

Review Article

Washizuka Hiromitsu, Park Youngbok, and Kang Woo-bang et al. Edited by Naomi Noble Richard.

Transmitting the Forms of Divinity: Early Buddhist Art from Korea and Japan.

New York: Japan Society, 2003. 384 pp., 115 color ills.; 160 b/w. \$49.95 (cloth) (0913304549).*

Reviewed by Cynthea BOGEL **

Many of us in the field of East Asian art history watched with curiosity, respect, and incredulity when the former National Museum of Korea on the Gyeongbok Palace grounds in Seoul was imploded with fanfare in 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of Korean liberation from Japanese occupation. The palace was built in 1395 as the banner edifice of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910); incensed city residents set fire to it in 1592 during the Japanese invasion – because the king and court had fled.¹ Restored and expanded in 1865, the palace again became the symbol of Joseon rule, but not for long: the Japanese annexed Korea in 1910, dismantling and destroying over 300 palace buildings. The structure that later became the National Museum was erected in 1926 to house the Japanese Government-General. It stood directly in front of the throne hall of the palace, symbol of Korean sovereignty. Even after its postwar conversion for use as the National Museum, the building's inauspicious position and painful history were a national affront, and it was razed (albeit after considerable national debate). Ten years later a less conveniently located museum is about to open.² Such recent events remind us of palpable and lingering tensions between the neighboring nations of Korea and Japan.

* A short review of this exhibition catalogue was published in *caa.reviews* (September, 2004), the online reviews journal of the College Art Association.

** Division of Art History, University of Washington (Seattle)

1. Details concerning fires that were set or left to burn by the Japanese remain unclear. Lee Ki-baik writes: "The populace at large was infuriated at the government's incompetence and irresponsibility. As Sonjo and his high officials abandoned Seoul in flight the people blocked their way, hurling insults at them. Once the king and his retinue had left Seoul, the city's slave population set fire to the registry where the slave rosters were kept and to the offices of the Ministry of Punishments" (*A New History of Korea*, Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Harvard-Yenching Institute by Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 210).
2. The building is designed by Kim Chang-il, Junglim Architects & Engineers. The enormous structure is the sixth largest museum in the world. It is located in southern Seoul at Yongsan, former home to the U.S. military command headquarters (to be gradually relocated to the Osan-Pyongtaek area).

In 1998, when the Korea Society and Japan Society in New York, both non-political cultural organizations, began planning a collaborative exhibition, catalogue, and symposium on early Buddhist art and cross-cultural exchange between Korea and Japan, the organizers knew that the very concept would raise both eyebrows and hopes. The result was the exhibition *Transmitting the Forms of Divinity: Early Buddhist Art from Korea and Japan*, held at Japan Society Gallery from April 9–June 22, 2003, and a scholarly catalogue of the same name. The thick, lavishly illustrated book reviewed here is not only a very useful and pioneering work but also a testimony to successful modern diplomacy and collaboration. The cross-cultural representational models evident in the art introduced through this collaborative enterprise represent a large comparative statement and a brave moment in the history of East Asian art studies.

Just as Buddhism was introduced unofficially to Japan from Korea decades before the official transmission, so was this latest overseas venture the result of years of unofficial exchange of ideas between neighbors. The careful wording of the catalogue's preface and the balanced selection of both art works and contributing scholars suggest the tact, skill and finesse that facilitated the movement of objects and transfer of information. Exhibitions of Korean art are exceedingly rare in Japan unless they are part of a pan-Asian theme. There had been no major Japanese art exhibitions in Korea and never anywhere a collaborative show. Japan Society and the Korea Society enlisted the Gyeongju National Museum and the Nara National Museum as the organizers, then it involved a dozen other museums in Japan, Korea, and the U.S.; seventeen Japanese Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines; and one Korean Buddhist temple. Together they loaned over one hundred Buddhist statues, ritual items, and archaeological materials dating from the sixth through eighth centuries. The decision to limit the time period was a wise move, as it allows the drawing of more meaningful comparisons. The works exhibited in *Transmitting the Forms of Divinity* provide a tangible picture of the visual strategies and religious ideas that flowed from Korea to Japan – and occasionally back again – demonstrating through representational or stylistic modes and methods of construction a range of regional differences and distinct cultural continuities.

Korea introduced Buddhism to Japan officially in the sixth century by sending clerics, sutras, and small gilt-bronze icons similar to those in the exhibition. The collaborative exhibition, however, was more balanced and less unidirectional than the ancient transmission. Organizers tactfully designated an equal number of objects to be loaned from Korea and Japan, and the same number of familiar National Treasure groups (five) from each country. There are almost sixty gilt-bronze, iron, wood, and stone Buddhist statues, a stele and a portable shrine; sutras, reliquaries, and other ritual goods; and thirty-five plaques, roof tiles, and earthenware molds, all thoughtfully grouped. The inclusion of so many icons and discussion of regional Korean differences will be appreciated by scholars, clarifying scholarship somewhat confusingly presented in previous publications. No less welcome is the section on plaques and tiles, a discussion long overdue in art publications. The catalogue contains an excellent bibliography and a glossary and

concordance of terms that will help the reader navigate technical terms and several languages. (This review reflects the new transcription of Korean established by the Korean government.)

Once past its somewhat awkward title, readers of *Transmitting the Forms of Divinity: Early Buddhist Art from Korea and Japan* will find little to fault and much of interest. In a year of exhibitions in New York City with, as one headline put it, “A Buddha in Every Borough,” this publication will remain a useful and important source for scholars, teachers, curators, and students for many years to come. Going against the grain of modern history, the book’s essays and catalogue entries explore connections between the ancient cultures of Korea and Japan, discussing China perhaps too sparingly for some readers. Most of the ninety-two catalogue entries carry a full-page color illustration of the object and substantial descriptive text on the facing page. There are a few famous icons and a good number of National Treasures and protected Cultural Properties featured, but this book is not just the glossy companion to a blockbuster event. The utter worldliness of some objects (e.g. tiles), the small scale and simple worn lines of many statues, combined with what modern viewers interpret as an expressive charm on the faces of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, impart an approachability and familiarity unexpected in an encounter with what is, for most viewers, relatively obscure material. In terms of visual proof, only royal tomb goods could drive home the point of cultural connectivity as effectively, but they would do so without the beguiling gesture of the faintly smiling “infant Buddha” images (cat. no. 9, Korea; cat. nos. 25 and 53, Japan) or the willowy appeal of gilded bodhisattvas, or the transcendent aura conveyed by many of the works.

Only a combination of crisp color illustrations and broad-ranging texts can convey such artistic and cultural dispersion to the non-specialist, and here the book succeeds. Although the descriptive texts that accompany each catalogue entry tend to analyze the illustrated object without comparative comments or cross-referencing, they typically provide excellent information on appearance, iconography, and context. The major flaws of the catalogue are the uneven quality of the essays and the lack of unifying themes among them. Nonetheless, there is a wealth of material to be gleaned from them. Thirteen essays (plus two by Kim Song-gu and Mori Ikuo on tiles in the catalogue section) make up half the book’s pages. The essays are divided into three sections, but can be read in any order. The texts deal with Buddhist history, iconography, sculptural technique, artistic styles and motifs, reliquaries, architecture, Chinese sources, ideology, and philosophy, among other subjects. For the most part, the authors do not pull their punches: long-standing claims (typically Japanese attributions) about provenance and cultural significance are disassembled and new histories deftly inserted in their place. Although scholarship on recent Chinese finds from Shandong provides new links to motifs and styles found in Baekje and then Japan (Tanabe Saburōsuke, “From the Stone Buddhas of Longxingsi to Buddhist Images of Three Kingdoms Korea and Asuka-Hakuhō Japan” and Ōnishi Shūya, “The Monastery Kōrūji’s ‘Crowned Maitreya’ and the Stone Pensive Bodhisattva Excavated at Longxingsi”), we learn

from several essays that the intensity of contact and artistic connection between China and Japan prior to the eighth century has been stressed over the importance of Korean influence, and that southern Chinese influence on Korea and then Japan has been neglected in favor of northern Chinese import.

Like the seventh-century nested reliquary set from Sōfuku-ji Pagoda (cat. no. 63), the transmission of Buddhism across Asia was layered, complex, and splendid. *Transmitting the Forms of Divinity* deals with artistic, religious, and cultural transmission, and many of the essayists draw our attention to overlaps and distinctions among the three. The Buddhist foreign faith was officially introduced from China to the Korean kingdoms of Goguryeo and Baekje by the late fourth century, then to Shilla. Under strong royal patronage it flourished during the sixth century, when it was introduced from Korea to Japan. Initially, the transmission caused friction among governing elites. This history is navigated in the catalogue's invaluable Introduction by Jonathan W. Best, "The Transmission and Transformation of Early Buddhist Culture in Korea and Japan," which divides the period 350–907 into four chronological groups and themes. Best clarifies several pesky questions regarding diplomatic and cultural exchanges, adding much germane information about China and commenting extensively on the receptive contexts and cultural differences that attended the transmission of the Buddhist faith. His essay shows how the transmission of Buddhism and its arts relates to shifts in relations among powers in northeast Asia. He discusses the ways that Buddhism served governments and people alike, without resorting to facile and sweeping statements about political agendas versus popular needs; he tracks the "shifting nexus of international affiliations and antagonisms" that determined the channels of religious transmission (23).

Best makes it clear that Buddhism was not accepted by everyone who encountered it. He traces the uneven reception of the faith in Japan at the official level, beginning with the ambassador from Baekje in 538 (or possibly 552) whose mission marks the formal entry of Buddhism to the islands. Best cites the chronicles that detail an incident in 587, three years after pro-Buddhist faction leader Soga no Umako (d. 626) had been convinced of Buddhism's efficacy, in which a relic of the Buddha brought to Japan from Korea was pounded with a hammer to assess its veracity. Much of this official history is known to English readers, but the author's essay skillfully pieces together the documentation and sets it in the context of political events in Korea and China. Best also provides details about Korean priests such as Jajang (act. 635–650), who studied in Tang China from 636 to 643, and other Korean clerics who helped establish Buddhism in Japan, such as Gwalleuk, who arrived from Baekje in 602. Japan's first icons and monasteries evince the adoption of iconography, styles, and techniques as well as religious ideals from its peninsular neighbor. Indeed, Korea sent artisans and temple architects to Japan besides Buddhist priests, nuns, texts, and statues.

One would have liked to know more about the unofficial – but equally rich – transmission of Buddhist culture from China to Korea and from Korea to Japan, glimpses of which can be gleaned from symbols or material remains, and from

genealogies or clan histories.³ The records make mention of the Aya clan from Baekje, who settled in Yamato – especially around Asuka and Kawachi – by around the year 400. By the mid-seventh century the Aya were closely aligned with the pro-Buddhist Soga. By that time, many members of the clan were prominent in diplomacy, government, military affairs, and court ritual, and they actively promoted Buddhism. Along with the Hata, who probably came from Baekje,⁴ the Aya had supervisory functions over organizations called *be* that provided various goods and services. This kind of history offers a broad foundation for understanding later events and exemplifies how the Yamato leaders could not have secured power without the Baekje clans' knowledge and assistance, also that this process of securing power and legitimacy is intimately connected to Buddhism and the production of its material culture. Even without this sort of evidence, Best's essay is a splendid introduction to the catalogue and to East Asian Buddhist history, and I plan to assign it as a reading in some of my courses.

The Aya and especially the Hata were both appointed to positions in the treasury (*kura-be*) by the Soga, and from these positions safeguarded clan tribute from the mid-fifth century onward. The *Nibongi* notes that Hada [Hata] no Ohotsuchi was appointed by Emperor Kimmei (531–571) to head the Treasury to fulfill a dream he had that named Ohotsuchi as key to the success of his reign. The name Hata (or Hada) is the *kana* rendering for Qin (Aya is the rendering for Han); it also means loom (and in some usages, cloth). Both the Aya and Hata are associated with the production of textiles in ancient Japan. A Hata clan member supervised artists in making embroideries for Hōryū-ji (see below), and the *Nibongi* notes that there were many weavers among the immigrants. They made their wealth through sericulture and in 603 founded Hata-dera, i.e., Kōryū-ji, in the Uzumasa district of Kyoto.

-
3. See, for example Gina L. Barnes, "The Role of the *Be* in the Formation of the Yamato State," in Elizabeth M. Brumfiel and Timothy K. Earle, eds., *Specialization, Exchange, and Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Chen Yu-Hsiu, "A Study of Early Sino-Japanese Relations via Korea: The Sinicization of Japan," *Area Studies* 12:1 (August 1991): 81-88; William Wayne Farris, *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures: Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Ancient Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998; Hong, Wontack, *Paekche of Korea and the Origin of Yamato Japan* (Seoul: Kudara International, 1994); Kamata, Shigeo, "The Transmission of Paekche Buddhism to Japan," in Lewis R. Lancaster and C.S. Yu, eds., *Introduction of Buddhism to Korea: New Cultural Patterns*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1989; Roy Andrew Miller, "Yamato and Paekche," *Asian Pacific Quarterly* 26:3 (Autumn 1994): 1-13; Yu Hak-ku, "Early Historical Relations between Korea and Japan: Some Methodological Issues," *Korea Journal* 30:6 (June 1990): 45-48. Information on Korean immigrants and *be* is drawn primarily from these sources.
 4. The Hata may have originated in Shilla, although the *Nihon shoki*, the *Nibongi*, and other sources mention Baekje. See Lee Chung-myun, "A Study of the Aya and Hata Clans in Ancient Japan with Reference to Korean Migration," *Chiribak yongu* 12 (1987): 413-434.

A Hata-clan member of the treasury *be*, Kurabe no Hata no Kuma is named in Ariga Yoshitaka's essay, "Korean Elements in Japanese Pictorial Representation in the Early Asuka Period," as the man who directed both Chinese and Korean (Goguryeo) artisans in making the cartoon for the *Tenjukoku Shūchō* (Land of Heavenly Life) embroidery at Chūgūji, which dates to 622. Ariga's essay considers phoenix motifs on the Tamamushi Shrine at Hōryū-ji and an embroidered banner at Chūgū-ji,⁵ among other examples, relating them to the Goguryeo artists of the Three Kingdoms period (57BCE–668CE). He also considers the phoenix in Korean and Japanese tomb paintings, tiles, and carvings, and the difficulties of dating tombs. This short treatment of the subject fascinates with what it demonstrates as well as what it only suggests: the transmission of motifs and techniques through artistic exchange, immigrant beliefs, and the needs of patrons.

Lena Kim's essay pairs well with Best's Introduction as a lucid introduction to icons. "Early Korean Buddhist Sculptures and Related Japanese Examples: Iconographic and Stylistic Comparisons," delivers even more than the broad title suggests, with good references to Chinese works, discussion of standing and seated figures and regional types, and illustrations of lesser known and newly discovered works, all in clear art historical terminology. This essay, too, will function well as assigned course reading. Here the "multiple proximal sources" of Buddhism and the "variety of traits" (69) evinced by its arts is evident and suggests (but does not explore) the unofficial sources for transmission. Kim maps out the stylistic relationships between surviving works of Chinese and Korean, and Korean and Japanese statuary, but at the same time acknowledges the influence of the immigrant Buddhist community. She revisits briefly the famous Hōryū-ji Kudara Kannon ("Baekje Kannon"), stating, "most probably the Kudara Kannon was carved by a Korean immigrant sculptor or by a descendant closely connected with the Korean Buddhist community in Japan" (77). Certainly the small bronze statues that were carried to new immigrant settlements were part of the stylistic and iconographic template that informed official production, just as the makers of the first gilt-bronze statues for Yamato temples were directed by immigrant workers. Prominent among them were men from Baekje who populated the Yamato *kuratsukuri-be*, the "saddlers' guild," deployed for making Buddhist icons and temple implements – among them Tori, head craftsman for the famous Hōryū-ji 623 Shaka Triad.

There is evidence of modern diplomacy in discussions concerning the images themselves. Among those treated with kid gloves are two seventh-century bronze statues in a pensive *hanka* (literally, "legs half-crossed") pose, one with gilding extant (cat. no. 33) and the other stripped bare and pitted (cat. no. 20). Both icons have been in Japan since ancient times. The seated pensive form of a Bodhisattva, usually Maitreya, represents an important early image-type in Korea, one that was

5. The Tenjukoku Shūchō (Land of Heavenly Life) banner, dated to ca. 622 with later additions. In English see a recent dissertation on the banner by Maria Del Rosario Pradel, "The Fragments of the Tenjukoku Shūchō Mandara: Reconstruction of the Iconography and Historical Contexts (UCLA, 1997).

transmitted to Japan by examples like these – although the Japanese reception of the figure may not have been as Maitreya. Each figure is seated on a stool-type pedestal that rises from an inverted lotus-pattern base and is covered by cascading folds of drapery, the ends of which turn and double-back in a splayed curve-and-hook pattern that is characteristically Korean but which earlier Japanese scholarship typically labeled “Chinese influence.” The two bronze figures were until recently given Japanese provenance but in *Transmitting the Forms of Divinity* they are described as possibly Korean works. As scholarship in Korea has advanced and more pensive bodhisattva works are studied, statues excavated in Japan or housed for centuries within its temples are increasingly likely to be attributed to Korean artists in Japan or designated as imports. The catalogue makes clear that transmission was complex and many-layered, and our knowledge is still evolving.

Relaxed with one leg pendant and one horizontally folded, ankle on opposing knee, eyes pensively downcast and hand thoughtfully poised near the cheek, seated *hanka* Maitreya statues are said to recall the young Prince Siddhārtha’s contemplations – an iconography that shifted to the Maitreya cult in early Buddhist China. The most famous Japanese example of the pensive Maitreya Bodhisattva, an early seventh-century wooden statue at Kōryū-ji, Kyoto, resembles several of the smaller bronze figures featured in the exhibition. The Kōryū-ji Maitreya, a Japanese National Treasure, is most likely not Japanese but Korean; for decades the red pine from which it was carved directed the intellectual gaze of even the most stubborn Japanese scholar toward the Korean peninsula, as did its strong stylistic affinities with Korean examples. The Kōryū-ji statue is not given a definitive Korean provenance throughout the catalogue, but after many years of silence or refutation Japanese authors diplomatically concur that, at the very least, it “is believed to be Korean.” Lena Kim provides a summary of the issues in her essay (78).

The Kōryū-ji icon (although not exhibited) is the subject of a thoughtful essay by Ōnishi (“The Monastery Kōryūji’s ‘Crowned Maitreya’ and the Stone Pensive Bodhisattva Excavated at Longxingsi”) that compares several of its specific iconographic features to those of a stone pensive Bodhisattva excavated at Longxingsi in Shandong Province. Ōnishi speculates that the Hata originated in Shilla and concludes that, “Despite paucity of further documentary evidence, continuing research on the Silla *hanka* images in Korea has created a scholarly consensus that the image transmitted [from Shilla to Kōryūji] in Suiko 31 [616] would have been Kōryūji’s Crowned Maitreya” (55), i.e., a Shilla gift to a Shilla-clan temple, the Hata. Ōnishi’s essay also examines the full potential impact of the Shandong stone Maitreya bodhisattva on our understanding of the *hanka* Maitreya image type. Discovered in 1996, it provides evidence of the source for the Korean representation of a flat cordon (Chinese: *shou*) suspended from the waist, employing a jade ring ornament and cordon tucked under the figure’s bottom; a variant form of the hanging cordon is found on Baekje-style figures such as a statue from Kansho’in (cat. no. 20, noted above). The Shandong find, along with a number of works recently excavated at Qingzhou, complicates and enriches the map of transmission of Buddhist divinities to and quite possibly from Korea. Other pensive

figures presumed to be the Maitreya bodhisattva are represented in the catalogue (cat. nos. 17, 39, and 52) (although locating them is difficult because the index, which has numerous oversights, cross-references Maitreya in every language but does not include a Maitreya entry), and countless examples may be found in Korean collections, along with their typological kin in Japan.

My personal favorite among the essays concerns the disarmingly corporeal subject of relics. "Early Korean and Japanese Reliquaries in Relation to Pagoda Architecture," by Choi Eung-chon should be required reading for every East Asian history, Buddhism, and art history class as a window into early Buddhist belief and material culture. Choi gives careful thought to comparative aspects of relic worship from India to Japan, incorporating earlier important studies by Kang Woo-bang. One dreams of a future exhibition comprising precious relic containers alongside the sturdy pagodas that housed them.

Connections between rule and religion often determine the fortune of each. Portending the imminent death of the Shilla king, a sixteen-foot stone Buddha stone at the monastery Hwangnyongsa is said to have shed tears that moistened the earth a full Korean foot deep (148). An important essay by Park Youngbok, "The Monastery Hwangnyongsa and Buddhism of the Early Silla Period" provides a fascinating history of this mid-sixth-century state temple, named after a yellow dragon that appeared at the construction site of a royal palace in the Gyeongju capital. Park's study complements Best's to introduce early Korean Buddhist patronage, providing a meaningful glimpse of the painstaking archaeology that accompanies the reconstruction of not only a monastery but also its history. Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt takes up the challenge of an archaeological study of Japan's best-known ancient temple in "The Monastery Hōryū-ji: Architectural Forms of Early Buddhism in Japan." Indeed, "the number of unanswered or unresolved questions surrounding Hōryū-ji is almost as great as the number of superlatives lavished upon it" (154). Although she does not dispel the quickly fading myth of the existence of Prince Shōtoku, Shatzman Steinhardt's essay is very useful as both a comparative early Korean-Japanese-Chinese architectural study and a history of Hōryū-ji. She looks at the Korean sources for plans, forms, and motifs of the Japanese monastery while incorporating recently published Chinese tomb designs and models and Goguryeo sites in her discussion.

The best-known eighth-century temples of each country are discussed in two essays in which ideals of Buddhist central state ideology are indirectly contrasted. The second of two essays by Kang benefits from his extensive research on the man-made cave temple of Seokkuram. He maps out the geometry and a common unit of $\sqrt{2}$ measure that informed not only the architectural space but also the main icon's placement, and at the same time relates these ideas to Buddhist ideals. His brief concluding discussion of *Avatamsaka Sūtra* narrative complements "Tōdaiji's Great Buddha: Its Foundation in Buddhist Doctrine and Its Chinese and Korean Precedents," an essay from the prolific Konno Toshifumi. Konno suggests that a Vairocana representation in Japan may be based on context and preconceptions about appearance more than textual prescriptions or prototypes. A similar line of

reasoning might be applied to our study of statue construction. Washizuka Hiromitsu's "Techniques of Early Buddhist Sculpture in Japan," provides useful information on sculpting methods. Although he mentions new knowledge about the eighth-century bronze Yakushi-ji triad's method of construction (clay mold, not lost-wax method), what of new ideas on lacquer and wood construction? Botanical names and technical terms? Comparative studies between Japanese and Korean materials? With the majority of extant seventh- and eight-century statues in Japan made of wood, and most of these of camphor (*kusumoki*), why persist with the notion that the choice of material was driven by textual prescription, i.e., as a "sandalwood substitute"? Cumulative dendrochronological studies in Japan show that camphor was a common tree, which suggests to me that camphor statues were a popular yet precious type, but not one necessarily responding to a scriptural prescription.

Kwak Dong-seok's contribution, "Korean Gilt-Bronze Single Mandorla Buddhist Triads and the Dissemination of East Asian Sculptural Style," considers statue mandorlas (aereoles). Small Korean triads with a single lotus-shaped mandorla may derive from larger Chinese examples but become a "standard category based on distinctively Korean sensibilities" that not only "exerted considerable influence over ancient Japanese sculpture" (90) but also reverse directions and reappear in Shandong. Of great interest is Kwak's assertion that the mandorla and drapery style of a 673 stone stele from the Baekje region (early Unified Shilla period) form a more rational prototype for the Hōryū-ji Golden Hall triad of 623 than Chinese works.

The Baekje icons are often sweet, delicate, and visually complex; some from Shilla are more abstract and simple, with elongated and full lower jaws and a mouth placed high. Later works of the Unified Shilla period (668–935) show more robust and stately forms and comparatively fewer upturned mouths in their massive heads. The catalogue entries explain that the flaring "fish-tail" robe ends, scarves, and symmetrical silhouette of some gilt-bronze statues borrows a Chinese convention for visualizing the divine energy of a sacred figure (cat. no. 2). Many statues show Chinese influence, transmitted through Baekje's ethnic connection to clans in Goguryeo or imported along the maritime or land routes to the Korean peninsula. All these elements were transmitted to Japan, along with the expressive mouth, in the sixth century. Missing their mandorlas and bases or the flanking bodhisattvas of a triad, many of the divinities now present themselves to the viewer in a solitary and direct manner, thus more intimately, perhaps, than would have originally been the case. Missing mandorlas present other problems. In "A New Theory: *Ki* as Represented in Koguryo [Goguryeo] Murals and Buddhist Haloes from the Three Kingdoms Period," Kang Woo-bang (inspired by a 1976 paper by Inoue Tadashi) suggests that formless *ki*, a generative force, is represented on the mandorlas of statues and on other metalwork by meaningful patterns previously designated as swirling dragon, cloud, or flame motifs. If true, the icon without a mandorla is like a chariot without the driving force of its horses.

The transmission of Buddhism to Japan from Korea relied on material forms of proof besides spiritual efficacy. As Tanabe reminds the reader, the indigenous

Japanese deities, although personified, had never been represented in their imagined form and so “the Buddhist statue from Baekje must have made a stupendous impression.” Indeed, the visual impact of Buddhism – what may aptly be called a “Buddhist visual culture” – was critical to the transmission of the faith throughout East Asia. Without visual splendor, symbolism, and represented meanings, efficacy may flounder. With few exceptions, the fifty-nine Korean or Japanese icons look slightly downward or beyond the viewer’s gaze. Their modeling and stance is rarely bulky, always dignified, some are passive and others vigorous. Even those of heroic proportions, such as the 112 cm seated Vairocana Buddha in iron, are modeled with restraint. Only the buddhas, bodhisattva, and guardians illustrated in the last five catalogue entries, Japanese works made of lacquer or wood, present a more formidable presence, with substantial corpulent forms or imposing expressions that derive from Tang Chinese types. These works look toward the continent, and toward the future of artistic expression in Japan.

The makers of the Korean images during the sixth and early seventh centuries, especially those from Baekje, invariably seem to cleave to a kinder, gentler model and bestow upon the figures a mouth posed in a smile – or so it appears to the modern viewer. This reviewer is still waiting for a satisfying explanation of what is referred to throughout the catalogue as a bright, innocent, childlike, or benevolent smile. Are we to understand it as we understand a smile today? A Happy Buddha? Every newspaper journalist who reviewed the show commented on this captivating feature. Citing the achievement in seventh-century Korean Buddhist sculpture of “what modern viewers consider visual beauty in its representation,” one catalogue entry states that “Even – or perhaps especially – in sublime religious art, such as Buddhist art, the universal artistic desire to represent human beauty finds expression. It seems a common instinct to seek to represent the ‘perfect’ in concept as the ‘beautiful’ in visual art” (214). The writer’s interpretation – to be generous – may allude to an enlightened divinity or Buddhist mindful awareness in his use of “perfect” as an analogy to “beautiful.” As a “religion of images”⁶ Buddhism must have aimed to visually express perfection, i.e., the pure mind, in its visual culture. We can conclude this only by inference, however; the creation, care, worship, and potential merit of icons is prescribed by the sutras, but the expressionistic goal of representation is not. The texts do not link concept with expression in the way that interpretations of Buddhist art (necessarily, some might say) do. The catalogue entry quoted calls to mind a Hegelian appraisal whereby history is the development of *Geist*, or human spirit toward its own realization. It seems to derive largely from an aesthetic standpoint in observing Buddhist images. As such, it has nothing to do with the Buddhist significance of what is indeed to a modern eye a beguiling expression.

There are conspicuous absences in the roster of catalogue authors, among them Pak Hyon-guk (Nagoya University) and Professor Donald McCallum (UCLA), to

6. 像教 *xiang jiao*. See for example, T41: 813; see also Morohashi Tetsuji, *Dai kanwa jiten*, 13 vols. (Tokyo: Saishukan shoten, 1955-1960), 10: 659, who indicates that the term seems to have referred to Buddhism since the Han dynasty.

name just two major scholars of Korean and Japanese Buddhist art. There is also one conspicuous provenance label absent among the many exhibited objects, namely, Goguryeo works from China and modern North Korea (The Democratic People's Republic of Korea). Just before the Japan Society exhibition opened, a show of Goguryeo art (including Buddhist sculpture, most of them replicas) from the Central Historical Museum in Pyongyang ended in an exhibition hall in the Gangnam area of Seoul. One hopes that a future collaborative exhibition will include material from the whole Korean peninsula, China, and Japan. Notably, Korean scholars from the south have recently been able to visit Goguryeo tombs (where the paintings are rapidly deteriorating) and fresh studies on this material are being published for the first time in decades.

Diplomacy and change will continue to expand and inform our understanding of cultural transmission. On New Year's Eve last year, the popular Japanese band *Tube* took center stage in Seoul to celebrate the lifting of the last post-World War II Korean regulations banning the import of Japanese films, music, computer games, and *manga*. The symbolic intent was clear: the laws manifested a passionate response to Japan's forced imposition of its culture on the peninsula in times past. Many Japanese were shocked to discover that these restrictions were still in place. Today's "Korea boom" in Japan is, in part, a response to these events and may herald a new cultural open-mindedness on both sides. *Transmitting the Forms of Divinity: Early Buddhist Art from Korea and Japan* celebrates an ancient shared Buddhist tradition, one that finds support in both nations today. The successful exhibition and its impressive catalogue cleared many historical and diplomatic hurdles – and we on foreign soil are among the lucky beneficiaries.

