via Central Asia (Turfan, Tun-huang, etc.), was adopted in China as in Yün-kang, Lung-mên and many other places. But these, too, basically differed from Indian Vihâras and Caitya halls. They are mostly votive chapels filled with huge numbers of sculptures and are not architectural monuments in the strict sense of the word, even

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though their structural elements (beams, etc.) imitated their forerunners in stone, and frequently provide unexpected information about lost details concerning the technique of ancient temple construction. The only Indian free-standing building type still preserved in East Asian temples is the pagoda. Though corresponding to the Indian stûpa, it has, as we will see, also been strongly sinicized.

The basic type of a temple complex³³ described above has naturally been subject to many modifications depending on historical period and particularly on the special teachings, cult practices and disciplines of the various Buddhist schools or "sects."³⁴ This is not the place to describe these variants in detail, but a few points important to the entire temple complex should be mentioned. Of particular importance is the fact that temples may be aligned in an east-west, rather than a south-north pattern. This is the case with those dedicated to Amitâbha, the Lord of the "Pure Land of the West." Their cult halls and Amitâbha's statue face the pilgrim approaching them from the east with compassion and as if emerging from the "other shore." In other cases, the strict axuality and firmly symmetrical order of the buildings could only imperfectly be carried out in the particular location of the sanctuary, since Buddhism tended to prefer remote and mountainous sites. Though in such instances the spatial order was largely determined by the topography, a central axis—even if only an imaginary one—was emphasized and the *via sacra* (in open nature often given larger dimensions) was in every instance retained as the backbone of the entire complex. The total architectural effect could therefore be the result of an attractive, albeit frequently accidental and asymmetrical order determined by the natural features of the site. In precincts composed of largely independent buildings, the effect depends to a large degree on the harmony, distances and dynamic tensions between these individual buildings. The conformity to plan and strictness of arrangement, which is hidden in temples placed in broken terrain, is openly exposed in those temple complexes constructed on level terrain or in the cities, where their compact symbolism of a harmonious world order inspired by the Chinese genius for systematic planning and organization is fully revealed.

Important changes might occur in the mutual relationship and the spatial arrangement of the Buddha Hall and the pagoda—the two types of buildings most important in a religious sense (5*). Both embrace the essential substance of the Buddha. The pagoda holds Buddha relics while the Golden Hall serves as shrine containing the Buddha image. Depending on the weight a school or particular cult practice or historical period placed either on the cult of relics or on the veneration of images, ranking and position of the pagoda vis-à-vis the Golden Hall were bound to change. The oldest temple precincts (ca. 600-750) are preserved in Japan, and still reveal the basic structure of their continental prototypes. In this type of precinct the pagoda is placed on the central axis within the inner precinct in front of the Golden Hall (Shitennô-ji, Ôsaka; and also in the earliest precinct of the Hôryûji, which was excavated during the early 1940s). During the succeeding stage, which followed soon after, the pagoda was placed on the transverse axis of the inner yard, side by side and of equal rank to the Golden Hall (Hôryûji) (1). This is the so-called Kudara ("Korean") plan.

These two main buildings came to be more imposing in their design as the temple precincts themselves began to unfold in ever increasing grandeur. The pagodas not only became bigger but often doubled in number. A solitary pagoda no

longer served as solitary central monument. Rather, we now find a pair of pagodas flanking the center of the temple precinct symmetrically on both sides. As a result, pagodas attained greater external prominence even though their significance declined somewhat in the process of this duplication. At first, the two pagodas remained within the innermost nuclear precinct; i.e., inside the middle gate and the enclosing corridor. They were, however, soon moved to the outside: at first only to a spot between the middle gate and the external southern gate, but later even outside the latter so that their status was reduced to little more than that of monumental door posts (5*).

Though pagodas built in later Japanese temples retained high cultic rank and were objects of intensive veneration, they were reduced more and more to the level of a mere *nobile officium*. Finally, they were omitted altogether or at best retained merely as symbolic monuments or for the purposes of achieving an architectural and aesthetic balance and rhythm, particularly since they no longer served a religious function in the cult of relics. This happened chiefly in the temples of the Zen and Amitābha sects. Neither sect, though each otherwise fundamentally differed from the other, any longer put special emphasis on the veneration of relics and mystic-symbolic rituals.

In China, the pagoda by and large underwent a similar change in its position but more frequently retained a favored position in later times. It remained at the extreme northern end of the temple axis and, whenever possible, on elevated ground or on a terrace. Also popular were groups of pagodas of symbolically significant numbers and arrangements. Pagodas also gained an important new meaning and correspondingly wider distribution in connection with the concepts of geomancy (*feng-shui*). Though grounded in an essentially Taoist universism, geomancy's symbolism was also adopted by the Buddhist temples. Pagodas came, therefore, to be most intimately linked with open landscapes, and graced many places fortuitously as their crowning building. (More on the essence, development and structure of the Buddhist pagoda will follow below.)

The integration of the Founder or Donor Halls into the temple complex was subject to interrelated, yet opposite changes. While officially held to be subsidiary elements, and ranked as mere marginal phenomena in the spatial layout of the precinct, such halls gained a degree of cultic importance, particularly in the Amitābha sects in Japan, where they were shifted to the inner yard and placed adjacent to the Buddha (in these instances Amitābha) Hall of the transverse axis. They even came to surpass the Buddha Hall in size. Founder or Donor Halls also assumed an important position in Zen temples. In Zen, as in Amitābha Buddhism, the human founder of the school or temple, the patriarch or master, had gained an entirely new status. However, in Zen temples the Founder or Donor Halls never became the center of the complex. They remained confined to a temple yard of their own adjoining the central axis (2*, No. 16).

In its overall appearance, a Buddhist temple complex presents itself, as does every architectural complex in East Asia, as expanded over a wide area. The effect of this horizontal expansion is enhanced by the relatively loose, spacious grouping of the individual buildings, so that modern architects may refer to such layout as a kind of system of pavilions; it is, however, primarily conditioned by the limited height of East Asian buildings. Many of the buildings have only one story.³⁵ Even in cases of

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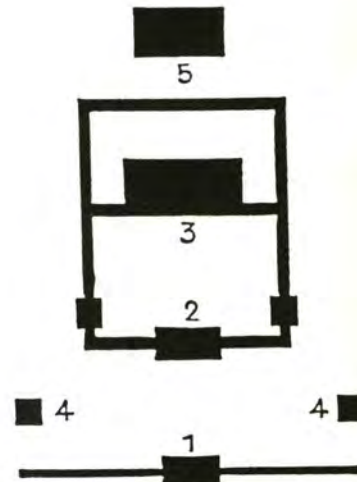
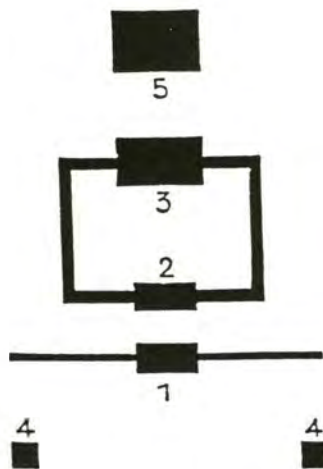
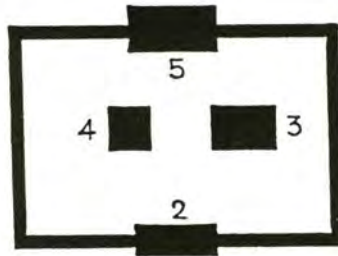
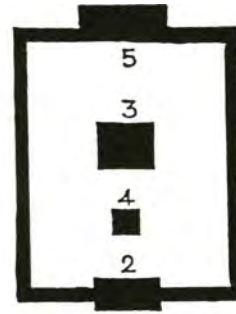
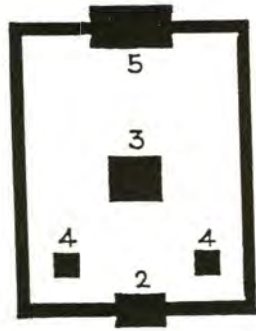
double-roof buildings or even of the rare multi-storied temple halls, width usually dominates over height, but this does not rule out monumentality of appearance, as is demonstrated by the huge halls of some of the leading temples (the Hall of the Great Buddha in the Tōdaiji in Nara for example). This holds true even for smaller buildings, though their monumental appearance is more internal than external.

The generous spatial layout of the temple complexes by itself shows the intent to attain monumentality. In such instances the free space between buildings is not empty but formed space. It contributes to the overall architectural design, and that part of the space which comprises the sacred path is permeated by a dynamic, religiously significant sense of direction. Horizontality of design tends to tie such architectural complexes to the soil. Only pagodas and--to a much lesser degree--the mostly two-storied bell and drum pavilions, are actually buildings of pronounced vertical character. The pagodas, with their slender, proud, and spirited striving for height, enter into a charming interplay with the broadly structured, low, and yet massive halls and walkways in their vicinity. In many instances such architectural groupings achieve a maximum of symmetric or asymmetric balance (1). Pagodas are essentially towering, resting, radiating "signs," three-dimensional monuments in space, and not so much creations of spatial art itself. Hence they represent one of the basic polar motifs of architectural design while the temple complex as a whole embodies the other, the "way," as opposed to the sign.³⁶

The individual halls combine both. As three-dimensional architectural entities and as shrines for housing cult images, they are "signs," i.e., self-contained points of destination and concentration of the cultic progression (of the inner, spiritual as well as the outer "procession"), and constitute the hearts of building complexes. On the other hand, many of them are located along the axial course and may also be regarded as transition zones leading to the adjacent yards and halls. The two cosmic directions, vertical and horizontal, as well as the two categories of space and time are, therefore, most intimately joined in a Buddhist temple, but, in accordance with the expressed religious intent, at the same time also transcended.

The same holds for the forms of movement inherent in the temple: the purposeful movement along the axial path also contains the motif of ascent, the category of height. Circular movement during the ritual of circumambulation is also present, because both this movement and the axial path lead back to their beginnings, since the axial path also implies a "return." This transcendence takes place primarily at the empirical level. Its "ground" and ultimate meaning is to cancel all movement and all directional determination in the "emptiness" of nirvāṇa. The Tao, the "way" of the world and of life, is, according to the *Tao-te-ching*, also the absence of movement, and this is at the basis of all world existence and world events. It constitutes the very essence of the Tao. The sanctuary displays internal movement and yet is also beyond movement. It has its "empty" central point in the figure of the Buddha.

The overall impression and the basic character of the Buddhist temple is revealed in exemplary manner not only in those large complexes found on level ground and in the spacious residential cities of medieval China and Japan, but also in those temple complexes integrated into a mountainous landscape. In the latter



5* Development of the ground plan types of Buddhist temples.

case, however, ground plans evolved which were no longer absolutely symmetric-axial but had their *via sacra* gradually ascend to the mountain top or the innermost recesses of a precipitous valley. They progress from their low-lying and horizontal entrances to the height of the mountains. Their architectural design frequently culminates in crowning a mountain summit, as in the case of the famous four sacred mountains of Buddhism in China (P'u-t'o-shan, Chiu-hua-shan, O-mei-shan, Wu-t'ai-shan), which are dedicated to the four great Bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, Samantabhadra, and Mañjuśrī). Surrounding the empire to the east, south, west, and north, they bestow protection and blessings on it.

But even in cases where temple monasteries blend into densely forested mountain valleys or sacred groves and are almost hidden in them, a marvelous harmony between the natural and human worlds is achieved which is an expression of that closeness to nature and nature mysticism which is inseparable from East Asian religiosity. Many landscape paintings show temple complexes hidden deep in mountain ravines. This location symbolizes their removal to a mist-shrouded sphere of mystic world renunciation. Such immersion into the deepest, most numinous recess of secret inner space is part of the essence of Buddhist or East Asian sanctuaries in general. Every one of them contains within itself such an innermost center which constitutes the point--hidden from casual view--where its very heart is located and which marks both the goal of one's quest and the center point from which everything radiates in an outward direction.

This applies equally to sanctuaries located in cities. They, too, strive for harmony with nature. The trees--in many instances quite old and venerable--in the temple yards, the parks encircling the entire precinct, and the lovingly cared for gardens--large or small--with their quiet ponds, rocks and plants filling every part of the precinct, all create the kind of natural environment which for East Asians and particularly East Asian Buddhists is inseparably linked with sanctuaries and a life dedicated to spiritual goals.

Individual Buildings

Almost every building type which constitutes one of the components of a temple complex may appear on a modest, medium-sized, stately or even grandiose scale while at the same time retaining a certain basic form which is, of course, modified in a variety of ways. In all this we encounter a general characteristic of architectural design in East Asia: the existence of a somewhat limited number of basic forms combined with a tendency to typify and even standardize them (for example, in Japanese residential architecture) but at the same time endow them with a wealth of variations. This keeps them from lapsing into sterile formalism and allows them to achieve a pleasing balance between freedom and restraint.

A temple gate may be nothing more than a wall gate covered by a simple roof. It may also, and preferably, be a portal building resembling a hall, usually with one central and two side passages, built on the principle of an axial center and its symmetrical flanks. These often rather monumental gate buildings usually have a wide overhanging double roof in the manner of temple halls, which they therefore resemble very closely. In most instances, however, their "upper story" and its small circumambient gallery have no practical but only a formal-decorative function. Characteristic for Buddhist temple gates, and East Asian gates in general, are the

inscription tablets, usually placed above the central passage where they are shaded by the upper roof. They proclaim the name of the temple^{36a} in characters either painted in plain black or in color or carved and gilded. These inscriptions were often the work of famous calligraphers or high-ranking personalities, occasionally even emperors, and were done in various calligraphic styles. The donation of such inscriptions was considered a good and pious deed. Many of the other buildings also bear inscription tablets, which usually state their purpose or their religious significance, i.e., "Buddha Hall," "Sermon Hall," "Meditation Hall," etc. In East Asia this custom of displaying the names of buildings on tablets extends far beyond the confines of sacred architecture into the courtly and private spheres.

Temple gates are also very often characterized by the larger-than-life figures of the two gate guardians (Dvarapālas; Erh-wang, Ni-ô; see above, p. 30) which are located on the ground floor to the left and right of the central passage. These threatening guardian demons keep all evil powers from entering and protect the threshold to the temple path which leads the faithful to levels of gradually higher sanctification. Temple gates have been given such prominent features because this passage across the border between the profane-empirical "world" and the sacred-cosmic-meditative sphere of the sanctuary, or between the samsāra and the nirvāna (Buddha) worlds is of crucial importance. Buddhist sanctuaries are often called "Buddha Lands" or "Buddha Kingdoms" (Sanskrit *buddhakṣetra*), i.e., spiritual spheres of a higher order, reached by the faithful through meditation or ritual practices. They were meant to manifest the "Buddha Nature" of all phenomena in its pure form as it manifests itself to the enlightened eye.

We will provide greater detail about the two major basic elements of the temple precinct, the hall and the pagoda, later on. At this point we must reiterate that the two appear in numerous variants, and that there is, for example, no crucial structural difference between a small chapel and a giant monumental hall. Halls fairly similar in external design may nevertheless serve different functions (as shrines for the major cult images or as meeting and lecture halls). The latter, together with the pagoda, constitute the embryonic form of the Buddhist temple, predating in their appearance even the rise of cult images. Those halls and pagodas located along the central axis or aligned with it are typical for a temple precinct and of decisive importance for the overall impression it makes. Since they house the numinous powers embodied in the cult figures (main hall), the relics (pagoda), and the sacred teaching (lecture hall), they rank highest among all temple buildings and therefore are given an especially monumental or decorative design.

Among the buildings of secondary importance serving liturgical purposes are corridors, bell and drum pavilions, or special chapels for the cults of different figures of the pantheon. They "assist" the main buildings. Other buildings are of vital importance for the religious life and the monastic path to enlightenment. These include meditation halls or chapels with their initiation platforms. Finally, some structures serve such routine functions as the residential, economic and administrative activities of the temples or their charitable activities for pilgrims and needy people. These buildings are all given the label "secondary," not because they are of secondary importance in the life of the temple but because they are normally located outside the compact central complex along its central axis. Individual buildings of particular importance may be located on the central dividing line of the

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precinct or close to it. These include residences for abbots and monks, the meditation hall and the refectory (2*).

The bell and drum pavilions (3*/4*)--they should not be called "towers" because they have little resemblance to such structures³⁷--are usually just two-storied buildings with square or almost square bases. The large bell or drum is suspended in the second story. Such pavilions are set apart from the low corridors which often are linked to them by their greater height. They can hold their own against the larger and broader halls because of their slender vertical proportions.

The covered corridors (3*/4*) enclose the individual inner courtyards of the temple precinct in rectangular fashion. They are walled off on the sides facing away from the courtyards but are kept open towards their interior by rows of widely spaced posts. In cases where they are being used to link larger buildings with one another and with their peripheral corridors, they are merely covered on top but kept open on both sides. They serve the important function of walling off the sanctuary--or at least its central precinct--from the outside and of joining it into a world of its own; i.e., of shaping a sacred area or *temenos*, while at the same time subdividing the total complex into individual compartments (precincts, courtyards) and forming "paths" to bind the entire complex together. They serve, therefore, simultaneously as enclosing frame and circulatory tract.

Special chapels generally follow the hall type. Sometimes they are centered buildings with an octagonal plan (8*), but structurally they are still halls and are labelled as such. They are sometimes named "Round Halls" or "Octagonal Round Halls" in order to emphasize their character as centralized buildings, and to exploit both the symbolic value of circles as images of perfection, and the profound and multi-faceted symbolic meaning of the number eight in Buddhism (and in East Asia in general). In building plans, *maṇḍalas* and elsewhere, the number eight stands for the eight directions of the compass and the eight world regions of ancient Chinese cosmology. Octagonal chapels, always of moderate dimensions, frequently form the focal point of a particular temple precinct or courtyard, and--because of their harmonious proportions--constitute a particularly attractive type of Buddhist architecture. In some respects they are related to the polygonal pavilions so popular in China, from which they may even have evolved. Next to them we should mention the pagoda as a particularly important type of centralized building. Pagodas may be square, polygonal or, occasionally, round. But pagodas are not connected with the hall type of building.

With the exception of octagonal chapels, the smaller buildings, as mentioned before, follow the normal form of a hall except in cases where a specific purpose necessitates a special form, as in the case of chapels for the five hundred Arhat (Lohan, Rakan) which are particularly popular in China, though only in relatively late times. To accommodate all five hundred, the usually life-size statues had to be placed on multi-level platforms along walls or on rectangular shelves in the interior of the halls leaving only small aisles between them.³⁸

Another important special building is the repository for sacred scriptures (the complete Tripitaka and other Buddhist literature) which were housed in lacquered boxes on shelves in small chapel-like rooms with a cult figure at their centers. In China, such rooms are often found in the upper stories of hall buildings. A special form of repository is the revolving Sûtra library, usually in the form of a polygonal

shrine. The numerous volumes of canonical writings it contained were considered to have been read, once a full revolution of the shrine had been completed. By completing many turns, an individual could acquire considerable religious merit in a fairly comfortable manner.

The Initiation Chapel--other than in cases of ordinary halls temporarily prepared for this special purpose--is distinguished by a high platform which fills almost the entire inner space and is accessible through steps on its sides. On this platform the consecration of monks of various grades takes place. Such platforms, built of stone, could also be found in a special sacred precinct laid out under the open sky. Occasionally, wooden platforms were temporarily erected in the temple yard in front of the main building and resembled the open stages used for cult dances during major festivals.

Finally, the Meditation Halls were also given special forms to fit special purposes. Externally, these had the appearance of simple halls. Their interior contained an open central space, surrounded on all sides except the entrance side by a raised platform which provided sitting and sleeping space for the monks who spent the larger part of day and night in meditation. Meditation Halls are extremely austere and self-contained. They are congenial to the spirit of Zen Buddhism which developed the mature form of this building type.

The Meditation (Zen) Hall serves also as living quarters--at least during certain times of the day. We will ignore those residential and service quarters and other rooms of the monastery which hold no great significance for Buddhist art (with the exception of a later form in Japan mentioned in the last chapter), but a few comments should be made about the ancient storage buildings. A few examples of these have been preserved in Japan, where they may even have originated. They are primitive block houses built with triangular beams. While the base of these triangular beams forms the smooth interior wall, their top faces outward. The beams touch each other, therefore, only with the edges of their base. During the hot and humid summer, when the wood expands, the gaps between the beams were closed. This prevents or limits the intrusion of moisture dangerous to the contents of the building but allows for the admittance of dry, pure, and preserving air during the dry fall and winter when the gaps reopen.

In the case of the most famous of the buildings of this kind, the Shôsôin of the Tôdaiji temple in Nara, the storehouse contains imperial utensils donated to the temple in the middle of the eighth century and the cult implements used during the inauguration of the huge bronze figure of the Great Buddha (in 752). This treasure of precious articles in pure Tang style, numbering in many thousands, has been miraculously preserved virtually intact. These items are the more precious since they were produced at the height of the Nara period and represent the Japanese version of Tang culture. They may even be largely of Chinese origin. In any event, they provide comprehensive samples of Chinese craftsmanship of the Tang period which, with the exception of ceramics and metal objects, cannot be found anywhere else. The objects consist in part of Buddhist utensils and in part of offerings of secular implements to that temple.

Elsewhere, too, numerous works of Buddhist art from earlier centuries--particularly cult implements, robes, paintings, sacred scriptures and historical documents--have been preserved for no other reason than that they have been

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placed in storage buildings of such primitive yet ingeniously functional construction. The Japanese have always been concerned with the preservation and protection of ancient objects. This is quite in contrast to the Chinese, who have been much more wasteful and careless and occasionally even reckless in handling their cultural legacy, because of their unshaken confidence in the inexhaustible creative powers of their unbroken tradition. Invaluable and irreplaceable treasures, particularly of Buddhist art, have thus been lost to mankind, and we must be grateful to the Japanese that they have preserved so many Chinese works or at least works which have faithfully preserved the Chinese style. (This is the reason why in this book Japanese works seem to dominate in such a seemingly inappropriate manner.)

Japanese temples frequently display another characteristic element: a Shintô shrine, usually of modest size and dedicated to one of the native deities (*kami*) who protects the temple. Such *kami* were regarded as *avatâras* (incarnations or "descended traces") of the Buddhist figures venerated in the temples and as protectors of the sanctuary. They are products of the Buddhist-Shintô syncretism (*honji-suijaku* theory) characteristic of Japan's medieval period and have their counterparts in the Buddha chapels, pagodas, and cult implements which were once part of Shintô shrines but which were banned after 1871 during the great purification of Shintô from all Buddhist accretions.

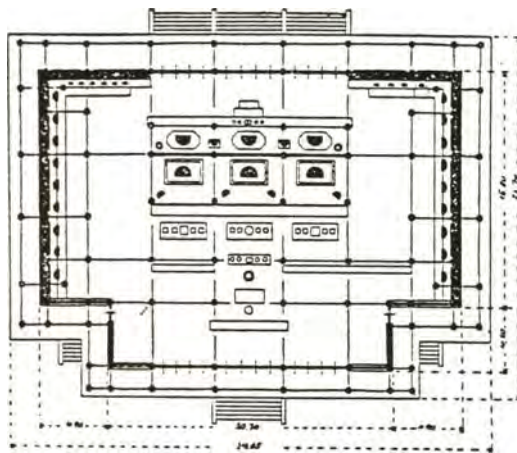
Temple Halls

The so-called "hall," an inadequate Western gloss of the original term,³⁹ constitutes the basic type of East Asian building from which all individual types--residential dwellings, palace halls, temple halls, even the pavilions--are derived. Exceptions include the pagoda, which has a separate foreign origin, the *p'ai-lou* (memorial gate in China), the *torii* (Shintô shrine "gate" in Japan), the tomb complexes which are unique forms of cult monuments, and a variety of structures whose forms are determined by their technical functions, such as bridges, city walls, and other defensive structures.

The basic form of the hall originated in ancient China⁴⁰ and, via Korea, was transmitted to Japan, where it existed side by side and, during the course of time, came to fuse with a similar building type of Malay-Polynesian-Southeast Asian origin--the Shintô shrine and house building, which already existed there. But in the Buddhist sphere, the Chinese hall has always been preserved in nearly pure form, even in Japan, though it was subject to some gradual evolutionary and innovative changes in structure and style. The native Japanese Shintô and residential structures, though influenced in some points by the Buddhist-Chinese design, remained in vital points independent of it. The Buddhist cult architecture of Japan, however, always displayed a distinctly "Chinese" face, because every few centuries, occasionally even every few generations, new waves of cultural influences crossed over from China, and were followed by periods of Japanization of lesser intensity. A description of this Japanese development and of the changes taking place over the centuries within the Buddhist architecture of China itself would require too many details to fit this account. Consequently, we will confine our comments to general and typical features.

East Asian halls (2,3)--as a general building type--owe their shapes essentially to the techniques of wood construction. Though massive stone buildings

can be found in China (but not in Japan) and occasionally may even display such features as tunnel vaults, they remained a marginal phenomenon. The halls are therefore of post-and-beam construction, with widely overhanging roofs, i.e., structures consisting of supporting elements (columns, beams, posts) which are joined at their upper ends by simple or multiple crossbeams over the length and depth of the building. This skeletal structure holds up both the inner roof and the brackets jutting outward in several layers to support the roof overhang (6a-c*/7*).⁴¹ The roof rests on this post-and-beam frame. Because the climate required protection against sun and rain, but perhaps also for aesthetic reasons, the roofs jut out as much as several feet or even yards at a shallow and elegantly curved angle beyond the outermost row of posts. The posts may stand on individual foundation stones or the entire building itself may rise from a stone terrace (3). The latter type is preferred for Buddhist temples.



6a* Main Hall of
the Hsien-t'ung-ssu,
Wu-t'ai-shan, Shansi.

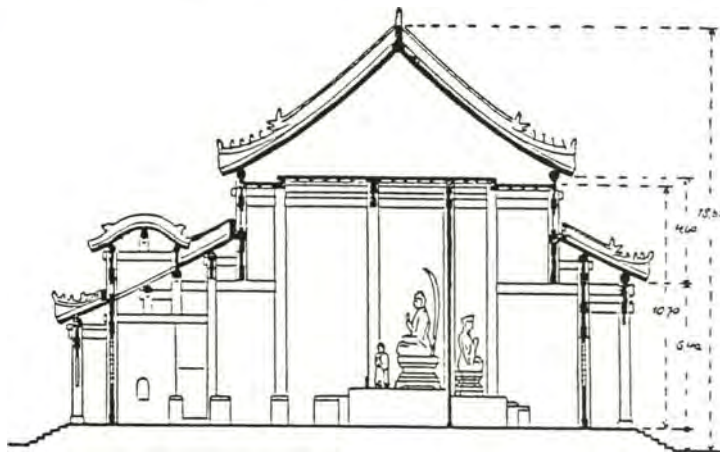
It is characteristic of post-and-beam construction that the walls have no supporting function. They may consist of light brick, of crisscrossed reeds covered with clay, or of a thin layer of boards between the posts. These walls may be present or absent according to need and desire. In most instances they are replaceable by doors and windows (mostly winged doors and latticed windows). In some cases, the entire front of the building—in East Asia normally the longest side and the eave, i.e., not the gable side of the roof—are pierced by doors, thus assuring that degree of communication between inner and outer space so important to the East Asian sense of space. The Japanese house has carried this principle to its extreme point.⁴² In China, solid brick walls play a definite yet usually marginal role. They are normally found along the narrow, gable side of the buildings, i.e., in places which attract the least attention because the viewer ordinarily faces the broad side of the edifice.

China has produced a large number of significant multi-storied halls of highly monumental, but occasionally also surprisingly graceful design. Technically speaking, they are also of wooden post-and-beam construction, and thus represent a remarkable achievement of the carpenter's craft. Many of these buildings were

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intended to house colossal cult statues. Others have special chapels or libraries in their upper floors. In Japan, large multi-storied halls have almost never been built. The huge hall of the "Great Buddha of Nara" is only an enlarged version of the normal type of hall. Most likely multi-storied halls were avoided because of the threats posed by typhoons and earthquakes, but perhaps also because the Japanese had in general no taste for monumental buildings.

The basic plan of a Buddhist temple hall (3; 6a*) consists normally of an oblong rectangle with outer and inner rows of columns. The inner columns are grouped around the "altar"--a platform for the cult figures--and the rectangular inner room designed for the performance of rituals. This room is usually defined solely by the inner row of columns and only in rare instances by walls and doors. The outer columns surround the inner columns on all four sides, but the little space between the inner and outer columns creates a narrow pathway which frequently also has a ritual function; i.e., for the solemn circumambulation of the sanctuary (Skr. *pradakṣina*) which is widely practiced in Asia (and may also be found in non-Asian countries). Outside the exterior row of supporting columns--but still beneath the overhanging roof--space is left for circumambulating the building on the stone terrace or on a narrow wooden veranda attached to the temple hall. These walkways are frequently railed off by beautiful and richly decorated balustrades of stone or wood, often with relief decorations. Steps leading down the terrace or veranda to the temple yard are placed in the middle of all four sides, but are most noticeable on the front side.

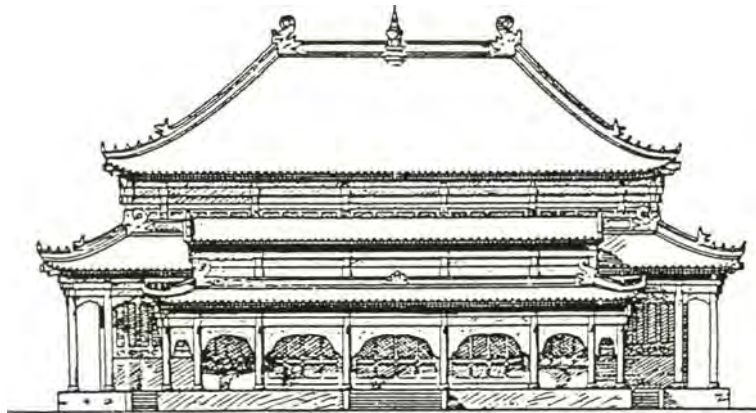


6b* Hsien-t'ung-ssu (Wu-t'ai-shan, Shansi).

This normal plan may be modified in many ways. The interior space may be divided into several subsections, and the corridor doubled in width or widened to some degree. The entire system may even be easily transposed from a rectangular plan into a polygonal plan. Frequently, walls of thin board are placed between the inner columns at the back corners, screening off the altar platform. They have no structural tectonic significance, but provide a surface to hold paintings which,

together with the cult figures, form an iconographic ensemble and provide a backdrop for these figures resembling a wall screen. In China, such walls frequently separate two groups of cult figures; one facing south while the other figures, with their backs to the former group, face north, i.e., in the direction of the figures of the adjacent hall (6b*). For this reason, but also because of its free-standing position and its alignment to the axis running through the entire temple precinct, a temple hall normally also has doors opening to the rear. A hall is, therefore, both a self-contained cult room and a way station along the sacred path. It marks a destination in its own right and a stage along the path to a higher destination.

Temple halls usually stand alone and are linked to other buildings, if at all, only by corridors. They basically unfold in all directions (1, 2, 3), as is demonstrated by the external circumambient path, the doors, and steps allowing access from all four sides, and by the eaves of the roof which protrude equally on all four sides. In this respect the temple hall is a truly three-dimensional entity, but it is also strictly integrated into the axial plan of the total complex and derives its major effects from its relation to this axis, the axis's cross-sections and its flanking courtyards. Still, the most important side is the front (14), i.e., the broad side facing south. The building is primarily designed to be viewed from this side because all its forms and proportions have been formulated with reference to it. The same holds for the cult figures.



6c* Hsien-t'ung-ssu (Wu-t'ai-shan, Shansi).

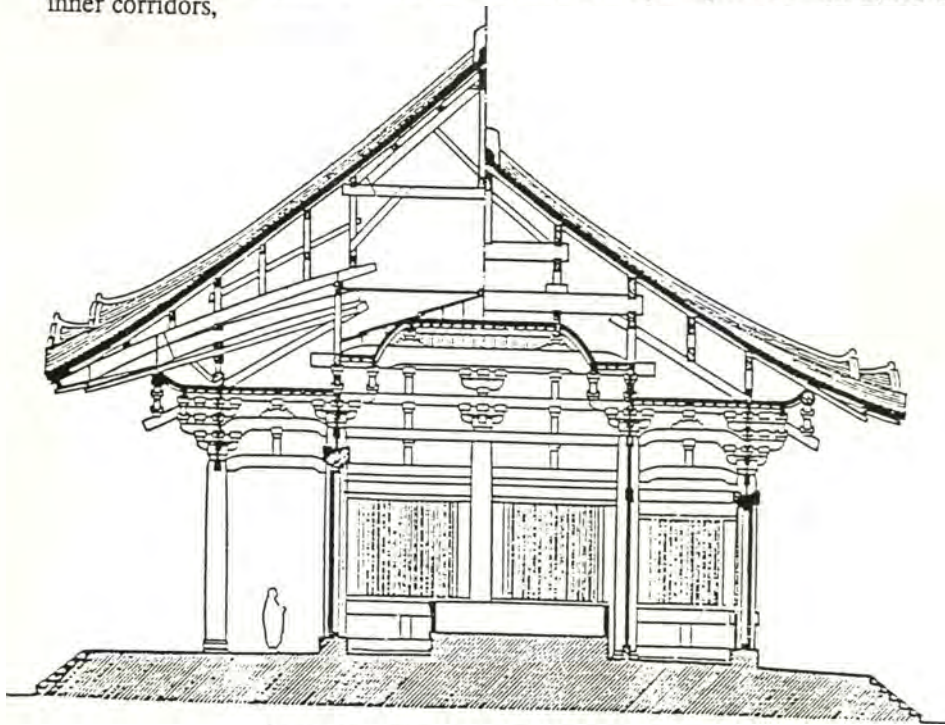
East Asia has, however, never witnessed the evolution of a dominating facade precisely because of the above-mentioned principle that the structure should unfold in all four directions. This principle fuses in a peculiar manner with those requiring orientation along a directional axis and a frontal orientation. Each balances and enters a state of harmonious tension with the other. To a certain degree the building may be called a "sculpture," but not in the sense that massive volumes are molded or stereometric spaces defined by solid surfaces. Rather, East Asian halls of all subtypes are always functionally articulated structures and never

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solid massive buildings (with the exception of the relatively rare massive vaulted buildings).

This is clearly revealed by their ground plans (6a*), which consist almost entirely of supporting rows of posts and, at best, of a few modest walls (6b*/7*). The posts are free-standing. Slightly below their top ends crossbeams are fitted into them. Their capitals appear cube-shaped. Above them the bracketing structure (16-19*, 8) juts out in varying interlocking patterns which resemble the branches of a tree. The bracketing extends to both sides; outward to support the overhanging roof, and inward to help to sustain the inner ceiling (9). The posts carry only part of the load. The major burden, particularly the external one, is handled in a different manner. The inner ceiling rests on strong crossbeams (which frequently bridge the free space) or it is suspended from the woodwork of the roof. The external overhang of the roof is supported by a complicated system of crossbeams anchored high into the woodwork of the roof and by posts standing on them. Frequently, particularly in Japan, the principle of leverage is applied, with the fulcrum on the outermost support (7*).

The interior rooms frequently allow for an unobstructed view of the woodwork of the roof with its impressively strong crossbeams and the tight rows of slanting rafters. Usually, however, interior rooms have flat ceilings which are raised at the center to form a canopy over the holy of holies (6, 9). In China, lantern domes (consisting of squares piled on top of each other across the corners and diminishing in size towards the top), and fake domes are also popular. Genuine domes occur only in the massive buildings mentioned above, but even they are not visible from the outside. Central compartments, frequently raised well above the inner corridors,



7* Golden Hall of the Tōshōdaiji, Nara.

are supported in a manner reminiscent of aisles by the lower post-and-beam framework of the corridors. This also serves a structural purpose. It does not so much deflect pressures from above, as it prevents the high central posts from tilting. At the same time these posts can carry the weight of the lower half of the overhanging roof structure.

It should be kept in mind that we are dealing with a structure evolved from the technique and spirit of wood frame architecture.⁴³ Despite the monumentality it is capable of generating, this structure is always characterized by its light and transparent qualities. It is also typical that the skeleton structure is not, or only rarely, covered up. Rather, it is normally freely exposed and even made use of in subdividing the walls. Since the walls only fit in between the structural elements and are thinner than these, posts and beams are not only prominently visible from the outside, but also from the inside. It may even be claimed that the exposed structure and the pure architectural framework possess *eo ipso* a "decorative" function. The wall surfaces in their proportional divisions⁴⁴ may bestow to the enclosed space and to the entire building a particular rhythm, and their wealth of individual structural elements (crossbeams, roof beams, inner roof structure) and the lavish attention they have received may provide to the eye an attractive interplay of forms.

A special role is played by bracketing. Bracketing is indispensable to provide support for the roof overhang; it is also fully made use of for its decorative potential in a way that is characteristic of East Asian buildings. The illustrations (8, 9; 16*-19*) allow us to forego detailed descriptions. They make evident how complicated but also how logically functional and, at the same time, organic such supporting systems are, and what high artistic charm they exude. More than any other parts of the buildings, the bracketing reflects the changes in style within East Asian architecture. The proportions of the individual elements, their contours, and certain decorative embellishments allow us to date these buildings fairly accurately.

The development of bracketing can best be followed through the Buddhist architecture of Japan since it offers--in uninterrupted sequence--all phases of style from very early times (around 600) until the modern era. Buildings still surviving in China come predominantly from the period of the 15th through the 18th centuries.⁴⁵ Examples from earlier periods are extremely rare in China, making it necessary to reconstruct them from literary and pictorial documents and from Japanese buildings of the 7th to 13th centuries. It remains uncertain how far the latter reflect intermediary Korean and certain specifically Japanese characteristics rather than Chinese prototypes.

The roof itself may be considered the most typical, artistically the most beautiful, and architecturally the most significant element of any building. It imparts a special quality and makes the buildings seem typically "East Asian." There are five basic roof types in East Asian architecture which are used for both Buddhist and other edifices. These are: 1. The lean-to roof, which leans on the wall surfaces (1, 4; 6b*/c*) and is mostly used for the roofs of the lower floor inserted under the main roof of the building or on the open corridors enclosing the buildings; 2. The saddle-roof with gables on the short sides of the building (4*); 3. The hip-roof (3; 6c*), with four sides dropping off from an elongated horizontal ridge following the long axis of a building to all four rain gutters; 4. A special variant of no. 3 is the

pyramid or tent roof (5, 13; 8*, 11*), with all edges coming together in a single apex. This roof form is typical for centered buildings with square or polygonal plans, and so also for pagodas. In the case of round buildings, it assumes the form of a tent roof; 5. A roof called Irimoya by the Japanese (1, 3, 4, 15; 4*) is characteristic of East and Southeast Asia. It results from the fusion of a four-sided hip-roof with a smaller saddle or gabled roof inserted into the former from the top. Two small gables linked by the ridge surmount the lateral slopes of the hip-roof, and from the bases of these gables four roof ridges run to the corners of the eaves. This is an exceedingly decorative, spatially balanced and lively roof form which offers interesting vistas from all sides, and clearly and impressively conveys that "plastic" unfolding of the structure in all directions so characteristic of the temple hall. It joins two elementary roof forms in an ingenious manner to form a harmonious synthesis and thereby intensifies their charm.

A hierarchy exists among the main roof types. The most distinguished of these types, found on buildings of the highest rank, is the hip-roof. Next is the Irimoya (hip-and-gable) roof, also very frequently used for temple halls of important rank. Finally, the least distinguished of them, and found in the simplest buildings of a temple complex, is the saddle roof. This ranking does not, of course, establish an absolutely rigid standard. All five roof types, or at least three or four of them, may be combined in the same building (4), or may be distributed among different buildings of a closed complex linking these various buildings into a larger unit. In both instances a richness of forms is created which avoids any monotony.

Particularly frequent is the combination of the Irimoya roof with a lean-to roof attached at a slightly lower level to all four sides of the structure (2, 4; 4*, 6b/c*; compare 11, 13) to protect both the inner corridor and the outer platform. This roof should perhaps better be identified as a rudimentary hip-roof from which the upper part of the hall with its crowning Irimoya roof emerges, thus creating the impression of a two-storied building. However, the inner room usually rises up to the upper roof (6b*) and only in exceptional cases is there a clerestory (upper wall with windows). To be sure, in China--though very rarely in Japan--there exist genuine two- or three-storied hall structures, but their upper floors are not piled as tightly on top of each other as are the two roofs of the regular double-roofed hall. In cases where multi-storied halls have an approximately square or a polygonal base of modest proportions, they merge into the type of the multi-storied pavilion--erroneously also labelled "tower."

Buddhist temples and other buildings of distinction are usually covered with tiles (2, 3, 4, 5). In Japan we also find attractive, simple, and yet elegant shingled roofs (13, 14) consisting of thick layers of wooden or, preferably, bark shingles. Though the shingled roof originated in indigenous Shintô and domestic architecture, it has also become part of Buddhist buildings. Copper roofs are also known in Japan and particularly in China. The tiled roof is most prevalent. Slightly concave flat tiles and semi-cylindrical hollow tiles are used, with the latter bridging the gaps between the flat ones--a combination popularly called "monks and nuns." The very prominent ribs formed by the round tiles are perpendicular to the eaves. Thus the East Asian tiled roof displays lively surfaces with a glittering play of light and shadows and an attractive shifting of perspectives.

The fully round end pieces of the tiles at the eaves display relief decorations of vine and flower motifs. Lotus flowers are preferred in Buddhist temples, but Chinese characters or other symbols may also be used. These decorative end tiles are important sources for tracing the history of ornaments. Their styles also allow the dating of destroyed buildings at sites where frequently only such tiles or tile fragments have been left in the ground. It is well known that in China such tiles were frequently given a colorful glaze of yellow, blue, green, or purple, but as permission to have colored roofs was a privilege granted by the emperor, silver-grey tiles with their muted gloss predominated. In Japan, which normally has eschewed lively colors in its architecture, only the silver-grey tiles are customary.

The application of painted colors to such structural elements (20*) as posts and beams has been much more subdued in Japan and is largely confined to a warm red and some green, gold-yellow, or white colors, to which gold-plated bronze mountings are added. As a matter of fact, after emancipation from Chinese models, application of color was increasingly abandoned in Japan in favor of a reliance on the beauty of the untreated Japanese wood. Chinese architecture, in contrast, employed much livelier and varied colors, just as it made use of richer decorations of stone, metal, wood and ceramics.

The same difference between the two countries applies specifically to sculptured or molded roof decorations. In China, the roof beams, eaves, and ridges are more often than not populated by all kinds of grotesque figures of animals, demons and deities mostly fashioned of colored glazed ceramics and, in some instances, of metal. In Japan, however, this was almost never the case. Though we may sometimes find decorative tiles with devil masks, bronze phoenix figures (4), fishtail-like end pieces and the like on roof edges, the Japanese did not like to have the austere beauty of roof lines and surfaces crowded with baroque decorations. Although such elaboration appears to have become common in China only in relatively recent times, the enjoyment of a wealth of forms and colors is a trait peculiar to Chinese art as a whole and is only occasionally restrained by a preference for strictness of form and monochrome works (as, for example, in Sung ceramics). A typical roof ornament for Buddhist buildings is the gilded Cintamani Jewel. Cast in bronze and frequently surrounded by a halo of rays, it often crowns the top of the pyramid or tent roof of an octagonal building (5, 8*).

All East Asian roofs share two common features: the pronounced overhang of the roof, which has no comparable counterpart in European architecture; and the curvature of the roof surfaces and edges, which is also virtually absent in other cultures. The overhang was necessary to protect the wooden and clay walls of the buildings and the external corridors from the heavy rainfall in a monsoon climate. An overhanging roof was also desirable as a protection against the strong sun, and because of the preference of East Asians for muted, indirect lighting in the interior rooms. Such extreme overhangs were only possible because wood was used in that particularly skillful way characteristic of East Asian roof construction. To achieve similar effects in stone construction would be unthinkable. The degree of roof projection varies in different regions of China. In the north (6b/c*), this projection is--for reasons of climate and regional preference--much smaller than in the south. In Japan, the roof overhang always juts out considerably beyond the main body of the building (13, 14, 15). The 480 centimeters (measured diagonally, 600

centimeters) of roof overhang of the Chinese Tang-style (middle of the 8th century) Golden Hall of the Tōshōdaiji in Nara (3, 7*) perhaps represents an extreme case since the total length of the hall is not more than about 31.5 meters and its width about 15 meters. But this extreme case shows the capabilities of this building technique and the importance attached to the design of the roof, which contributed significantly to the majestic impression of the hall.

The concave curvature of the roofs of South China is more intense, vivid and inspired than those of China's north where the roofs display a certain heaviness and reserved dignity. The south prefers graceful, dynamic, even baroque forms, whose pointed eave corners rise almost vertically upward. In this respect, too, Japan occupies an intermediate position and has imparted to the curvature of the roofs a peculiar touch.

The difference between the length of the roof and the body of the structure caused by varying degrees of overhang establishes an entirely different artistic relationship between main structure and roof. If the roof protrudes only slightly, the structure appears more massive, its body more prominent and more as an equal partner than in cases where it is almost hidden under the protruding roof and appears to be no more than an unassuming support of this dominant main part of the building. Even minor differences in the relation between roof and building have noticeable effects, as, for example, in the case of the older and later forms of an octagonal chapel (8*).

The curved roof evolved in China only relatively late, most likely not before the end of the Han period, but at the latest very soon after that. Until that time, as revealed by numerous pictorial documents (cf. 9*), we find only straight roofs. But this evolution is not important for Buddhist architecture, which developed fully only during the following centuries. There is no agreement over the reasons which may have prompted the Chinese to design this beautiful but technically difficult roof structure. Clearly, however, it was very important to them. The "tent hypothesis," which claims that this roof form was derived from the nomadic tents of Chinese antiquity, must be categorically rejected. The Chinese have never been nomads, and at least two thousand years had elapsed between this conjectured nomadic period and the appearance of the roof curvature. It is also questionable whether the impact of the dynasties of nomadic origin which ruled China or parts of it could have been that profound.

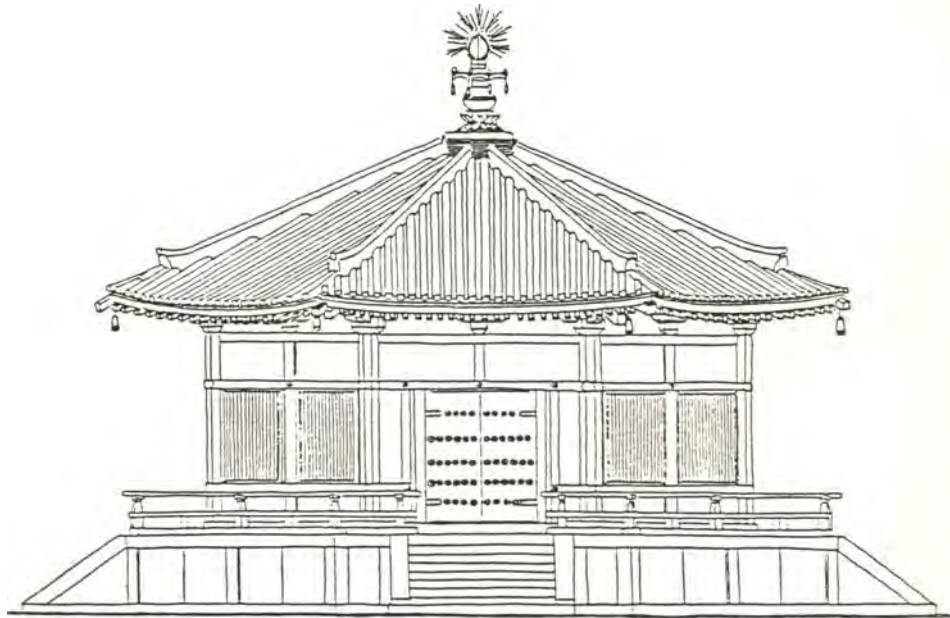
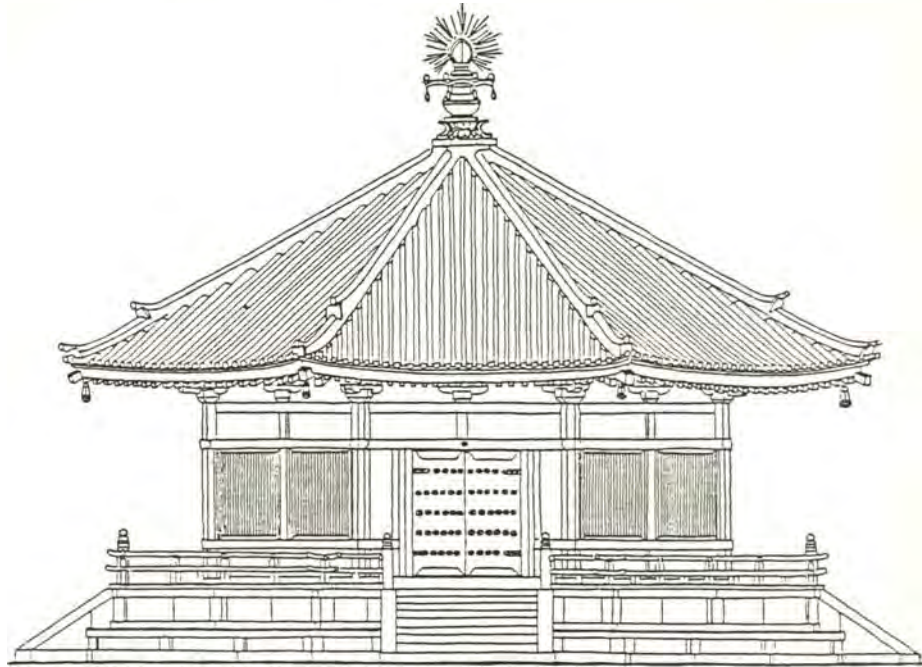
More attention is due to the thesis that the concave curvature of the roof may have been necessary not only to allow for easy drainage during heavy rainfalls (hence the increasingly steeper angles of the upper roof parts) but also to admit sufficient light inside even given the monsoonal climatic conditions which made the protruding roof necessary in the first place (therefore the flattening or even upward tilting of the lower parts and eaves of the roof). In the case of the hip and hip-and-gable roofs—where two curved roof surfaces meet at a right angle at the corners—such upward curvature of the eaves would come about naturally.⁴⁶ It is highly likely that the Southeast Asian and Indonesian native architecture, which still employs rather prominent roof curvatures, influenced the neighboring south Chinese architecture. In the south the climatic reasons for roof curvature were also much more present than in the drier north.

Aesthetic considerations may also have played a part. The desire to create lively and elegant contours--for plastic pliability of forms, for a light roof which appears to float above the equally light post-and-beam construction--are impulses which can also be found in the other arts of China. The unusual beauty of these roofs argues against a purely technical derivation of one of the most ingenious inspirations in all East Asian art. The roof curvature serves also the important artistic function of counterbalancing the predominant horizontality of both the layout of the temple compound and the structure of the East Asian hall. With its leisurely rise from the nearly horizontal overhang, emphasized by the plane of the roof tile spars, the incline of the roof gradually tends towards the vertical. This increases an effect which, though noticeable in the posts, would not succeed by its own momentum.

The gradual transition of the roof's curvature from the horizontality of its lower parts into the more prominent verticality of its upper part mediates between those two major directions, between those cosmic coordinates to which in China all world experiences, ideas, and concepts come to be related. This mediation, this harmonious fusion, obviously takes place in both directions, and it is simply impossible to decide whether such a roof rises from below or descends from above. Its movement may be read in both directions. It seems to float by its own power and appears to rely only slightly on the support offered by the lower structure. This "floating" effect--open to all possible directions, including the four sides or cardinal points--creates a "mean" which defies any particular fixation and constitutes perhaps the most profoundly East Asian and at the same time Buddhist aspect of this roof type. One is tempted to claim that it is impossible to imagine another roof form to be more appropriate for expressing the innermost essence of a Buddhist sanctuary.

This roof protrudes on all sides over the building structure and thanks to its curvature, reaches out beyond itself into free space. Under it can be found the inner room, which is not defined by solid heavy walls. The space shadowed by the roof accommodates, first of all, the circumambient outer corridor resting on a terrace. Steps make it possible to approach, ascend to, and, finally, enter this space (2, 3, 7*). The corridor is located entirely under the roof and closely follows the outline of the structure, but it is also part of the undefined outer space, and thus constitutes the transition between exterior and interior. The building structure opens through several wide doors to this corridor. Thus the interior space, the corridor and the exterior space are all linked. The latter in turn is formed into a temple yard--an enclosed precinct, tightly structured and marked off from the profane worldly sphere outside (1).

Finally, the compartments of the interior of the hall are nowhere abruptly separated from one another. The interior aisle and the sanctuary merge more or less openly into each other (6a/b*, 7*); only in relatively rare cases, where the cult figures are enclosed in a shrine, do we find an adytum, a truly inaccessible sanctuary. Such openness, incorporating all these transitions forms a kind of fluctuating continuum. This is a basic feature of East Asian architectural design and corresponds to a deep layer of the East Asian as well as of the Buddhist world view. The basic idea of non-duality, the "mean," has found here its symbolic expression in space, just as that same cosmic idea contributes to a feeling of all-embracing unity which also forms the background of East Asian nature poetry and painting. This



8* "Dream Hall" (Yumedono) of the Hôryûji near Nara. Octagonal chapel. Upper picture: present state, dating from 1230. Lower picture: reconstruction of the original shape from ca. 739.

design for the hall was certainly not created by Buddhist ideas, but had its origin in similar spiritual attitudes which also came to form part of the Buddhist world view.

No matter how open to the surrounding space the interior of Buddhist temples may be, no matter how much this interior space is integrated into the totality of the surrounding outer space in a variety of ways, and no matter how much the character of the temple's frame structure (and not solid mass) may contribute to the effect described above, this effect should not be regarded as something needed to support a particular function of the building. The interior space of East Asian temples, in contrast to that of Christian churches and Islamic mosques, was not originally intended as a meeting room for a congregation of believers. If at all, it assumed this function only during relatively late times and only for certain denominations with popular mass appeal, particularly those of the "Pure Land of Amitâbha," which created large congregational halls where many hundreds could find room at the feet of gigantic round pillars. Under ordinary circumstances, temples are shrines housing images and chapels for their veneration, for the performance of rituals, and even for the practice of meditation.

Their interior space (6, 7) is, therefore, basically not designed for human beings, but for the Absolute represented in the cult image. A building is erected for and around this cult image. The "congregation," if this is a proper term for the multitudes gathered in the temple yards on the occasion of particular celebrations and festivals, remains outside. Buddhist temple halls, in spite of the great importance attached to their exterior appearance, are nonetheless essentially interior spaces; they are tight shells enclosing the ultimate and innermost center--the "heart"--of the sanctuary. The distinct character and artistic expressive powers of their spatial effects impress much less than those of Christian churches. Buddhist space, in a certain sense, is neutral. It is silent, and leaves the act of revelation to the cult images. In the best cases, it only supports this act of veneration as a subordinate companion, as do the decorations lavished on this space.

Another characteristic feature of all Buddhist temple rooms points in the same direction. The design of light effects is intended to admit light only "accidentally" through openings of low doors and windows. Admittance of light through the upper parts of the structure, which would be quite feasible in a purely technical sense (between two roofs, for example), is almost never employed. The manipulation of light is not an independent factor in the design of the space or a factor intensifying the experience of space. Rather, daylight is as much as possible kept out of the interior, so that a deep, quasi-formless twilight is created. The golden and richly colored cult images are illuminated by the mild light of candles and muted indirect light drawn from the outside. As a consequence, they seem to glow mysteriously, like manifestations from the abyss of "Emptiness."

Spatially as well as spiritually, the cult figures form the center of the temple hall, which exists only for their sake. They are placed on flat pedestals or table-like raised platforms (6, 7, 31), located exactly or approximately in the middle of the hall. These platforms should, therefore, perhaps not be called altars because they are not primarily tables for sacrifices, containers of relics, or something of that sort, but instead represent the central world mountain Sumeru which, according to Hindu mythology, forms the world axis and is surmounted by numerous layers of heavenly spheres. Such daises are therefore also called "Sumeru terraces" (hsü-mi-t'an;

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shumi-dan), and frequently imitate in their tiered structure the strange shape of that world mountain which is believed to be widest at the bottom and the top and narrower in graduated steps towards its waist.

Since the pedestal used as throne of the Buddha figures symbolizes the center of the world, the ceiling of the roof above it corresponds to heaven,⁴⁷ particularly its central area which usually takes the shape of a canopy or cupola (6, 9). Below this level, another canopy (38), richly decorated with carvings, paintings, inlays or gold, is frequently suspended above the heads of the cult images whose halos rise in a gentle tilt at their tops and are fitted into the available space. Canopy and ceiling (or ceiling acting as canopy) signifying heaven are just as widespread and important in East Asia as in Europe. A stylized lotus flower is usually placed at the center of the canopy (37, 38, cf. 33) where it serves as a kind of heavenly mirror image of the lotus forming the Buddha seat, and in some cases even has a metal mirror at its center (37).

The ceilings of halls or chapels are frequently important artistic works of interior design in their own right and display great sculptural variety and high artistic charm, particularly since they are usually divided into numerous small sections and painted with ornamental decorations (6, 7, 9, 38). The focus of the artistic design of such rooms is located in their upper part. The lower parts are kept very simple and draw the eye towards the images with their appurtenances and symbolic adornments and towards the wall paintings iconographically related to them. The richly painted structural elements--posts, beams, ceiling--are occasionally also decorated with lacquer, inlays of mother-of-pearl, and metal. The garments and halos of the colorful figures and the cult implements display a rather narrowly prescribed number of ornamental motifs (20*), predominantly arabesques of vines, leaves and flowers, rosettes, etc., interspersed with angelic heavenly beings, mythical animals or clouds, all presented in a manner designed to create an impression of unity and harmony.

These spaces, at least insofar as they retain the classic forms evolved during the Tang period, convey a sense of unity. Certain basic motifs permeate the entire room and join into a luxuriant, organic fabric of flowing lines and variegated colors full of organic vitality and animated by a flowery beauty of lines which is, however, never purely abstract.

A peculiar coloring technique, called *ungen* by the Japanese and widely used in painting, contributes substantially to this effect. The surface of ornaments (20*) are not colored uniformly, but instead are divided into several parallel or concentric stripes. In a number of graduated shades moving from dark to light, they are colored with varying degrees of intensity so that they merge imperceptibly into each other. For example, moving from the outside to the inside, the petal of a flower would be colored white, light pink, dark pink, red, purple, and dark blue; or white, pale green, light green, dark green, and black. In some instances two such graduated scales of colors may be found on one and the same ornamental object. With the help of this technique, which is also regularly employed in cult paintings (109), the impression of an intricate brocade pattern is achieved. At the same time a certain life-like three-dimensional effect results from this shading of colors. Plant forms and even the more abstract cloud motifs are thus made to appear as organic entities surging with vitality. The gentle transitions between the stripes of color

prevent any harsh clashes and vigorous contrasts, and thus approximate the colorful but always harmoniously blended interplay of colors found in nature. Yet this happens not in a naturalistic fashion but by means of a free, almost musically imaginative play of colors.

This luxuriant, almost confusing, wealth of colors and forms is further enhanced by jewelry consisting of carved figures and ornaments. In the midst shine the cult figures--Bodhisattvas and, above all, Buddhas whose plain golden surfaces glow in dignified quiescence. The very absence of the glittering play of ornaments and the ultimate simplicity and silence of their "Emptiness," beyond "form and color" generate such a powerful impression precisely because of the expressive power of this extreme simplicity. The statues, their accompanying figures and the wall paintings form an iconographical whole. The larger wall surfaces are frequently adorned with large paintings depicting Buddha figures and Buddha groups (21*), Bodhisattvas and other sacred beings, "paradise" scenes, *maṇḍalas* (compare 7), etc. Occasionally, even the posts marking the innermost space are painted with such figures (6, 7). All join to form a large *maṇḍala* in whose plan even the structural elements of the hall may participate as symbols of the dimensions of space.

Information about such components as the original arrangement of the wall paintings, the scrolls used during certain rituals, the wall screens, portable altars and cult implements may be obtained from old pictures which show all of them in the organic and functional relationship prevailing during cult performances. Japanese illustrative picture scrolls (*emakimono*) of the medieval period are particularly valuable as sources for viewing and understanding the interior decoration of such temples.

From the classic types of the T'ang period which spread throughout East Asia and which have been preserved in a few examples in Japan as, for example, the Tōshōdaiji near Nara (3), or can still be reconstructed, temple interiors changed in two opposite directions. In China, there was a move towards an ever increasing wealth of decoration until this lavishness was so overdone that its vulgar splendor overloaded and smothered architectural structure. In Japan, however, except for individual cases imitating the Chinese pattern, the architectural structure came to be even more openly displayed in its unadorned, pure form. It was allowed to manifest itself vigorously and to reveal its natural decorative properties, particularly during the Kamakura period.

Even in Japan, only a few temple halls have survived the centuries since the flourishing period of Buddhist art in their original and complete form. In China still fewer have survived. For this reason we should be thankful for surviving sculptures contemporary with the lost architecture. These, together with a few contemporary paintings and utensils, give us a sense of what the original ensembles in their entirety may have looked like. Because the entire ensemble was a truly comprehensive work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) imbued with unearthly splendor and an aura of mysterious sacredness leading ultimately to Emptiness and Nothingness, individual works of art can only be truly understood in the total context of this religious world of ideas and moods and with reference to the particular artistic forms and atmosphere responsible for presenting them and generating their profound impact. This is especially true for the cult images which--all too often stripped of their pedestals and halos--are viewed by us in the cold and pathetic

loneliness of bare rooms built perhaps centuries later, or even worse in the sterile atmosphere of museums (compare 27 with 28).

The minute details of the rich decoration of the temple rooms are not the only components serving the purpose of veneration of these cult figures. These rooms truly come alive during the cult performances, their effect heightened by Sûtra recitations, the sound of bronze bells or gongs and, above all, hymns sung by a choir of priests. These rites are further enhanced by the burning of incense and of the most beautiful and simplest gifts of flowers placed day in and day out even in the most modest chapels and on the smallest domestic altars.

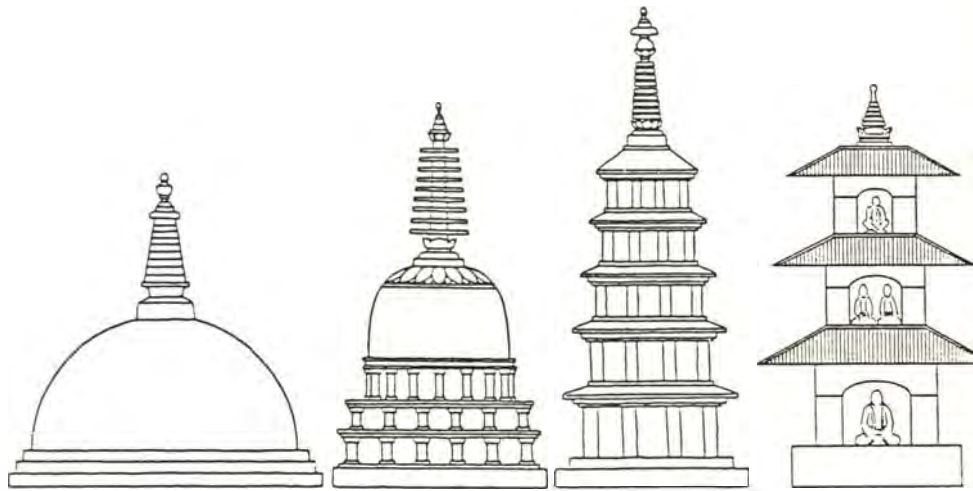
Pagodas

The pagoda, the "most sacred of Buddhism's sanctuaries" (de Groot), evolved from the ancient Indian, pre-Buddhist stûpa,⁴⁸ which perhaps is a form of tomb monument of high antiquity similar to the tumulus type found in many cultures. The ancient Indian princely tomb is a large, hemispheric hill rising from a low base and topped by a small ornament consisting of a pole holding up one or more flat umbrellas, the symbol of nobility. By very early times this tomb had already evolved into a type of memorial monument and was adopted by Buddhism as an important sacred symbol, originally even as the focal point of a sanctuary. It served both as monumental tomb or reliquary for the mortal remains of the (or a) Buddha and other holy personalities and as marker at the most important sites of Śākyamuni's earthly activities: the place of his birth, the Bodhi tree under which his enlightenment took place, the site of his first sermon, and the spot where he entered into parinirvāna; i.e., the final, perfect nirvāna. The stûpa has always played a central role as symbol of parinirvāna and therefore of the absolute state of salvation.

The close link between the stûpa and the sacred person of the Buddha, i.e., any Buddha, and the relics representing him has been maintained until the present. The pious early sponsor of Buddhism, Emperor Aśoka (B.C. 274-237/232) reportedly had 84,000 stûpas erected over Śākyamuni's relics, which were scattered throughout the empire (the number 84 having symbolic meaning). The pagoda later became an almost indispensable part of any temple or monastery and, strictly speaking, each should house a relic. But this is by no means true in every instance, even though sacred texts and formulas--as part of the world-body of the Buddha--are included in the concept of a relic (śarīra), and may bestow on a pagoda their numinous substance. Stûpas, and later also pagodas, were venerated by the ritual of a circumambulating procession (pradakṣiṇa) and a wide variety of sacrificial offerings and acts (pūjā).

Indian stûpas could be free-standing structures like those which can still be seen in their original, exactly reconstructed form in Sāncī (particularly stûpa I, 3rd-1st centuries B.C., with its 18-meter high tumulus) or could form the center of a cult hall. East Asian pagodas by no means appear only as separate buildings but also in the form of free-standing central pillars in cave chapels (Yün-kang, et al.) which can be circumambulated. We also find pagodas in a variety of sizes and shapes inside temple halls or private rooms, where they are used as shrines housing statues, as reliquaries, incense vessels, or votive offerings. Both inside and outside temple complexes, pagodas may be found serving as grave markers, small chapels, posts bearing inscriptions of Sûtra texts or symbolic letters (Siddham). They also appear

in Chinese and Japanese gardens. Pagodas may be regarded as ubiquitous symbols of Buddhist religion in general. Their numerous special and derived forms cannot be reviewed in detail at this point. Many of these forms resulted from exaggeration of one or the other of the pagoda's essential features at the expense of others.



9* Development of the pagoda from the Indian stûpa (schematic).

The formal evolution of the hemispheric tomb monument into a towerlike pagoda had already begun during pre-Christian times in India. This is proven by surviving stûpas in the Caitya halls (in Bedsâ, for example, around 175 B.C.; in Kârli during the first century B.C.) and by representations in reliefs. Of particular importance is an inscription describing the stûpa tower erected by the pious emperor Kaniska (reigned 78-ca. 100, or 128-ca. 150, or 144-ca. 166 A.D.) which, together with its thirteen-story wooden base above a square foundation, is reported to have reached a height of 200 to 300 meters. Its foundations, measuring ca. 87 meters across, have been found.

On the basis of such inscriptions and from pictorial representations found in the early Buddhist art in China, as, for example, those in the caves of Yün-kang (5th century A.D.), we may surmise the following stages in the evolution of the pagoda (9*). The multi-layered base of the stûpa was stretched upward. The horizontal layers resulting from this process were faced with pilasters and came more and more to resemble the stories--usually odd numbered--of a tall building. The top element also became more elongated by being given a larger number of discs or rings (frequently nine). Ultimately, this resulted in a slim, pointed top element, measuring about one-third of the total height. In a reverse process, the original main body of the stûpa, the hemisphere, shrank in size until nothing more remained than a rudimentary, barely visible, hemispherically shaped object resembling an overturned flat bowl at the base of the top element of the pagoda. The top of the

pagoda was occasionally crowned by a canopy-like disc reminiscent of the umbrella ornament of the ancient stûpa. At its very apex was placed a Cintâmani Jewel.

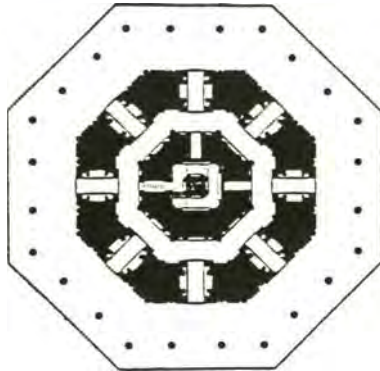
Other changes took place in addition to this increase in height. The form of the base, originally round, had already begun to undergo changes in India. In East Asia it became predominantly polygonal or square. The cornices which had appeared in these lower parts of the structure accompanying the walls and "stories" finally assumed the form of roofs which, depending on the building material--stone or wood, or both combined--protrude more or less prominently. The final result of these three metamorphoses (stretching, alteration of base, evolution of cornices and roofs), whose internal logic we will clarify later, is represented by the Japanese square pagodas with their overhanging roofs and high top ornaments (1, 11*). These are based on certain Chinese prototypes and represent in every respect the opposite pole to the ancient Indian stûpas, though remaining essentially the same type of building: a free-standing, centrally located, "sculpted" relic and memorial monument, venerated by ritual circumambulation and other such ceremonies because it contained the metaphysical essence of the Buddha and the Buddha world through the physical or symbolic presence of relics.

This surprisingly logical evolution did not, however, take place in an entirely endogenous fashion. No pagodas of the "East Asian" type were built in India. It even remains open to question whether Kaniska's towerlike structure already so closely resembled a pagoda that its shape needed only to be copied and handed down. It may also be questioned whether the transition from the round Indian stûpas to the storied towers rising on a polygonal or square base can, as is generally assumed, be traced to protective structures erected over stûpas and other sacred objects. In any case, the decisively new prototype appeared for the first time in East Asia rather than in India. Chinese architecture is bound to have contributed something to its form. One ancient Chinese building type which appears a likely candidate because it was the only towerlike structure to exist in China, was the multi-storied watch tower endowed with a rectangular or square base. With its widely overhanging roofs and encircling small galleries in each story this building appears in pictorial representations and clay models of the Han period. Multi-storied pavilions, usually rising above a polygonal base, are related to these towers and have always been prominent in Chinese architecture. It therefore appears possible or even likely that the East Asian pagoda is the result of a synthesis between the Indian stûpa--already being stretched into a shape resembling a tower and articulated into stories or at least layers--and this Chinese type of tower.

The oldest depiction of the Chinese pagoda available to us can be found on reliefs in the cave temples of Yün-kang and Lung-mên (5th-6th centuries; cf. 9*), where the square storied tower with widely overhanging roofs is already fully developed. Its beginnings are, therefore, most likely to go back even further. In China, this type has been developed in highly different ways, including regional variants. Numerous transitional forms relate the stûpa-like shapes (particularly for smaller pagodas serving as grave markers, incense holders, or relic shrines) to the tall, multi-storied tower-like structures.

Storied pagodas display a strong tendency to have polygonal bases. Moreover, these polygonal bases have so many sides that they approach the circular

form of the Indian prototypes. Particularly in the case of older pagodas (Sui and Tang periods), they reveal a tendency toward a curved, parabolic overall contour reminiscent of Indian forms (*Śikara*) (10). Most Chinese pagodas are built of brick but may be embellished by pieces of sculptured stone and are occasionally even covered with richly colored glazed tiles. Medium sized or smaller pagodas are also often made entirely of stone or metal (iron, bronze); this also applies to miniature pagodas of stone, crystal, wood, terracotta, or cloisonné.



10* Pagoda Liu-ho-t'a near Hangchou.

The most monumental Chinese pagodas, however, are built entirely either of bricks, in which case they have only small cornice-like protruding rooflets, often with stone imitations of wooden brackets, or have only an inner brick core surrounded by an outer ring of wooden galleries and widely protruding roofs. The ground floor is sometimes noticeably taller than the upper floors, which are frequently packed so tightly atop each other that they should be more accurately labelled ring zones (10). The buildings are always topped by a mast to which several discs or rings of stone or metal are attached (cf. 1, 13, 9*, 11*). From the top of this mast are (or were) suspended chains extending to the corners of the uppermost roof with bells attached. Their sound, triggered by every breeze, was designed to proclaim the sacred words of the teaching far and wide. The same purpose was originally served by having pagodas illuminated by numerous lamps, since pagodas were regarded as "Lighthouses of the Doctrine."

Most Chinese pagodas have a massive central core which extends all the way to the top. Around this core, but still inside the outer wall of the pagoda, staircases are attached, spiralling upward in clockwise fashion for the purpose of ritual circumambulation. Sometimes these cores are hollow, and house at their center a free-standing Buddha which can be circumambulated. Small, tunnel-like corridors lead from this central hollow core to the four or eight sides at each floor level (10*). Additional corridors, niches, or even small chapels for Buddha statues or reliefs may be carved out of the massive body of the building. The pagoda is clearly a fully three-dimensional entity unfolding to all sides from a center or core. Both are closely confined and frequently literally closed off, as pagodas contain no empty space per se, but only contain hollowed out, i.e., quasi-sculpted space.

The core is formed by the Buddha statue or the central pillar which, rising from the foundation, soars the entire height of the building and carries at its end the top decoration. The relics are usually contained within this central pillar. Four Buddha images, attached to it at the four cardinal points, face the outside world through the radial corridors emanating from the pillar. The Buddha statue, or the Buddha-body in the form of relics (physical or spiritual, i.e., Sûtra texts and sacred formulas) may be substituted for the core pillar and have the same symbolic meaning. From this core or heart encapsulating it, "Buddha nature" radiates in all directions into the world and dispenses its blessed powers everywhere. For this reason, many pagodas also have relief figures of Buddhas on the outer surfaces of their walls. These are the Buddhas of all worlds revealing themselves in meditative-visionary acts.

Chinese pagodas display an extraordinary variety of forms. All of these, however, can be traced back to a single basic type; all are composed of certain common elements and observe strict rules. These rules apply, for example, to the number of the polygonal sides and the floors. With rare exceptions pagodas have an even number of sides but an uneven number of floors, and, correspondingly, of rings at the top. The even numbers are based on the linkage of the pagoda to the world directions and cosmic cycles. The four cardinal directions and four lesser directions total eight. Subdivided further, they become sixteen. When related to the phases of the moon and constellations of the stars, they become twelve. The fact that the vertical structure, which represents the world axis rising to the sky, is given an uneven number of floors--3, 5, 7, 9, 13--is the result of its relationship to the yang principle, i.e., heaven, sun, height, light, creative-positive principle. Even numbers correspond in Chinese cosmology to yin, i.e., the earth, moon, depth, darkness, receptive-negative principle.

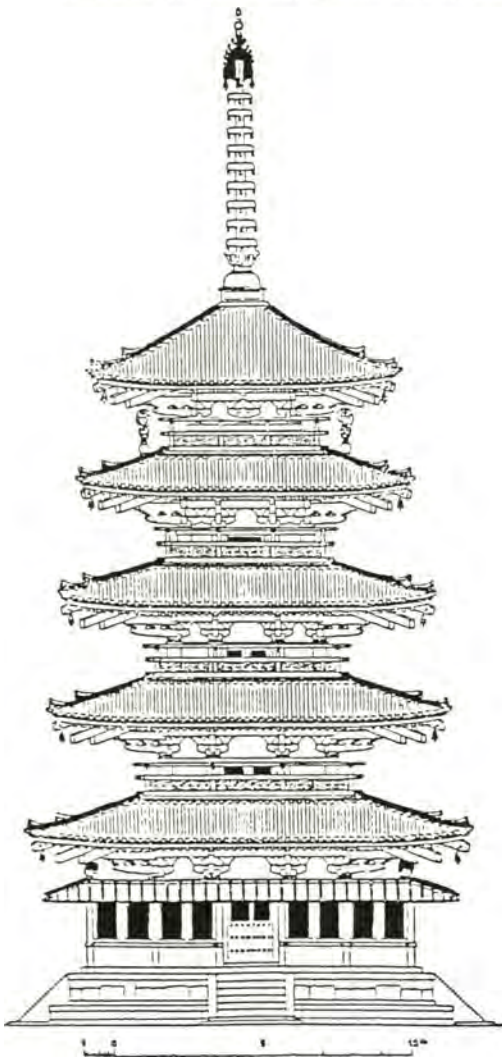
Within this cosmic system, and especially within Taoist geomancy (the theory and practice of *feng-shui*, "Wind and Water"), the pagoda has gained a profound significance far beyond the Buddhist sphere. Many pagodas in China are designed to exert a favorable influence on the *feng-shui* relations of a certain locality or of an entire region by virtue of the bliss radiating from them; hence their harmonious integration into a great variety of landscapes, which were frequently enhanced, completed and crowned by them.

Japanese pagodas, on the other hand, do not have this extra-Buddhist significance, or have it only indirectly, because of the general beneficial effect any Buddhist sanctuary is believed to have on its surroundings. In all other essential features, however, they follow the Chinese model, but retain distinct special characteristics of their own.

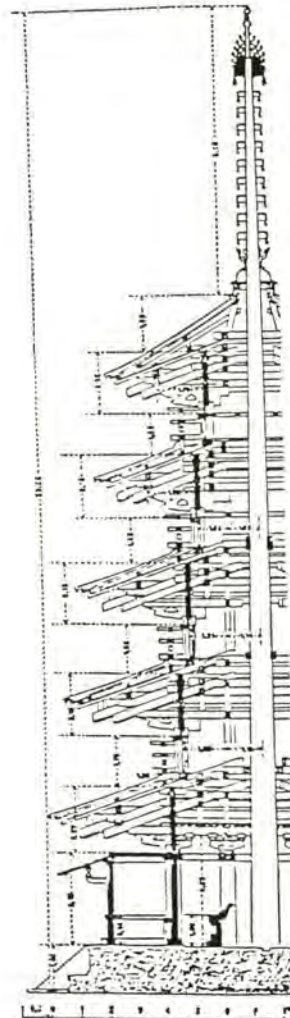
It appears that during the period when Chinese Buddhism first entered Japan, during the 6th-8th centuries, a particular pagoda type was adopted in preference to all others. This type may have been more common or influential at that time in China or in that region of China which was the main source of Japanese Buddhism in this period. It reached Japan either via Korea as intermediary⁴⁹ or by a direct route. The dominant form was a storied and galleried pagoda built exclusively of wood (1, 11*, cf. 11), with a square base and most often with five, but frequently with three, or occasionally seven or nine stories, and with widely

protruding roofs. Such pagodas were crowned by a high bronze top, usually with nine rings and a kind of halo and one or two Cintâmani Jewels above the latter.⁵⁰ It should be noted that Chinese pagodas of this type still found today were built much later. They have massive brick cores which, however, are never found in Japan. Polygonal pagodas also existed in Japan, though apparently rarely and exclusively with an octagonal base. Only one such example has survived.

To erect polygonal buildings in stone or brick was easy, but to build them in wood--the only material employed in Japan--was much more difficult. A certain Japanese aversion to stone or brick architecture may have played a part in all this, but it was highly characteristic of the spirit of Japanese culture for the Japanese to have selected only two or three pagoda subtypes from the rather wide variety available in medieval China and to have never significantly diverged from them.



11* Pagoda Liu-ho-t'a near Hangchou.



12* Pagoda of the Hôryûji near Nara.

Despite their eagerness to learn and readiness to embrace Chinese models, the Japanese always retained a selective distance from their mentors. The Chinese models for these main types of Japanese pagodas must be among the earliest to have evolved, because we already find them depicted in the Yün-kang and Lung-mên reliefs (5th-6th centuries), even though perhaps in a simplified form (9*). A mere fifty to one hundred years later, the highly complex pagoda of the Hôryûji near Nara (1, 11*) had already been erected in its fully developed form, and this type has never been substantially changed or surpassed.

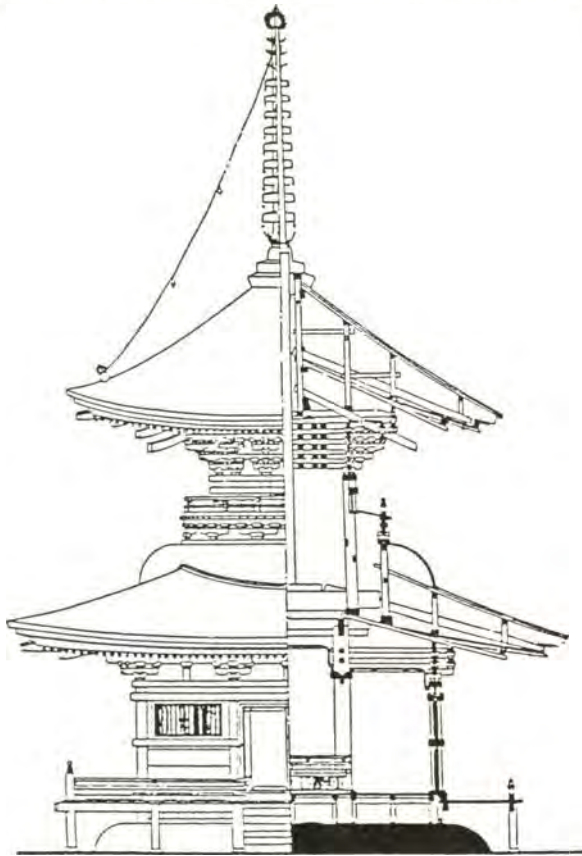
The most important distinctive feature of the Japanese wooden pagodas is their central or "heart" pillar (12*). It is likely that this pillar structure was not invented in Japan or Korea, but was borrowed from China, where it was preserved only in rudimentary form. Comparable to a gigantic mast, the heart pillar stands on a foundation stone lowered deep below the surface. Its primary functions are to hold the very tall and very heavy bronze ornament at the top and to relieve the wooden structure of that ornament's weight by shifting it to the foundation stone. The square or octagonal stories which rise above the ground story with its solid wooden posts are not structurally attached to the central pillar at all. They encircle it and allow it sufficient room so that its light swaying movements during typhoons or earthquakes do not threaten the entire complicated structure.⁵¹ Such pagodas have therefore been able to survive even serious catastrophes for many centuries in remarkably good shape. Lightning and fire have been their real enemies.

The diagrams show their structure in detail. The stories are layered in strictly repetitive patterns slightly tapering in the upper stories. They are overshadowed by very widely protruding and elegantly curved roofs which are usually covered with tiles or shingles, and less frequently with copper plates. All the upper floors are quite low and are never accessible, through staircases. Their interiors are a confusing array of beams, posts and rafters. Only the ground floor of the pagoda is accessible. It forms a narrow, yet intimate and carefully fashioned chapel room, with four Buddha figures or groups of figures surrounding the central pillar on all sides. The walls and posts of this room are covered with paintings of the many figures of a maṇḍala or with other figures from the pantheon. The very small exterior wall surfaces frequently display painted Buddha figures which correspond to the reliefs found in Chinese pagodas (these paintings have vanished almost everywhere, but can be seen in old illustrations). The function of radiating from a central core and the "identity" of building core, relic, and Buddha figures are the same as in China because the relics--almost like seed kernels covered by several layers of precious vessels--are normally placed in a hollowed-out part of the foundation stone from which the heart pillar arises. These relics may occasionally also be found at the top of the heart pillar in the hemispheric element--a vestige of the ancient stûpa or tumulus--or in the crowning Cintâmani Jewel at the top. In any case, they are always located at a vital point of the building.

In addition to the multi-storied tower-like pagoda there exists in Japan--and very likely also once existed in China--a special type referred to by its Japanese name as the Tahôtô (13, 13*). *Tô* (Chin. *t'a*) means stûpa, pagoda; *tahô* (Chin. *to-pao*) corresponds to the Sanskrit word *Prabhûta-ratna* ("many treasures"), and refers to the name of that primordial Buddha who, according to one of the basic texts of

Mahâyâna, the Saddharma-a-pundarîka-Sûtra (Fa-hua-ching, Hokkekyô, "Lotus of the Wonderful Law"), appeared seated in a precious stûpa and granted the Buddha Śâkyamuni the place at his side (Chapter 11; compare the frequent occurrence of a pair of sitting Buddhas in Buddhist sculpture). This derivation belongs to the "open," the generally accessible, Buddhist teaching.

The hidden teaching, the so-called esoteric Buddhism, traces this pagoda type to the Indian "iron stûpa." The patriarch Nâgârjuna (second century A.D.)--the originator of the fundamental Mahâyâna teaching of the Middle Path with its central concept of śûnyatâ (emptiness) and its basic assertion of the non-duality of samsâra and nirvâna--is said to have fervently venerated this pagoda for seven days.



13* Tahôtô. Ink on paper.
Ishiyama-dera near Kyôto.

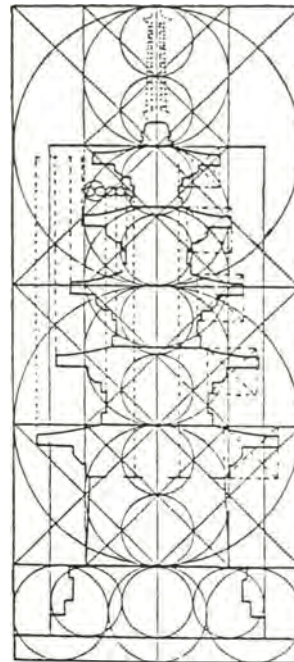
As a consequence, he was permitted to enter it and thereupon received a revelation of the ultimate truth from the sacred figures residing inside the stûpa. All this apparently reflects a meditative and visionary experience. From about the 8th-9th centuries on, the application of the term Tahôtô in esoteric Buddhism to this stûpa and pagoda form reflects perhaps a later stage. It is frequently called simply hôôtô, treasure pagoda, with reference to the "jewel" of the true teaching. It has become the mystical symbol of the ultimate truth gained by meditation which is also embodied in the figure of the Âdi-Buddha Vairocana whose image--surrounded by

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four other Buddhas--always occupies the center of such pagodas (6). This pagoda's shape, as indicated by the legend mentioned above, was more reminiscent of the ancient Indian stûpa than of the storied pagoda. On a square, lower roofed structure, which at times encloses a circle of inner posts, rises the upper part of a flattened hemisphere covered with smooth white plaster. This element is derived directly from the hemispheric body of the Indian stûpa. Above it, on a round "neck" with a small non-functional gallery, rests the widely overhanging upper roof with its highly complicated bracketing-and-rafter system which follows the transition from



14* Tahôtô: Ink on paper.



15* Korean stone pagoda from Paekche (Kudara), ca. 7th century.

circle to square. The roof and its crowning ornament, consisting of a tall mast, have the normal shape. The central pillar begins only above the chapel in the "lower floor," which, in fact, is the only floor. There the central Buddha figure, placed on its "Sumeru mountain" pedestal, takes the place of the pillar--a fact which presumably is to be understood as an actual physical substitution.

Older pictures (for example, the well-known painting "Nâgârjuna Opening the Iron Stûpa" in the Fujita collection, Ôsaka⁵²) and, above all, the forms of the Tahôtô used as cult symbol--be it as relic shrine, tomb marker, Vairocana symbol in mandalas and elsewhere⁵³--display beneath the single roof an openly visible cylindric body with doors (14*). The broad, square form of the lower part may have evolved later, and perhaps only in Japan, probably not before ca. 1000 A.D. or still later. This may have necessitated the addition of another roof. The lower part, including the roof, should perhaps be regarded as having been created for cultic (circumambulation) as well as for climatic-technical reasons. Designed to protect the wall of the originally round central body, it rendered that body superfluous.

Below the simulated "dome" remained only a group of posts, arranged in a square or circle, which forms the inner ring of the chapel. (Some experts also tend to explain the transformation of the Indian stûpa into a four- or multi-cornered tower as the result of a fusion of the stûpa with a protective structure.) In this manner, a building type came into existence which, though not or no longer found in China, is represented in Japan by a number of outstanding albeit relatively late examples (from the Kamakura period and later) which rank among the most distinct and charming creations of East Asian architecture.

The architectural effect of a Buddhist temple complex is primarily determined by three factors: the disposition of space and the rhythm of the entire complex; the large hall buildings; and the pagodas (1, 4*). Of these three, only the pagodas achieve their prominent role by emphasizing the vertical dimension in contrast to the wide, massive and earthbound effect of the other buildings. This vertical effect is accomplished through their extremely focused, almost pointed, pillar-like shape which, in turn, focuses the structure toward an innermost core from which its spiritual energy radiates outward. This characteristic feature is joined by a second; a seemingly effortless surging effect comparable to the flight of a bird. This effect is achieved through the slender shape of the tower-like structure punctuated by its roofs and, finally, through the pagoda top which seems to aspire to ever greater heights. However, this vertical surge is, in turn, restrained by numerous horizontally arranged elements, so that dominating vertical and retarding horizontal lines are brought into harmony with each other.

This proud, yet dignified balance between a thrusting vertical and a restrained, radiating horizontal quality is found in almost all pagoda types. However, great differences mark their individual character and temperament. Even within the Chinese tradition, pagodas came to display a variety of qualities: some are solid and massive, others graceful and slender (both qualities carried almost to their extremes). Some appear austere and monumental, others playful and decorative. Many of the most graceful, lavishly decorated pagodas were built during later centuries, and found sympathetic response on the part of Europeans practicing the chinoiserie of the Rococo style which shared similar tastes. Pagodas also reflect the differences between northern and southern China by being stricter and more austere in the north and more lavish in design in the south. But they all share common features (10, 11) which distinguish them clearly from Japanese pagodas. They impress one as being more "plastic," as if modelled and sculpted from a manipulable, homogeneous mass. We leave unanswered the question whether the choice of brick walls and of hewn masoned stone as preferred building materials is the cause or effect of this general appearance.

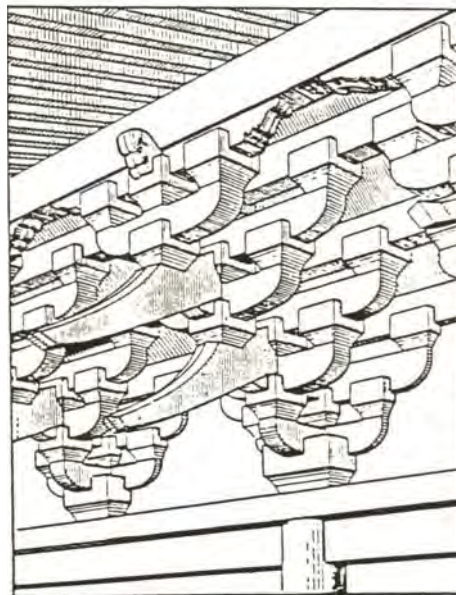
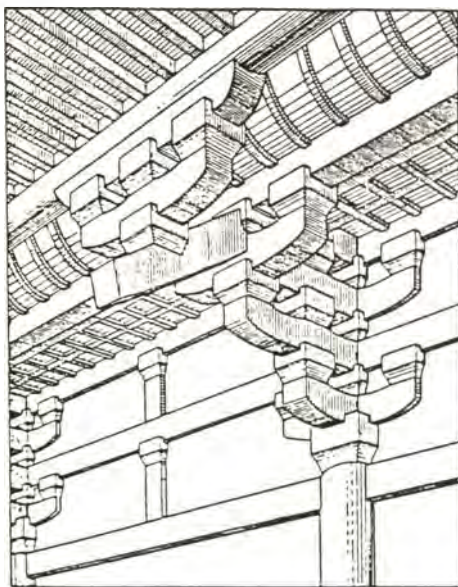
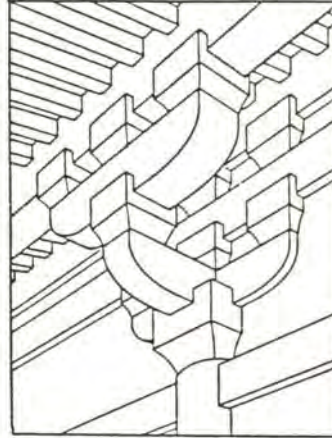
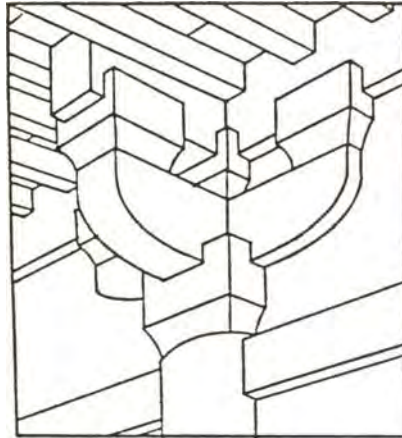
Japanese pagodas (1, 12) are bracketed, jointed and structured buildings displaying a varied and highly differentiated articulation of component elements. With their stories hidden under widely protruding roofs, they do not convey the impression of a compact mass as constituting their primary ingredient. But even wooden multi-storied Chinese pagodas (11) appear more massive, plastic, rounded, and self-contained than wooden Japanese pagodas of roughly similar design. The latter always appear more structured and less weighty, but frequently also more tightly constrained in form. Still, Japanese pagodas, like the best of their Chinese counterparts, possess a majesty tempered by charm and a monumentality inspired by

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an adherence to a noble beauty of form. They display a highly harmonious balance both within themselves and with their physical environment.

Iconology of Buddhist Architecture

As in all sacred art, aesthetic values clearly do not exist for their own sake but serve to convey religious meaning. However, they do so not only in the sense that they establish the highest attainable impressive framework for religious ideas by



16*-19* Bracketing in Japanese temple buildings.

generating a general "mood" for them. Rather, first and foremost they embody specific ideas and notions in architectural form, i.e., they turn them into visible words. By making statements of clearly defined and expressible content with the help of architectural means they themselves become vehicles conveying meaning.⁵⁴

Religious and in part also secular buildings may therefore (not only in East Asia) become subjects of an "iconology" of architecture. This field of research has become very preeminent in recent scholarship in art history, and has given a vital impulse to the study of medieval European architecture. Iconology asks questions about the ideas and meanings represented in a building and its parts, either symbolically or through literal resemblance between the original prototype and its architectural representation. Sedlmayr referred to "architecture as representative art." Questions are also asked about the meaning and significance of particular architectural forms, about the consequences resulting for the design of the whole or parts of a building and about the relationship between the sculpted or painted decorative images in their various locations within a building and the manner in which this location is directly determined by their individual meaning or is the result of placing the images in a suitable context. Buddhist architecture would offer a highly productive field for such inquiries, but we still know too little about its iconology and can at present only provide a few hints as to its nature.

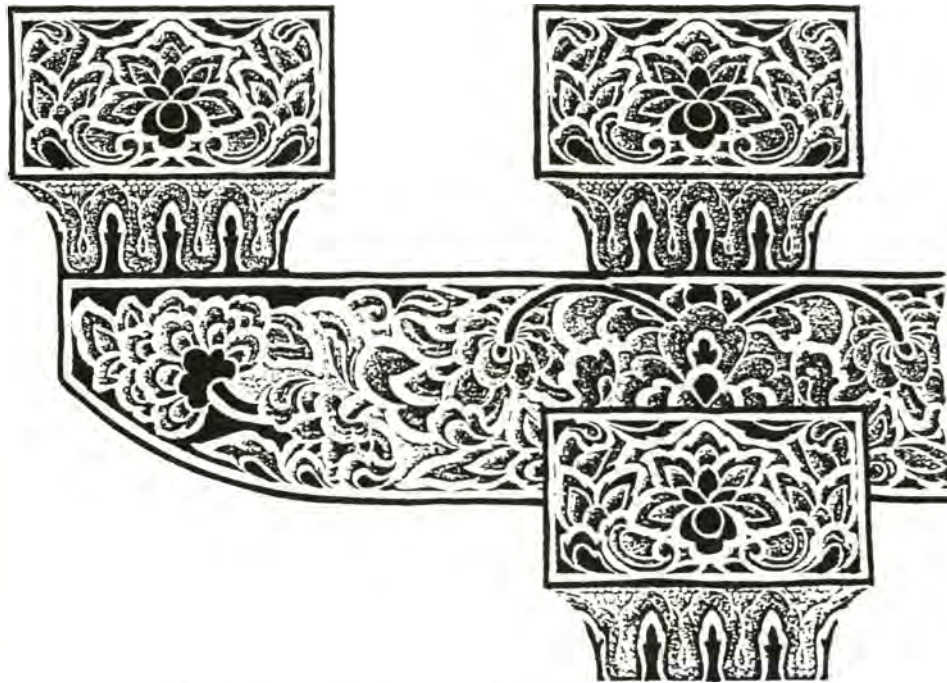
Let us resume our comments on the pagoda, which provides an example particularly well suited to illustrate the nature of iconological treatment. Because a pagoda contains relics; i.e., the body of the Perfected One in his essence, it represents the Buddha in the state of nirvāṇa, and itself becomes a symbol of nirvāṇa. It embodies the innermost essential nature of the Buddha, and points to the inexpressible Absolute in the form of a symbol. But at the same time it also "contains" the Absolute by virtue of a physical identity between the architectural body and the Buddha body. The anthropomorphic form of the Absolute is the Buddha viewed and depicted as a person. This Absolute Buddha is called Vairocana in esoteric Buddhism, and his figure is made the center of the Tahôto (6). Conversely, he may also be represented by the Tahôto symbol (14*).

The place where a Buddha attains the highest enlightenment (bodhi-maṇḍa) --the "diamond" seat (vajrāsana) under the Bodhi tree--is a firmly defined numinous area. It is the world center and rests on the very foundations of the cosmos. This applies equally to the throne of Vairocana and to that of any other Buddha. The center of the pagoda--be it a Buddha figure or the central pillar containing relics and therefore embodying the very essence of the Buddha--constitutes the axis of the cosmic-spiritual world. The widespread idea of the world pillar or world tree (*axis mundi*) may have played a role in this. In the center of the axis also stands Mount Sumeru. As pedestal of the Buddha throne, it constitutes the center of a temple hall and frequently also of a pagoda. The pagoda and its stories obviously represent the world mountain divided into several stories or terraces and containing numerous heavenly spheres.

The stories of a pagoda and the rings of its top ornament represent several worlds aligned on top of each other: Deva and Bodhisattva worlds which may be interpreted as cosmic levels of existence and at the same time as levels of consciousness, enlightenment, maturity, and perfection. Viewed under the aspect of time, they may also be considered as stages along the path to perfection. Such a

building may, therefore, also be called a "psychocosmogram" (Tucci),⁵⁵ just like the maṇḍala. The fact that it depicts both the world structure extending upward to the highest spheres and the central axis of this world may explain why the pagoda has become elongated during the course of its metamorphosis. The evolution of highly structured roofs could perhaps be based on an attempt to represent the various divine and Buddha palaces located in different cosmic spheres, because it is obvious that every floor of a fully developed pagoda--its pillars, beams, windows and enclosing veranda--represents an abbreviated form of such a palace and therefore requires a roof of its own.

Vairocana--as well as other hypostases of the Absolute, or All-Spirit, or whatever this Ultimate Reality may be referred to--is enthroned on an eight-petalled flower in the center of the maṇḍala from which all differentiations unfold by a process of radiating and subdividing in all directions. The pagoda, with the Buddha or the relic pillar as its center, is therefore also a maṇḍala transposed into an architectural form. Its building plan is identical with that of the maṇḍala, not only with respect to the central Buddha figure or groups of figures and the painted interior room related to them, but even in the architectural elements themselves, most notably in the number, dimensions and arrangements of the pillars. These are related to certain groups of sacred beings, or heavenly spheres, or even spiritual potentialities, and follow the pattern of four or eight plus center, making a total of five or nine.



20* Ornamental Painting on Architectural Elements.
Phoenix Hall (Hôôdô) in Uji, near Kyôto.

It is possible that the transition from the circular shape of the stûpa to the square or polygonal pagoda may be explained as the result of the radial pattern, geometric partitioning and geographic-cosmic arrangement suggested by the maṇḍala. This, like the other two innovations in the evolution of the pagoda--its increase in height and the evolution of stories and roofs--may also have an iconological explanation. The maṇḍala is a comprehensive world image. This image has been realized in buildings in a variety of ways, as, for example, in the splendid Borobudur of Java, to mention only the best-known structure of this kind in all Asia. The pagoda is also a place for the meditative viewing of a maṇḍala comprising all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Such activity is appropriate both in essence and meaning only in that particular cosmic center and in a building which represents the spiritual cosmos.

In contrast to the pagoda, whose form most likely has been shaped from the very beginning by its representative-symbolic meaning, the East Asian hall does not, as far as we know, have a particular symbolic meaning. Rather, such meaning is acquired by its use in varying contexts. Various cosmological systems might be suggested when a building is used for religious instruction or for social and state building complexes (as were Chinese residential and palace buildings). The hall's symbolic meaning is therefore not given a priori as is the pagoda's but is acquired as the occasion warrants, either by virtue of what a hall contains (certain cult figures with clearly defined iconographic meaning), by the events taking place inside the hall (certain cult performances or religious exercises), by the symbolism imposed on its design and its individual elements, or by a combination of some or all of these factors. Preexisting individual shapes and elements characteristic of a particular building type may be given later interpretations, or the shape of the buildings may change in accordance with the particular symbolic meanings they are to "depict." The latter has only rarely happened with respect to the East Asian temple halls because of the strong inherent conservatism of their design and their nearly universal potential uses.

A temple hall may become a "Buddha land" simply through the presence of a Buddha and his companions. All its architectural elements, together with the iconographic arrangement of the sculpted or painted sacred beings, may form a maṇḍala, just as pagodas do. The Sumeru terrace of the "altar" on which the cult figures are placed serves in this instance also as world symbol, and the temple itself is a world mountain.⁵⁶ The lotus flower of the Buddha throne with its stem--which is also the world axis--extends down to the bottom of the primordial waters on which the world rests. The hall's ceiling or the canopy suspended from it may be an image of heaven. The mirror⁵⁷ placed on the core of its central lotus flower may be a sun-like counterpart of the primordial lotus below. The Buddha, as center and core of the universe and personalized image of its true reality, is enthroned between the upper and lower lotuses. The sacred figures--sculptures and paintings alike--constitute in their totality the picture of a "Pure Land," of a visionary realm of bliss with a Buddha, manifesting himself in his sambhoga-kāya form, as its lord.

Since these "Pure Lands" with their sacred assemblies and their overwhelming splendor are described most poetically in the Sûtras, such temple halls are at the same time also "illustrations" of such texts. What the Sûtras describe for the spiritual eye, the temple halls depict for the physical eye. An entire temple

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building--down to the last details of its decorations--together with the surrounding garden and its ponds, may therefore be an exact illustration, or even an earthly realization, of the Pure Land of Amitābha. A splendid example is the Phoenix Hall in Uji near Kyōto (4). In this particular instance, the significance of the envisioned realm has also required an adaptation of the architectural design, so that the central temple building and its two wing buildings modify the normal type of the hall to approximate the palace of Amitābha as it is depicted in numerous paintings (103).

However, not only the individual temple hall, but the entire temple complex is a symbolic representation. The "path" of the faithful through the entire precinct has to be understood as a supra-empirical passage through ever higher levels of being and spheres of bliss, and the sequence of the buildings as an image of the world structure. The spatial order of this sequence also has the function of representation and reproduction and follows a "cosmo-magic building principle" (Heine-Geldern). In almost all cultures symmetric axiality dominates whenever a city, palace or sanctuary is understood to be an image of a cosmic order. Earthly events, but particularly cultic events, are understood as repetitions of cosmic processes.⁵⁸

Since the world may also be seen in the image of the All-Buddha, just as in the case of the pagoda which is understood as world stūpa centered in the Buddha body, the entire temple complex may be regarded as an image of the body or the face of the Buddha. The gate "below" is his lower body; the Buddha hall is his heart; and the lecture hall is his head. These are the three centers of the body according to East Asian teachings; they play an important role in the practice of Taoist meditation, in medicine, and elsewhere. Two symmetrically flanking pairs of buildings are regarded as the Buddha's arms and legs. Alternatively, the gate is likened to his mouth, the Buddha hall to his nose, the lecture hall to the top of his head, and the side buildings to his eyes and ears. Strangely enough, this obviously secondary interpretive symbolism has even been applied to Zen temples, even though Zen is highly skeptical of such symbolism.⁵⁹

In these iconological analogies of meaning,⁶⁰ the ideas of three great religious traditions are linked or even fused. First, there is the ancient Chinese cosmology, dominant throughout East Asia, with its teachings of Yang and Yin, the five or nine world directions (four and eight plus the center) and its complicated system of universal correspondences. Second, there is Indian cosmology, going back to Vedic times and adopted by Buddhism, with its notions of Mount Sumeru, the hierarchy of worlds and heavens, etc., its ordering schemes in the form of *maṇḍalas*, and its archetypal symbols like the lotus. Third, there are the specifically Buddhist notions, many of which originated from non-Buddhist Indian sources and only partially took on new meanings such as the *maṇḍalas*, the notions of the Pure Land, the hierarchical world structure, etc. Generally speaking, the world symbols of Mahāyāna add new shadings of meaning, reinterpretations and further elaborations of ancient ideas and images but do not create something specifically new. Accordingly, the iconology of Mahāyāna architecture contains a store of ideas which were derived from a good many traditions. But while all these ideas and their symbolic realization in buildings, figures, rituals, and signs may originally have had a somewhat worldly, "secular" flavor, Buddhism, no matter how much it made use of such ideas and forms available from the general repertoire of these cultures, made

them serve a world view which essentially transcends "images" and strives to enter the realm of no-images (nirvāna, "Emptiness," "Nothingness"). According to this world view, that which is truly essential begins only at a level beyond all world stages, divine heavens, and even all highly sublimated manifestations of the Absolute in the form of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and the symbolic signs representing them. All such tangible visions and representations possess only temporary and insubstantial validity. If judged by strictly "theological" criteria--though not by the standards of popular faith--no matter how great their importance for doctrine, cult and architectural and pictorial design, these repositories of iconological meaning are stripped in a peculiar manner of their corporeality and literal meaning. This iconology transcends itself into "Emptiness." Its true power of expression is realized only after it has transcended all formulations and all forms.