

## Interpretation of Ancient Japanese Architecture: Focusing on Links with World History

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### ANCIENT GREECE AND HÖRYŪJI TEMPLE

Hōryūji was built at the beginning of the seventh century. It was totally destroyed by fire at one time but was rebuilt in its current form between the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century. Hōryūji is currently the oldest wooden construction in Japan and probably the oldest wooden temple in the world.

It is often said that Hōryūji was influenced by ancient Greek architecture. How could Hellenism have been conveyed to a Buddhist temple in the Far East? Undoubtedly, to a person hearing this for the first time, this would appear somewhat dubious. However, it is true that Hōryūji is considered to be very Greek.

A cross-section of the pillars used in Hōryūji shows that they are round. The pillars, in other words, are round columns. They are not completely straight columns, though. The mid-point of each column tends to curve outwards. This is especially noticeable in the pillars of the Chūmon Gate and the Kondō (Main Hall). In architectural terminology this is referred to as *dobari* in Japanese. Sometimes the Western term, entasis, is also used.

This technique of having a bulge at the midpoint of columns was also seen in ancient Greek architecture. It is generally considered that this method was employed to make the exterior of a construction appear visually stable. This is what the word entasis originally meant. The term was originally used to refer to ancient Western architecture, but it has also been translated into Japanese to describe the Hōryūji columns.

Indeed, the Hōryūji columns appear very similar to Greek columns. It is no wonder, therefore, that the bulge in the columns of Hōryūji is often referred to as entasis. It is these columns that make people say that Hōryūji was influenced by ancient Greece.

Japanese Buddhism has its roots in India. The classical ancient civilization of Hellenism, at one time, spread out as far as India. Remains exist in north-west India, modern-day Pakistan, that are reminiscent of ancient Greece. These are the ruins of Gandhara.

Hellenistic civilization, which flowed into India, was finally transmitted to Japan. It was conveyed to Japan along with Buddhism, via Gandhara. This is why the columns used in Hōryūji are Greek-like and round. The reasoning behind this is that Hōryūji was erected as a temple in the seventh century when Buddhism entered Japan. Japanese people are well aware of this story. It is written about often in Japanese junior high-school history books. There are even many historical stories read by elementary school students that include this explanation. Tour guides at Hōryūji virtually always relate this story. This could be referred to as common knowledge among the Japanese people.

Is this explanation really correct, though? As a story, it is undoubtedly intriguing. It also has a romantic air to it. It is no wonder that the Japanese people like this story. Perhaps it is a little too interesting, though. There are very few researchers of architectural history and art history who believe this story. Most academics in these fields view this story as being questionable. In architectural history textbooks used in universities, this explanation is not included.

The bulges in the columns at Hōryūji and in Greek architecture are very similar. However, this may have occurred quite coincidentally. It just might have happened that the same type of column was thought of at opposite ends of the Eurasian Continent. That might be all there is to the story.

Experts today do not spend much time on the similarities between the two types of columns. There is a strong tendency for academics to believe that the columns in Hōryūji in the Far East are quite independent of ancient Greek columns.

The experts, though, are not entirely confident that these similarities occurred as a matter of coincidence. The reason being that no decisive evidence has been found to completely disprove the theory that Hellenism was conveyed to Japan. As such, there are few academics who will come forward and directly advocate that this is incorrect. In their minds, though, they think that this story is wrong. However, there is simply no data to support a clear answer to this explanation. Their way of dealing with this issue is to simply not talk about it.

It may be because of this that the theory of Hellenism being transmitted to Japan remains unscathed in places other than the academic world. Viewing the Hōryūji columns as having Greek influence is common practice among those who like to read up on history. Perhaps it is the prudent stance of researchers, then, which has prolonged the life of this theory.



In any case, there is no mistake that this interpretation is widely known and accepted. There is surely something in this story that attracts people. That is why the force that this story possesses, even though it is ignored by the academics, remains strong. Where did this explanation come from, then? Surely the roots of this idea must be interesting.

This theory is generally said to be the idea of Itō Chūta, an architectural historian. Itō first mentioned this in his paper “Hōryūji kenchikuron” (A Study of Hōryūji Architecture, 1893). This was to become the accepted statement to write when commenting on modern Japanese architecture.

Strictly speaking, it is not completely correct to say that this idea was solely devised by Itō. Ishii Keikichi, an architectural historian, proclaimed a similar theory at a much earlier stage. This history of an advance east by Hellenism had also been suggested to Itō by artist Okakura Tenshin.

It is Itō's treatise, though, that is most famous for linking the Hōryūji columns with ancient Greece. It was Itō who made people aware of this, who was the real source of this story. Let us take a look at some of Itō's work without actually examining the details of the history of his theory.

### REACTION AGAINST FERGUSSON

“There is no decent architecture in Japan. Chinese architecture is also very boring. Neither are worth special discussion.” James Fergusson, a British architectural historian, made these comments in the nineteenth century. Fergusson, born in Scotland, was initially an entrepreneur. In 1829, he traveled to India on business, his main goal being the cultivation of indigo plants. However, upon arriving in India, Fergusson became interested in India's architectural history. He visited various places in India and thoroughly examined architectural ruins in India. Fergusson was the first person to conduct a systematic categorization of Indian architectural ruins.

In later years, instead of only conducting investigations, Fergusson also exerted much effort into publishing his research results. It is well known that data published by Fergusson was the foundation of research on Indian architectural history. Fergusson published his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* in 1876. This work covers, as its title implies, all architectural history in this region. It was in this particular publication that he harshly criticized Japanese and Chinese architecture as being worthless. Yet Fergusson never visited Japan or China. He wrote about the region east of India based on hearsay and other reference books. What made Fergusson, who had never been to Japan, come to such a conclusion?

Fergusson wrote much about Gandhara in his section on the history of Indian

architecture. Given the fact that this publication is supposed to be an overview, the amount of narration on Gandhara is far too great. The reason Fergusson placed importance on Gandhara is quite clear. Namely, the influence of ancient Greek civilization on Gandhara is obvious.

This is why Fergusson attached no importance to the India that had existed prior to Alexander the Great's expedition to that region. "India was yet to receive the benefits of Greek civilization, so there was nothing important about it. The true essence of Indian architecture was not developed until after the time of Alexander." This way of thinking can be seen here and there in Fergusson's work. Taking delight in finding the influence of Greek civilization in India — this was the type of sensitivity that most Western researchers in the nineteenth century possessed. This was not restricted to Fergusson. The majority of Western academics paid homage to Greek civilization as it was considered to be the origin of Western civilization. That is why the greater the influence of Greek civilization present, the greater the value that was placed on something. How similar something was to Greek civilization was an index for determining its value.

This is why Fergusson tended to look down on China and Japan. "Greek civilization did not reach the Far East, so, of course, no wonderful architecture would exist in these places." This is the type of preconception that Fergusson most likely possessed. He does not clearly say this in his works, but this is most likely how he felt.

In the nineteenth century, Fergusson's work played a determinant role. No other book provided a comprehensive study of Oriental architectural history. Fergusson's book was also read by students at the newly established Tokyo Imperial University. Of course, the first Japanese architectural historians also read Fergusson's work. Both Ishii Keikichi and Itō Chūta made reference to Fergusson in their writings. They also learned from Fergusson that Greek civilization had been conveyed to India. What did they think, then, after reading in Fergusson's book that "there is no decent architecture in Japan"? Fergusson had decided this without even seeing Japan. Students at Tokyo University were forced to read this book, and there were undoubtedly some scholars who felt humiliated by this.

In 1894, the year after writing "Hōryūji Kenchikuron," Itō wrote something very interesting. In *Nihon kenchiku kenkyū no hitsuyō oyobi sono kenkyū no hōshin ni tsuite* (The Necessity of Japanese Architectural Research and Research Policies Therein), he implicitly criticizes Fergusson. He writes that "shortsighted Westerners" do not know that Japanese architecture "is linked with the architecture of faraway Persia and Greece." Without doubt, the "Westerners" Itō refers to are Fergusson and his followers. Itō also attempts, though, to appeal to Western scholars. He is saying to them, "Don't you know



that ancient Japanese architecture is linked to ancient Greece?”

This is one reason that Itō wanted to find Greek influence in Hōryūji. Itō could not endure being underrated by Fergusson and others. “Architecture exists, in Japan, like Hōryūji, which has been influenced by Hellenism.” He also wanted to inform the Western academic world of this fact. It was based on this feeling that Itō wrote “Hōryūji kenchikuron.”

Incidentally, the International Research Center for Japanese Studies houses some of Fergusson’s works, including *The History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*. The 1891 edition of this book, and not the first edition published in 1876, is housed at the Research Center. It is by coincidence that the name of Itō Chūta is stamped in this book, showing that this book was owned by him. It appears that after Itō’s collection of books was dispersed, this particular copy found its way to the Research Center. The book has many comments handwritten by Itō. A number of these voice criticism of Fergusson. There are places in the book where Itō has written “No!” in English next to the text. There is no question that in the back of his mind, Itō opposed Fergusson.

One can still not believe, though, that Itō criticized the very foundations of Fergusson’s work. Fergusson considered ancient Greek works to be of the highest value. That is probably why he placed so much importance on Gandhara. Itō tried to challenge Fergusson in the following way. “There is architecture in Japan that has been influenced by Greece. There are elements that can be linked to Hellenism. In this respect, this Japanese architecture is no different from that of Gandhara, so highly respected by Fergusson.”

It is quite obvious what happened. Itō’s opposition, in reality, paid homage to ancient Greece. In this respect, his position was the same as Fergusson’s. He ended up following the same values as his opponent. “Ancient Greece is wonderful. However, Japan was once blessed with what ancient Greece had to offer, so Japan must have some value.” This may seem a little exaggerated, but this is the essence of what Itō ended up saying.

“So, what of ancient Greece? Japan has nothing to do with something so trivial. Japan has had, from years back, its own wonderful architectural culture.” Itō did not rebuff Fergusson in this way. As such, this was a very different historical understanding compared to the values followed by scholars of Japanese classics in the times after the Edo period. Itō Chūta was unmistakably a scholar who lived in the years after Meiji, during the time when Japan was heading for Westernization.

## SHŌTOKU TAISHI AND JESUS CHRIST

Hōryūji was first constructed by Crown Prince Shōtoku Taishi. Shōtoku Taishi was also referred to as Umayado no Ōji, which literally means "Prince of the Stable Door." It is said that the prince was so called because his mother, Hashihito no Kisaki, went into labor after running into a stable door. This was recorded in *Jōgu Shōtoku hō-ō teisetsu* in the eighth century and was also written in Japan's first official recording of history, *Nihon shoki*.

A number of other biographies on Shōtoku Taishi also exist. One which is particularly interesting is *Jōgu Shōtoku Taishi den hoketsu ki*. This was written at the beginning of the ninth century and relates a most incredible story concerning his birth. One night, Hashihito no Kisaki, the Prince's mother, had a dream in which a glittering golden priest appeared before her. The priest told her that he would like to borrow her womb in order to save the world. After accepting this announcement in her dreams, Hashihito no Kisaki went into labor at the stable door. It was here that Umayado no Ōji, Shōtoku Taishi, was born.

A similar story is related in the New Testament. Namely, the birth of Christ as announced, in a dream, by the archangel Gabriel to Mary. This is widely known as the Annunciation.

Perhaps there is some sort of historical link between these two stories. This is what historian Kume Kunitake thought. He wrote of this in his *Jōgu Taishi jitsuroku* in 1905. There were many Christian believers in China during the T'ang Dynasty in the seventh century. These were followers of Nestorianism. These Christians were treated as pagans in the West and ventured to T'ang in China in order to find a means of survival in the East. They were officially recognized by the T'ang Dynasty and conducted propagation activities in its capital, Ch'ang-an. The story of a messiah being born in a stable after the Annunciation would undoubtedly have been related by these believers. There were many Japanese in Ch'ang-an at the time. From the seventh century to the ninth century many exchange students were dispatched as envoys from Japan to Ch'ang-an. This was precisely at a time when Nestorianism was at its peak in China.

What Kume suggested was that the legend of the birth of Christ was conveyed to Japan by these exchange students. Upon returning to Japan many of these former students became involved in the editing of written materials. Some were possibly involved in compiling historical material. Some may have even been involved in writing biographies of Shōtoku Taishi. They may have applied the legend of the birth of Christ that they had heard in Ch'ang-an to what they were working on back in Japan. This may be why the story of the



birth of Shōtoku Taishi was embellished with details similar to the birth of Christ. This is what Kume imagined.

There is much controversy in the academic world over this theory of the New Testament being conveyed to and used in Japan in this way. The average opinion of researchers is that this is possible, but there is no proof to support it. Instead of discussing the right or wrong of this theory, let us consider why Kume arrived at this conclusion. A hint may exist in Kume's own experiences in the West in the 1870s.

It is well known that the new Meiji Government dispatched a large diplomatic mission to Europe and the United States between 1871 and 1873. Minister of the Right, Iwakura Tomomi, was designated ambassador plenipotentiary of this delegation, which visited the United States and European countries over a time span of two years. This mission is often referred to as the Iwakura Mission, after the name of its leader. The diplomatic aim of this mission was to revise treaties with the nations visited. Unequal treaties with the West were to be abolished and diplomatic relations putting Japan on an equal footing with other nations established. This is why this delegation was sent abroad. Apart from Iwakura, other participants in this mission included Kido Takayoshi, Ōkubo Toshimichi, and Itō Hirobumi. Such an impressive lineup undoubtedly displayed the Government's will to have this mission succeed.

The mission, though, did not succeed in abolishing unequal treaties. A diplomatic relationship, where the West was superior, continued to reign. After failing in this diplomatic endeavor, the mission changed its goal to observing advanced civilization. A large proportion of *Bei-Ō Kairan Jikki* (An Account of the U.S.A.-Europe Mission), a written record of the mission, covers this observation. While this is also well known, these records were written by Kume, who was also a member of the mission. He completed this work in 1878.

It is interesting to note that Kume was also ordered to observe religions in each country. For this reason, Kume visited churches in each place the mission went to and came into direct contact with Christianity. According to Kume, many Westerners made fun of Japanese religion. "Evil religions like those where snakes are worshiped are rampant in Japan. Christianity, the religion of civilized people, has yet to find its way to Japan. How could a treaty on equal footing be concluded with such a barbaric country?" Kume says that Westerners possessed this type of preconception about Japan.

The British diplomat Harry Parkes also emphasized the importance of Christianity. Kume reports that due to this, Iwakura, Kido, Ōkubo, and others started to attend local churches while abroad. While this mission was given the task of revising treaties, understanding Christianity also became an important issue. Kume became involved in this area of work, too. Perhaps it was due

to this that Kume, even after returning to Japan, continued his contact with Christianity. While he did not convert to Christianity, he did unmistakably feel sympathy toward this religion. In 1897, Kume started work on a translation of the New Testament.

“Japanese religious perspective is still backward, and a need exists for the people to understand the more advanced religion of Christianity.” This is what Kume was told in the West. “However, Christianity had reached this so-called backward Japan in ancient times. The Japanese had absorbed this and produced a Shōtoku Taishi legend that appeared to be an adaptation of the Bible. Even Japan had been Europeanized in ancient times.” This is probably what passed through Kume’s mind. He was undoubtedly delighted when he developed the idea of a relationship between the Bible and the legend of Shōtoku Taishi.

“This will lead to resolving some of the gap between Christian civilization and Japan. Westerners were complaining that the Japanese did not understand Christianity. However, there existed, from days gone by, an element of Christianity in Japanese history.” It is quite possible that this thought crossed Kume’s mind. He was trying to answer a pending question which had existed since he was in the mission by using the dimension of historical interpretation. If this is so, then his historical position was very close to that of Itō Chūta, both held a type of enthusiasm for Europeanization. Both wanted to link Japan with the West, so what they did was to reflect this dream in Japanese history.

### WHEN THE HISTORY OF INDIAN ART CHANGED

Let us now take a look at the art critic, Earnest Havell. Havell published a number of works on Indian art. Havell, an Englishman, was registered at an art school in Calcutta. One of Havell’s works is entitled *Indian Sculpture and Painting*. In this work, published in 1908, Havell lowly evaluates Gandharan art. Havell says that all Gandharan art is a crude copy of Greek and Roman art. Trying to find the foundation of Indian Buddhist art in Gandhara was incorrect according to Havell. What Havell did highly evaluate was India’s own art. “Art born and practiced in India, art that was not influenced by Hellenism, was wonderful.” Havell, therefore, expressed an opinion exactly opposite to that of Fergusson’s.

This was not what is referred to as positive research. This was very speculative work. A stance of wanting to honor the uniqueness of Indian art was extremely strong. This was, however, a very stimulating point of discussion. Moreover, this was responsible for changing the color of Indian art history



from the second decade of the twentieth century. It was around this time that Indian art historians in England also started to change their values. The tendency to emphasize the influence of Hellenism, as was done in the past, was starting to diminish. They were, instead, highly evaluating Mathuran and other forms of essentially Indian art. The focus of value was being transferred from Gandhara in the northwest to Mathura in the central north. This was a time in history when European artists were expressing an interest in Asian and African art, and primitive art was being spoken of as being avant-garde. It was also at this time that the anti-British independence movement and Bengali nationalism grew stronger.

This trend, in which India's unique art being taken up at the beginning of the twentieth century, also had an influence on the world of art history in Japan and grew stronger from around the end of the second decade this century. What is characteristic is that Japanese scholars stopped mentioning Gandhara as the source of Japanese Buddhist art. Prior to this, it had been the common trend to emphasize the conveyance of Hellenism from Gandhara. However, from around this time, this perception started to fade away. On the other hand, an increasing number of academics started to cite elements originating in Mathura in Japanese Buddhist art.

Proof of this can be seen in the fact that many researchers started to write that art history up until that time had been completely wrong. Taki Seichi and Matsumoto Bunzaburō, for example, wrote as such. Sekiya Tadasu, an architectural historian, in 1919 reflected on this issue in *Seryū Zasshin* (Report of a Trip West). "Too much importance has been placed on Gandhara. Indeed, ancient Japanese art and Gandhara were not linked."

What should be given attention here are changes in Itō Chūta's way of thinking. In 1893, Itō proclaimed the conveyance of Hellenism to Hōryūji. He claimed that styles from the West reached Japan by way of Gandhara. Just how did Itō handle the new wave of thinking that emerged between 1915 to 1920? Itō, too, fell in line with the new popular way of thinking. At the beginning of the 1920s, he started to point out the favorable view of Havell. In his *Tōyō Kenchiku-shi Gaisetsu* (Outline of Eastern Architectural History) of 1926, Itō's way of thinking was quite similar to that of Havell. This shows just how large an impact Havell's work had on the Japanese academic world.

Why, though, did Itō accept this new way of thinking? This way of thinking was completely different from his previous position. So why did he decide to become involved in this new wave? One reason could be that scholars cannot ignore trends in the academic world. However, that cannot be the only reason. Itō's own nature also made it easy for him to feel sympathetic toward Havell's cause. In 1913, Havell wrote *Indian Architecture*, in which he critically wrote about Fergusson. "Fergusson, who emphasizes the influence from overseas

countries, is wrong.” Havell wrote as such in his preface and criticized Fergusson from the beginning to the end of Chapter 1.

This is what influenced Itō. In fact, Itō often referred to remarks made by Havell about Fergusson in his own criticism of Fergusson. Fergusson emphasized the point that Greek art had a great influence on India. This is most likely why he highly evaluated the art of Gandhara and extrapolated that there was no value in Chinese and Japanese architecture. Itō refuted this point at the end of the nineteenth century. “Japan had been influenced by Greek civilization in ancient times. Japan had been within the scope of influence of Hellenism.” Itō questioned how Fergusson could make light of Japan without even knowing about this.

Havell had criticized Fergusson for the exact opposite reason. “Fergusson focused on influences from overseas. However, a traditional art had existed in India from ancient times. Greek influence had nothing to do with this.” Even so, Fergusson was focusing too much on this and this is why, according to Havell, Fergusson had lost track of the true nature of Indian art. Havell’s criticism of Fergusson was much more logical. Itō was paying homage to classical architecture. In this respect, Itō had surrendered to Fergusson. Havell, on the other hand, totally ignored the standards of ancient Greece. Havell completely denied Fergusson, the authority on Oriental architectural history in the nineteenth century.

However, Itō did want to surpass Fergusson. Itō’s architectural history research was supported by his opposition to Fergusson and that is most likely why Itō veered toward Havell’s way of thinking, even if this meant that Itō’s own position may be weakened. From around this time onward, not many people spoke of Hellenism having been conveyed to Hōryūji. The claim that columns at Hōryūji were linked to entasis from ancient Greece was no longer to be heard. It took quite a while, though, for Itō to abandon the theory that entasis had been conveyed. He withdrew the overall theory that Hellenism had been conveyed, meaning that he may have still felt some attachment to this theory.

### JAPANESE ESSENTIALISM

It is sometimes said that Hōryūji construction was based on site planning unique to Japan. Such site planning is not evident in mainland China or on the Korean peninsula. Facilities and buildings are lined up in a type of ethnocentric way that can only be seen in Japan.

The central part of Hōryūji is surrounded by a *kairō* (cloister). A hall for displaying Buddhist statues and a tall pagoda stand next to each other in the



courtyard. Looking into the courtyard from the South Gate, the hall is on one's right and the pagoda is on one's left. This placement is said to be uniquely Japanese.

The hall on the right, when seen from the gate, is wide in width but short in length. The opposite stands for the pagoda on the left. It is long in length, but narrow in width. The hall and pagoda are built in line, though. This means that when looking in from the South, the symmetrical balance of building placement is askew. Moreover, this was done deliberately.

All ancient temple construction on the continent was performed in a way whereby facilities and buildings were positioned in line with each other, balanced on the right and left. Both in China and on the Korean peninsula the placement of buildings was symmetrical.

This is not the case with Hōryūji, though. There is no placement on the continent where symmetry is deliberately skewed. Breaking symmetry was a method created in Japan. This is something to unique to the Japanese. From times of old, a tendency seems to have existed among the Japanese to not like the attainment of right-left symmetry. There appears to be something oppressive with perfect symmetry. The Japanese discovered a sense of easiness and spiritual freedom by breaking free from symmetry and delighted in this. A typical example of this is the tea-ceremony room. This type of ethnocentric preference had already appeared at the time of the construction of Hōryūji.

Japanese Essentialism is often used in this way when talking about Hōryūji. Of course, this type of discussion also has historical roots. Reading a Japanese uniqueness into architectural placement started at the end of the 1920s. Up until then, nobody had commented on this issue, which suddenly surfaced at that time. Up until the beginning of the 1920s, architectural placement at Hōryūji was considered to be continental. It was considered that Buddhist temples had made their way to Japan via the Korean peninsula and were simply copied in Japan. The first person to say that this placement was Japanese was architectural historian Hasegawa Teruo. He wrote of this in his *Shitennōji kenchikuron* (A Study of Shitennōji Temple Architecture) in 1925. Even so, he did not clearly state that this was Japanese. It was as if he was saying, "I think this is Japanese, but what do you think?" There is a reason Hasegawa wrote in such an ambiguous way. He wrote that facilities and buildings in Buddhist temples on the continent were lined up symmetrically. However, Hasegawa had not actually studied such sites on the continent in detail for himself. Hasegawa was not involved in this type of work at all. He wrote purely from his own imagination.

Hasegawa possessed a preconception from the outset. "The Japanese do not like symmetry. In this respect ethnocentric preferences between the Japanese and the Chinese, who like symmetry, exist." Hasegawa professed to this type

of comparative culture theory from the very beginning. All he did was to simply apply this theory to architectural placement used at Hōryūji.

What is interesting, though, is the reaction to this theory of the architectural historians. There was no proof whatsoever to back up Hasegawa's theory. Even so, all the architectural historians accepted this theory. Itō Chūta, Sekiya Tadasu, and all the other historians rushed to accept this theory, which really had no solid foundation. This was what happened from the end of the 1920s to the beginning of the 1930s: everyone became taken up with the ethnocentric spiritualism trend prominent at the time.

Between 1910 and 1920, Bengali nationalism influenced academic theories in India. Academics started to focus on art unique to India. A similar phenomenon occurred in Japan from the end of the 1920s. People wanted to talk out about Japanese nationalism. This prevailing trend also changed interpretations of ancient Japanese architecture. Hōryūji, which had been thought of as being a copy of continental architecture, now was considered to display Japanese creativity. It was most likely this way of thinking about Hōryūji that attracted the ethnocentrism of the academics at the time.

The prevalent trend at any one time has power. Once you are taken in by this power, it is very hard to pull away. You gradually become taken in by the trend, and the trend takes you over. Academics should be detached from this, but they are no different from others when it comes to being taken over by trends. There are perhaps certain trends, though, that entangle the academic arena because of its inherent nature.

There is another flow in the academic world that progressed between 1910 and 1920 and that should not be ignored. At around this time, the theory of Hellenism having been conveyed to Japan started to weaken. People started to say that the origin of Japanese Buddhist art should be looked for in Mathura in India.

The origin of Japanese art moved closer to Japan, from Greece to India. It is important that this move gained momentum between 1910 and 1920. If this had progressed even further what would have happened? The location considered to be the origin of Japanese art would have shifted to China and then the Korean peninsula, closer and closer to Japan. It is understandable, then, how Japan itself came to be considered the origin of Japanese art as time progressed. This is what happened in the late 1920s.

If the Japanese academic world had felt a stronger cultural inferiority complex toward India, the results may have been different. The possibility exists that people may have continued to revere India's Mathura as the origin of Japanese art. However, there was not so much of an inferiority complex on the Japanese side. At least, any feeling of inferiority toward India was much less than what was felt toward the West. That is why the next theory to surface



after the theory of the roots being in India, was Japanese Essentialism.

There are a few other elements, apart from site planning, that were said to be Japanese. It is true that the first issue to be taken up was that of building placement. However, there were other features that were also said to be Japanese. For instance, the line of the roof and the construction work under the roof was very Japanese. From the 1930s, a trend existed in the Japanese academic world to try and discover an element that could be described as being essentially Japanese. This had an impact on the view of Hōryūji's curved pillars being Greek in origin, and this view faded away even further. This interpretation became somewhat out of date prior to the 1920s and added momentum was given to this.

A glimpse of the world outside the academic arena shows a different situation. Ordinary readers continued to favor the old theory, even in the 1930s and 1940s. They continued to say that the columns in Hōryūji had been influenced by Hellenism. This can be clearly understood from printed matter read outside the realms of academic magazines and specialist books. Surely, though, normal readers also came under the influence of the ethnocentrism trend at the time. The nationalism of the 1930s should have had an effect on areas outside the academic arena as well.

However, ordinary readers were unaware of the situation within the academic arena between 1910 and 1920. News of the interpretation of Indian art having changed had not reached the ordinary reader. Most likely it was only a small group in the academic world who had an understanding of this. That is why the average person continued to support the theory of Hellenism having been conveyed to Japan. Ordinary people did not try to view Hōryūji in the context of Japanese Essentialism as the academics did.

However, the academic world leaned toward Japanese Essentialism. With the perception of Indian art having changed between 1910 to 1920, the scholars were probably prepared for this situation. All that can be said is that Earnest Havell's influence on the academic world was quite considerable. This explains the prevailing situation today of the difference between the recognition of the scholars and that of the average person toward Hōryūji.

### THE DESTINY OF THE ENTASIS THEORY

Soon after World War II, travel abroad by Japanese people was strictly controlled. For a number of years, Japanese people had to remain in Japan. It was not until around 1964 that people were allowed to travel freely abroad. Even at this time, though, only U.S. \$500 worth of foreign currency could be taken overseas. Japan's return to international society was quite slow at the begin-

ning. Japan became a member of the League of Nations in 1956. Perhaps it was this closing off of Japan which influenced the situation, but linking Japanese Essentialism to Hōryūji remained predominant in the academic world in the 1940s and 1950s.

However, from the 1960s, circumstances clearly started to change. It was at around this time that an interpretation of Hōryūji based on Japanese Essentialism started to die out. For example, a new interpretation of the asymmetrical placement, said to be uniquely Japanese up until then, surfaced. Instead of this having its origin in Japan, it was considered that this was conveyed to Japan from China.

This occurred at the same time that Japan was making a comeback in international society. This was at the time when educational and scientific exchange between Japan and China was being reestablished. Perhaps this new theory is related to this background. No historic site in China, dating back earlier than Hōryūji, had been found with asymmetrical placement of buildings. No evidence had been found proving that this had occurred in China first. Even so, people started to say that asymmetrical placement also had its origins in China. "It is hard to believe that such originality existed in Japan in the seventh and eighth centuries." "Temple construction basically involved the copying of temple construction conveyed from the continent." "Asymmetrical placement is also just one example of what was copied." It was from simple judgments such as this that Hōryūji interpretation was to be changed again.

No asymmetrical placement of a temple older than Hōryūji has been found in China. Surely this condition would support the theory that Hōryūji was a Japanese creation. Researchers should have been more forceful and stood their ground. Why, then, did they abandon the old theory at this time? Why did they lean toward the theory of asymmetrical placement being derived in China? Trends in the academic world were undoubtedly influenced by the situation at the time, for example, the re-establishment of educational and scientific exchange between Japan and China. This cannot be proved, but I cannot help but think that this was the case.

Even further impetus is given to this trend in the latter part of the twentieth century. Apart from site planning, a number of features of Hōryūji have been cited as being Chinese. Links with faraway Central Asia have also been cited. What will eventuate if this trend gathers further momentum? Perhaps the theory of entasis being conveyed with Hellenism to Hōryūji will be resurrected in the Japanese academic world. In 1991 art historian Uehara Kazu published the results of his research work in the voluminous *Tamamushi no Zushi*. In this work, Uehara declares that the columns of Hōryūji are linked to ancient Greece. He says that he cannot prove this, but he believes this to be true.

I do not believe that this comment has been taken positively within the aca-



demic world. It could be referred to as a type of false start from the starting blocks. It is extremely interesting, though, that this type of comment has started to re-emerge. This may mean that the trend within the current academic world is now to place even greater importance on international trends. Although I would like to look into the social background to this, I will leave this issue alone here. I will reserve judgment on this, as it is a very new development.

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