

JANUARY 1967

The Metropolitan Museum
of Art BULLETIN





fait par
Rondet M^r
Petersbourg
1762.

The Mistress & the Widow

EDITH A. STANDEN *Associate Curator, Western European Arts*

Three women – aunt, wife, and mistress – were important in the life of Peter III, emperor of Russia for six months in 1762. His aunt, the Empress Elizabeth, took him from his native Germany when he was thirteen and proclaimed him her heir. Four years later she married him to a German princess, who eventually became famous as Catherine the Great. Elizabeth and Catherine were women of outstanding intelligence, ability, and force of character; it is not surprising that, when Peter acquired a mistress, he chose someone totally lacking in these qualities. The Metropolitan Museum owns two unusual woven portraits, one of the mistress (Frontispiece) and one of the wife (Figure 6) – or rather widow, for it was made long after Peter's early, sordid, and violent death.

The first of these portraits, a tapestry, has always been recognized as Russian, because of its inscription (Figure 1). A good deal is known about the French weaver who signed it, Jean-Baptiste Rondet, including such an insignificant fact as that on July 25, 1752, he wore a colored costume early in the day and later changed into black. This comes, as might be guessed, from a police report; the Paris police submitted a bill, which has survived, for twenty-two days' work trailing various employees of the Gobelins manufactory at ten livres a day, and for the services of a "*mouche*" (a spy) inside the factory at three livres a day. The poor workmen were not believed to be guilty of anything that would be called a crime today outside the Iron Curtain: they were merely suspected of wanting to leave the country. A Gobelins or a Savonnerie weaver underwent long and arduous training at the king's expense and became a very valuable person, but both these royal manufactories were in bad financial shape in the mid-eighteenth century and their employees frequently did not receive their pay. Elsewhere in Europe, ambitious princes and enterprising capitalists were trying to bring their own tapestry or carpet workshops up to the standard of the French ones, and the best way of doing this was to persuade skilled workmen to emigrate by promising them better treatment.

Early in July 1752 a Savonnerie worker called Dufresne was thrown into jail because he was suspected of being about to leave France. In prison, according to a letter he wrote to his wife on a leaf torn from a book (intercepted, of course, by the authorities), he was provided only with water, had to buy his own bread, and was eaten by a million fleas. He soon admitted that he had wanted to go to England, and his confession involved

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FRONTISPIECE:

Elizabeth Romanovna Vorontsova, at the age of twenty-three. Tapestry-woven in wool and silk by Jean-Baptiste Rondet (active 1752-1764). Russian (St. Petersburg), 1762. 42½ x 34 inches. Gift of Mrs. T. Durland Van Orden, 62.105

ON THE COVER:

Moriya defending his stronghold. Detail of Figure 1 on page 199



1. Detail of the Frontispiece. The inscription, translated, reads: "Made by Rondet M^e [maître tapissier] at Petersburg, 1762"

some Gobelins weavers. One of these was called Rançon, who had tried to escape to Portugal three years earlier. "But what I think is the worst," wrote the director of the Gobelins to his governmental superior, "is that Rondet, one of the best *haute lisse* [upright loom] workers under Sieur Audran [head of the workshop], who seems to be quite well off [*qui est bien à son aise*], is apparently beginning to take part in the plot"; he was consorting

with Rançon and had gone with him to the prison at Fort-l'Evêque, presumably to see Dufresne. As England was the country chosen by these discontented workers, orders were given that any letters from "Padinkton," Kensington, or "Foullemme" (Fulham) to Gobelins employees were to be opened and read.

This attempted escape was foiled, but Rondet had more trouble in September, when he and his wife had to guarantee that their son, then in prison, would, on release, go to the port of Rochefort and join a group of marines being sent to the colonies. Young Rondet was a rascal, but this was not to be revealed to the marine officer; he should be described only as "the son of a poor Gobelins workman with so large a family that he could not support them by his work, etc." The "etc." suggests that the story would be easily accepted as only too probable.

The Rondets seem, like many other families, to have been Gobelins weavers generation after generation. In 1635, an Antoine Rondet and his son René were employed at one of the Paris workshops that were forerunners of the royal manufactory, and Jean-Baptiste is known to have inherited his father's quarters at the Gobelins. He clearly could not make both ends meet, for he is next heard of in 1753, when he was accused of weaving tapestries illegally, to be sold under the counter to private buyers. Three types of tapestries were made by Gobelins weavers. First, there were the official productions, ordered by the king's minister, fully recorded, charged to the king, and usually transferred on completion

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to the storehouse called the Mobilier de la Couronne; the Metropolitan Museum has important examples of these truly royal tapestries, including six pieces of the Sujets de la Fable set (see the *Bulletin*, May 1962). Then there were authorized commissions for private purchasers, such as the Croome Court wall hangings and furniture covers in the Museum; these do not appear in the manufactory records, but they are usually inscribed with the name of the head of the atelier or workshop in which they were made. Finally there were illegal productions, copied from borrowed cartoons in stolen wools and silks. These are hard to identify.

Rondet, even with the extra money he may have made illicitly and with one son off his hands, was evidently still in difficulty, for in July 1756 he appears again in the correspondence between the director of the royal manufactories and the king's minister. The news was worse this time: he had disappeared, along with a young man of very little ability called Vandigent. Rondet's wife, left at the Gobelins with two children, was sure she would hear from him, as she believed he had gone only to central France to visit her sick brother-in-law, but two days later a letter arrived from Brussels. It was from Vandigent, written in Flemish (was his name perhaps Van der Ghent?) to a fellow countryman at the Gobelins. Its contents were conveyed, in bad French, to the director. Rondet had persuaded Vandigent to go with him to Russia, but in Brussels he had suborned a local man to accompany him instead, and left Vandigent in the lurch. Deceived and abused, Vandigent asked to be forgiven and to be allowed to return to Paris, and he eventually got his wish. But Rondet, described as "one of the best *officiers de tête*" (the highly skilled and better paid workers who wove figures) was lost to France. The Seven Years' War broke out the following month and conditions at the Gobelins grew even worse.

The name Rondet occurs again in the official correspondence in 1758, in connection with an increase in pension. This must refer to another member of the family, as a tapestry formerly in the Hainauer Collection is re-

corded as signed "f[ait] a St. Petersburg p[ar] J. B. Rondet 1759," showing that Jean-Baptiste had indeed reached Russia. The next document is a belated permit, dated October 8, 1763, authorizing Rondet, "a worker at the Manufacture royale des Meubles de la Couronne at the Gobelins in Paris," to live in Russia for three years from that date, but enjoining him to return then, or incur the penalties listed in the king's ordinances.

The remainder of his rather sad history is summarized in an entry of September 21, 1764, in the archives of the French Foreign Office dealing with Russia. "Sieur Rondet [no gentleman he, to be called Monsieur], attached to His Majesty's service in the Gobelins manufactory, where he had worked the greater

2. *Detail of the Frontispiece*



3. *Empress Elizabeth of Russia.* Engraving by George Frederic Schmidt, 1761, after a painting by Louis Tocqué, 1758. 27 x 20 inches. *The Elisha Whittelsey Fund*, 59.570.48



part of his life with the title and pay of a *maitre tapissier*, let himself be seduced, five or six years ago, by the hope of an imaginary fortune; taking his industry and his labor to Russia, he deserted his place and his country, but scarcely had the Baron de Breteuil arrived in Petersburg, when this workman came to implore his assistance in obtaining forgiveness and permission to return to France.” The baron – then, according to a modern writer, a “dashing young cavalry officer of seven-and-twenty” – arrived as French ambassador in 1760, so that Rondet had had several years to regret his action; one may suppose that the ambassador was at least able to procure his pardon and the authorization for his absence,

even if he could not send him home. But the transcription of the document continues: “*Maître tapissier* at the imperial manufactory of St. Petersburg, Rondet died in this city in 1764, leaving a daughter named Jeanne, aged twenty-two.” His name appears for the last time in the Gobelins records the following year, when a competent worker called Savigny left the manufactory clandestinely and was thought to be on his way to Russia to replace him; actually, Savigny had gone to Munich. Only the Hainauer tapestry and the portrait in the Metropolitan survive to bear witness to Rondet’s skill, though another Russian tapestry portrait, unsigned, formerly in the collection of Sir C. Hercules Read, may also be his work. It represents the lovely young Princess Dashkova, author of lively but historically untrustworthy memoirs. Few tapestry weavers, other than workshop heads, have left as much concrete evidence of their individual existence as did Rondet.

The place of origin and the maker of our tapestry are given by the inscription, but who is the lady? She has been called the Empress Elizabeth, but the date 1762 on the tapestry makes this identification impossible. Elizabeth died in her fifty-second year on January 5, 1762 – Christmas Day, 1761, by the Russian calendar. Her portraits show her as round-faced, and all the artists’ skill could not present her as anything but enormously fat (Figure 3). Also, she would never have been portrayed, as is the lady of the tapestry, without crown, or orders, or any of the symbols of rank and empire. Fortunately, the published records of the imperial St. Petersburg tapestry manufactory tell us who this young woman is; the entry stating that her portrait was woven in the year 1762 is confirmed by the painting from which the tapestry is derived (Figure 5). She is Elizabeth Romanovna Vorontsova, a sister of Princess Dashkova, and Peter III’s strangely loving and faithful mistress.

Peter had little or nothing about him to inspire affection or loyalty. He was small, ugly, and horribly scarred by smallpox; the accounts of his behavior (most of them, it is true, written by his enemies) make him seem intermittently deranged. His most indulgent mod-



4. Detail of the Frontispiece

5. Elizabeth Romanovna Vorontsova. Painting formerly owned by Countess E. Vorontsova-Dashkova. From a reproduction in *Portraits russes des XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles* by Grand Duke Nicolas Mikhailowitch (St. Petersburg, 1906)

ern biographer has described him as “physically something less than a man and mentally little more than a child,” and his mistress as “the one ugly and stupid member of an exceptionally handsome and gifted family.” Her portrait supports this statement. Breteuil, the French ambassador who helped Rondet, said she had the manners and appearance of a barmaid in a second-rate pub. She was born in 1739 and became a lady in waiting to Peter’s wife, Catherine – the plainest of them all, Catherine wrote in her memoirs.

Peter, however, found her more to his liking than his wife. When the Empress Elizabeth died, he gave her an apartment close to his in the Winter Palace and awarded her the order of St. Catherine, an honor previously conferred only on princesses of the blood. Princess Dashkova tells of a conversation she had with the new emperor. “He spoke in a low voice and in half sentences, but in terms unequivocally expressive of his intentions to displace *her*, as he indicated the empress [Catherine], and to raise *Romanovna*, as he said, when speaking of my sister, to the throne. Having thus declared himself, he proceeded to give me some salutary cautions. ‘If, my little friend,’ said he [he was her godfather], ‘you will take my advice, pay a little more



attention to *us*; the time may come when you will have reason to repent of any negligence shewn to your sister; believe me, it is for your interest alone I speak; you have no other way of making yourself of any consequence in the world than by studying her disposition, and striving to gain her countenance and protection.' As it was impossible at this moment to make any suitable reply, I affected not to comprehend a word he said."

The emperor's remarks were painful indeed to the princess, who was devoted to Catherine. According to her memoirs, she played a very prominent part in the conspiracy that overthrew Peter, though she was only eighteen; this has been doubted by historians (she was writing forty years after the event), but Catherine certainly rewarded her more lavishly than she did her other supporters. There were many of them, for Peter, in six months, changed the course of European history and aroused the enmity of almost all his subjects. He was a passionate admirer of Frederick the Great; by putting an end to the war then in progress between Russia and Prussia and abandoning Russia's very substantial gains, he saved that monarch's career and may well have been responsible for the whole future success of the Hohenzollerns. Peter wished to be, as he conceived his idol was, an enlightened ruler, and many of his actions, such as reducing the salt tax, abolishing the Secret Chancellery (a judicial torture chamber), and permitting religious dissenters to return from exile, are indeed admirable. But he alienated the Church by putting its property under state control and by ordering priests to shave; the Army, by introducing German uniforms and discipline; and the people as a whole by his treatment of his wife, by his contempt for religion (he liked to stick his tongue out in church), and by starting a war with Denmark merely in order to enlarge his German estates. When Catherine's friends proclaimed her Empress and Autocrat of All Russia, there was no opposition.

Peter, at this moment, was drilling troops, his favorite occupation. Elizabeth Vorontsova and a number of other ladies and gentlemen

were with him. On hearing the news, he and his companions went by boat to the fortress of Kronstadt, but the garrison had gone over to Catherine, and Peter fainted in Elizabeth's arms. When he regained consciousness, he dismissed his friends and servants, but Elizabeth refused to leave him. He was arrested and signed an abdication document. He wrote abjectly to Catherine, "Your Majesty, if you do not wish to kill a man already sufficiently miserable, have pity on me and give me my only consolation, which is Elizabeth Romanovna. It would be the greatest act of charity of your reign. . . . Your humble servant, Peter." The request was refused, and Peter was imprisoned and within a month murdered, if not at Catherine's orders, at least in accordance with her unexpressed wish.

Elizabeth Vorontsova met a happier fate. After being separated from Peter, she was sent to her father's house – much to his annoyance, according to Princess Dashkova. He allowed the two sisters to meet; the princess has described what happened, and given us a brief account of the rest of Elizabeth's life: "As soon as I entered my sister's chamber, she began bitterly to bewail the disasters of the day, and her own misfortunes. With regard to any personal apprehensions, I entreated her to dismiss all anxiety; and though she might rest assured of my affection and solicitude to serve her, such I begged her to believe was her majesty's nobleness and generosity of nature, that it would, without any appeal on my part, be exercised in her behalf. On this point my persuasion was well founded; for although the empress judged her absence necessary during the period of her coronation [as one may well believe], she frequently sent messages to her, with assurances of her protection. My sister soon retired to a country place of my father's in the neighborhood of Moscow; and after the coronation and the departure of the court, removed to that city, where she lived until her marriage [in 1765] with M. Poliansky, when she took up her residence with him in Petersburg. On the birth of her eldest son, the empress stood god-mother in person; and many years afterwards,

her daughter, at my request, was nominated a maid of honor." Catherine did, however, take away the order that Peter had given her. Elizabeth lived through most of Catherine's reign, dying in 1792, four years before the empress.

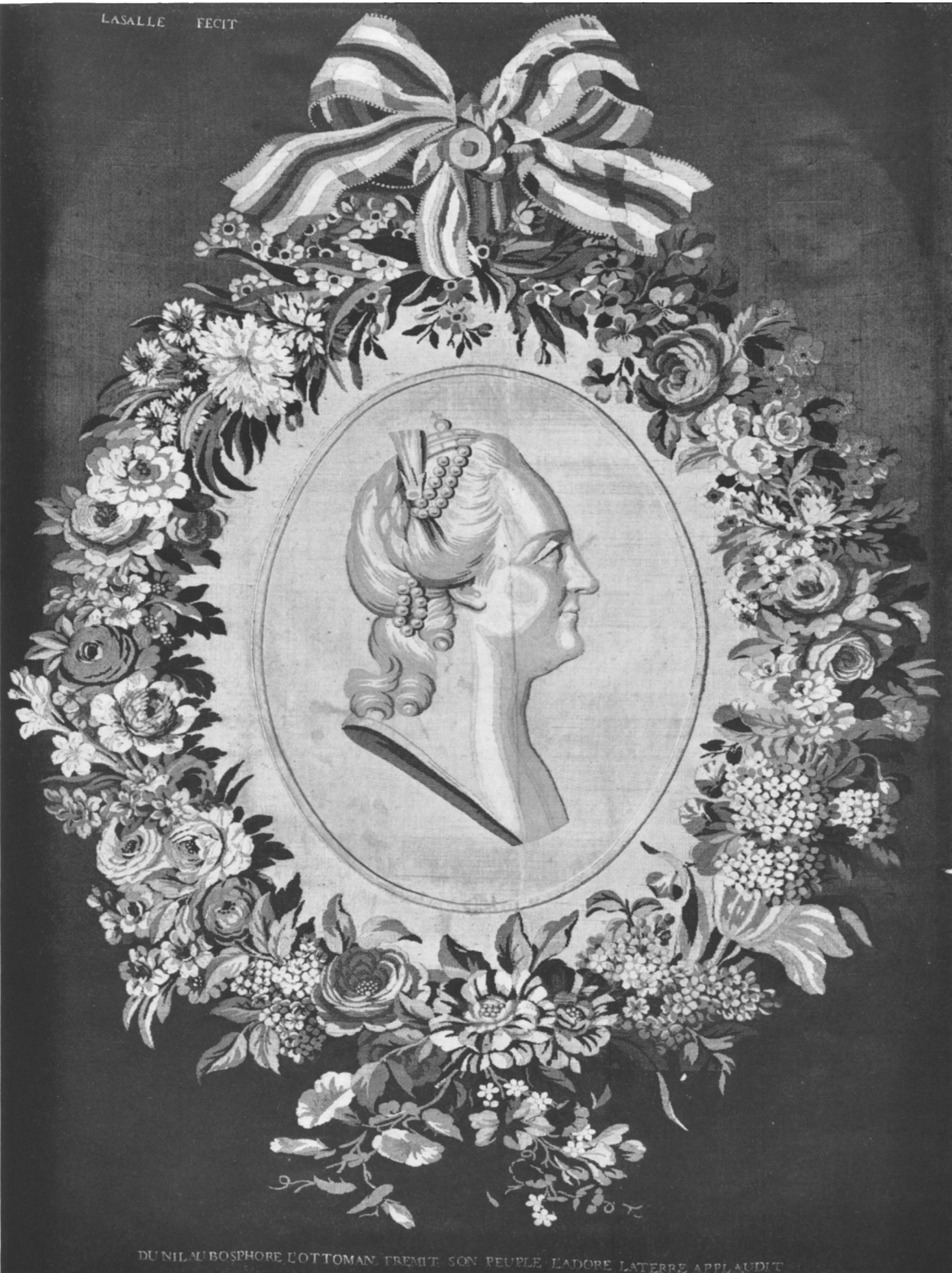
Princess Dashkova quotes one remark that Peter made to her, expressed, she says, with "much more point than was found in the usual tenor of his conversation. . . . 'My child,' said he, 'you would do well to recollect that it is much safer to deal with honest blockheads, like your sister and myself, than with great wits, who squeeze the juice out of the orange, and then throw away the rind.'" The princess calls this "very characteristic of the simplicity of his head and of the goodness of his heart," but it would seem rather to indicate a most unexpected shrewdness of judgment. For the princess and the empress did not remain close friends for long; by 1769 she had found it advisable to travel abroad. She became something of a European celebrity and met important people in all the countries she visited. She was in Lyons when Louise-Marie-Josephine of Savoy (the Princess of Piedmont) passed through the city on her way to marry the Count of Provence, the future Louis XVIII, in May 1771. Here, she wrote, she "visited the several manufactories which were then vying with each other to produce the most beautiful specimens of their art, as offerings to the Princess of Piedmont and her train." From Lyons, she went to Switzerland and, the day after her arrival in Geneva, sent a message to the most famous inhabitant of the region, asking permission to call on him. This was Voltaire, then living near the Swiss border at Ferney, who at the time, as Goethe said later, "governed the whole civilized world." He received the princess with compliments, comparing her voice to that of an angel, and they talked about the empress of Russia.

Voltaire had been corresponding with Catherine for some seven years. He was undoubtedly pleased to receive flattering letters from an imperial hand, but to her, his unctuous letters and, still more, the publicity he gave

to her replies, were extremely useful. She was carefully cultivating the French intellectuals, of whom Voltaire was king, in order to change her image from that of a licentious, husband-murdering tyrant to that of an all-powerful but all-beneficent monarch: wise, freethinking, liberal, and a lover of the arts. Voltaire's letter to her of May 15, 1771, begins: "Madame, I must tell you immediately that I have had the honor of receiving Princess Dashkova in my hermitage. As soon as she had entered the salon, she recognized your portrait in *mezzo-tinto* [grisaille], made with a shuttle on satin, surrounded with a garland of flowers. Your Imperial Majesty should have received one [*l'a dû recevoir*] from Sieur Lasalle; it is a masterpiece of the arts that are practiced at Lyons, and that will soon be cultivated at Petersburg, or at Adrianople or Istanbul [cities that Catherine was expected to capture from the Turks], if things continue to take their present course."

This woven silk portrait evidently became one of the sights of the house. Voltaire's secretary, Jean-Louis Wagnière, was apparently referring to it when he described a "life-size portrait of the Empress Catherine II embroidered in petit point [*brodé en tapisserie*] by herself"; Catherine is said to have, as a young wife, embroidered the wall hangings of her husband's cabinet, but no such gift as an embroidered self-portrait is recorded in her correspondence with Voltaire. He would certainly have acknowledged it with transports of rapture, as he did her other gifts, including a wooden box turned by her own "*belles et augustes mains*." At least one visitor also mistook the woven picture for an embroidery. The Duchess of Northumberland, when she came to Ferney in 1772, wrote in her diary that she had seen "an original Portrait in Stone Colours of the Empress of Russia, Catherine ye 2nd, encompass'd by a garland of Flowers embroider'd in silks on a hair-Colour Paduasoy." The description is accurate in every respect except for the word "embroider'd," and it is impossible to think that there was an embroidered silk portrait at Ferney so exactly resembling the woven one.

LASALLE FECIT



DU NIL AU BOSPHORE L'OTTOMAN TREMIT SON PEUPLE L'ADOPE LATERRE APPLAUDIT

The portrait sent to Catherine is in the Hermitage museum in Leningrad, and three other examples of this Lyons masterpiece have been published. One is in the Musée Historique des Tissus, in Lyons, which also owns the original design; the second was formerly in the Schlossmuseum, Berlin, but was lost in World War II; and the third is in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 6). The last two have embroidered inscriptions: the words “Lasalle fecit” above and a laudatory verse below, which has been translated, “From the Nile to the Bosphorus / The Ottoman trembles; / Her people adore her, / The world applauds.” As has been pointed out in an earlier issue of this *Bulletin*, the poem is by Voltaire. It is the opening lines of a letter dated March 24, 1771 (now owned by the Library Company, Philadelphia) that he wrote to M. Tabareau, director-general of the post office at Lyons. Voltaire continues: “Here, Sir, is the shortest thing I have been able to compose for your protégé; and in such cases the shortest is always the best.” The letter is endorsed, presumably by the recipient: “Verses intended to be placed at the foot of a portrait of the empress of Russia made at Lyons on the loom by M. Lasalle, manufacturer [*par les soins de m. Lasalle fabriquans*].”

Portraits woven on a drawloom are among the rarest of all textiles. They are *tours de force*, far more difficult to make than embroidered or tapestry-woven portraits. The idea of weaving them does not seem to have occurred to anyone until Philippe de La Salle – the “Sieur Lasalle” of Voltaire’s letter to Catherine, and the most famous of Lyonese silk designers – produced the models for this piece and for portraits of the Count and Countess of Provence. The latter pair were made for the future countess’ passage through Lyons, already mentioned, and must surely have been among the specimens of the city’s manufac-

7. *Empress Catherine II of Russia. Terracotta medallion, signed by Jean-Baptiste Nini (1717-1786), and dated 1771. Diameter 6⅛ inches. Gift of James Hazen Hyde, 52.189.11*



LEFT:

6. *Empress Catherine II of Russia. Woven silk, with embroidered inscription and signature of Philippe de La Salle (1723-1795). French (Lyons), 1770-1771. 40 x 29½ inches. Rogers Fund, 41.78*

ture shown to Princess Dashkova. Considering the time needed to construct the *mises en carte* (working drawings), set up the looms, and weave the fabrics, work on all three portraits must have been begun not later than early in 1770.

Why did the idea of making these fantastically complicated portraits occur just at this moment, and why were they carried out in grisaille instead of color? Separate portraits had been woven in the simpler tapestry technique since at least the sixteenth century, but not usually in the great weaving centers: the surviving sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and early eighteenth-century examples are mostly German, Italian, English, and Russian. But in July 1762 the director of the Gobelins was ordered to make a copy of a full-length painting of Louis XV; this tapestry reproduction was exhibited in the Salon of 1763, where it was a great success. Other Gobelins portraits followed, as well as examples carried out in the more difficult Savonnerie knotted technique. The master weavers of Lyons, then at the height of their powers and with a supremely competent designer available, may well have been put on their mettle by these achievements in allied crafts. Their task was certainly simplified by the decision to use grisaille instead of flesh tones for the heads, and La Salle's brilliantly colored floral wreaths make an extremely effective contrast with the muted grays of the simulated sculptural reliefs they surround.

The choice may also have been influenced by the fact that reliefs of this type, in many media, were very popular at this time for portraits. One example of such a portrait is the terracotta medallion of Catherine by Jean-Baptiste Nini, made in 1771 (Figure 7). The profile is very close to that of the silk. Nini was in Paris at the time, so that he, like La Salle, must have copied another work. A marble medallion in the Hermitage museum by Marie-Anne Collot, the pupil and co-worker in Russia of the famous French sculptor Falconet, has the hair arrangement with a laurel wreath (in honor of Catherine's victories over the Turks) that Nini used, though he curled the

dangling locks more gracefully and added another at the back of the neck. The medallion, of course, was not available to artists in France, but its basic features may well have been similar to those in a print by Louis Bonnet after Jean-Louis de Veilly (or Develly), who attended Catherine's coronation in 1763; this has been described as showing the empress in profile, wearing a small diamond crown, presumably that seen in the portrait of the Empress Elizabeth (Figure 3). Perhaps this print was La Salle's model, but it is clear that he did not understand the miniature crown, which is quite unlike anything worn by French royalty; he has placed on Catherine's head a minute ball and cross, with no visible means of support, floating at an angle above some indistinct kind of cap.

The choice of the French royal couple as subjects for these demanding masterpieces was very natural, and one can imagine the excitement with which the project was conceived and taken in hand as soon as the princess' engagement was announced, or at least as soon as it was known she would pass through Lyons on her way to Versailles. But why was the empress of Russia the third person to be so honored? The reason must be connected with the popularity that Catherine had acquired in France, which is attested by the many paintings, prints, sculptures, enamels, and works in other media recording her features that were made there at this time. Their appeal was probably greatest to those who were not wholehearted supporters of the French regime. One engraved portrait has a verse: "Elle est par les Combats, par les Arts et les Loix / La Gloire de son Sexe, et l'exemple des Rois." Louis XV and Louis XVI were not distinguished for their achievements in combat, the arts, or the law, and to honor Catherine by displaying her portrait, particularly if it called her an example to kings, was a subtle and irreproachable way of protesting against what Voltaire called "*l'infâme*," and what we might describe as the Establishment or the Power Structure.

Who was the "protégé" who asked M. Tabareau to obtain a suitable inscription for

the portrait from M. de Voltaire, and who must at least be suspected of conceiving the idea of the portrait itself? Several letters from Voltaire to Tabareau have been published; their tone is jocular and anticlerical, suggesting that Tabareau, though a man of standing, was of Voltaire's party – a freethinker and not happy with the current state of affairs in France. There are clues to the identity of his protégé, who must have been in sympathy with Tabareau to have wanted that dangerous writer, Voltaire, associated with his undertaking. One is Voltaire's statement to Catherine that she should already have received her example (in May 1771) and his naming of La Salle as the sender. (He underestimated the time a package took to reach Russia, for Catherine wrote in June that she did not know the works of La Salle, but, if the portrait in Voltaire's salon was a good likeness, it should convey her appreciation of the friendship he was good enough to bestow on her.)

Another clue is in the endorsement on the letter with the poem: the portrait was "*exécuté . . . par les soins de m. Lasalle fabriquans.*" This great artist made most of his designs for the large and important firm of Pernon, but he had a weaving workshop of his own, and the Pernon silks with which his name is associated are several years later in date. These include a number made for Catherine, commissions that are probably the result of Camille Pernon's visit to Russia about 1773. The portrait was certainly not commissioned by Catherine, and it could not have been made by the Pernon firm in gratitude for the amount of business the empress provided, which was still some years in the future.

But the clearest indication that the "protégé" was La Salle himself is an inscription on Voltaire's own example of the portrait; this, by an extraordinary piece of good fortune, is still in the place for which it was made, his house at Ferney, now owned by Mme Pierre Lambert David. There is the usual embroidered signature above, but, at the foot, instead of the verse, are the words: "Présenté à Monsieur de Voltaire par l'auteur."

The French Revolution was particularly

sanguinary and destructive at Lyons. Tabareau's fate is not known, but it can hardly have been a happy one. La Salle was ruined. It is indeed ironic that these two men were concerned with honoring the darling of the *philosophes*, the "enlightened" empress of Russia, by reproducing her features in silk and by obtaining verses from Voltaire to enrich the offering.

Catherine bought Voltaire's library after his death for 30,000 rubles. She asked her agent in France, Baron Grimm, for a drawing of the façade of Voltaire's house at Ferney and a floor plan, because she intended to put up a copy of the building in the park at Tsarskoe Selo. She wanted to know how the house was oriented and whether the Lake of Geneva and the Jura Mountains could be seen from the windows – if so, from which of them; whether there was an avenue and in what direction it extended. How was each room furnished and for what was it used? Grimm sent what he called a *plan en relief*, and Wagnière, whom Catherine had hired to bring the library to St. Petersburg, was to take with him a sample of every fabric used in the house. Catherine meant to have him supervise the construction of the replica, and place each book where Voltaire had had it, so that the building would duplicate Voltaire's surroundings exactly and be a permanent memorial to the great man, with his statue by Houdon in the middle of it. Sad to say, this fascinating and extraordinarily modern idea was never carried out.

The survival of the woven portrait of Catherine at Ferney is the more remarkable, since Voltaire's heir quickly sold the building and its contents to the Marquis de Villette, who, according to Wagnière, immediately got rid of most of the furnishings. He did, however, set up in one room what Wagnière, who did not like him, called "a kind of little tomb of glazed terracotta," imitating marble, which, he pretended, held Voltaire's heart. The walls were hung with portraits the marquis had found in the house, such as those of Catherine, Frederick the Great (a present from the sit-

ter), and the actor Le Kain. To these, he added others of famous people whom Voltaire had admired. Wagnière pours scorn on the whole *Chambre du Coeur*, as the marquis called it. A print in the Metropolitan Museum

(Figure 8) shows this room, but the portrait of Catherine, visible in the top row, at the extreme left of the long wall, is unfortunately not the “masterpiece of the arts that are practiced at Lyons.”

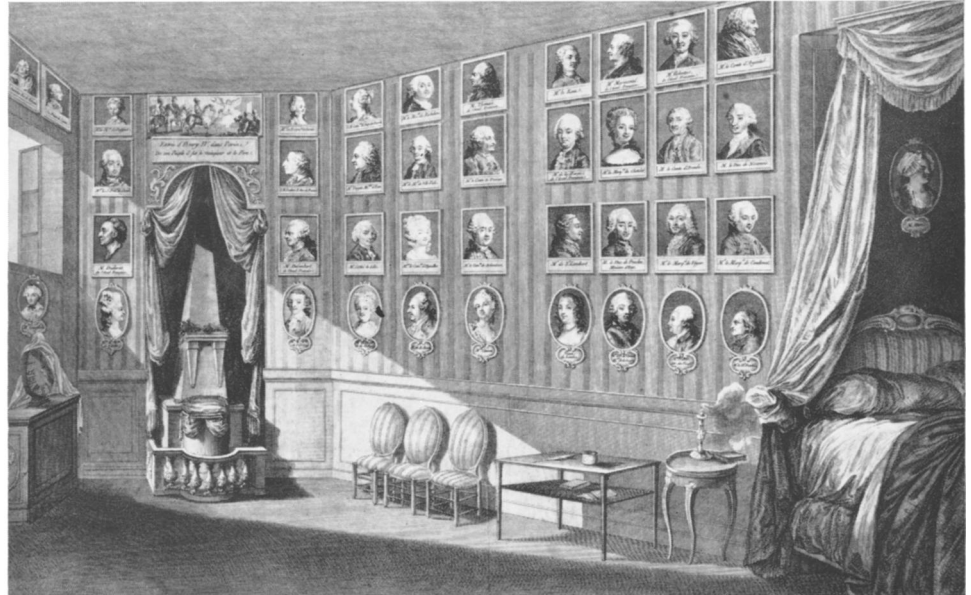
NOTES

The identification of the tapestry portrait and the painting from which it is derived was made by Nina Birjukova of the State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, to whom my deepest thanks are due.

For further details on the Lyons portrait, see John Goldsmith Phillips, “A Silk Portrait of Catherine the Great” in *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* xxxvi (July 1941), pp. 151-153, and J. H. Schmidt, “Zwei Seidentapeten von Philippe de Lasalle und die berliner Seidenmanufaktur” in *Berliner Museen, Beiblatt zum Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen* (1935), pp. 26-32. The latter article includes a technical description and color notes. The author illustrates a medal of 1770 by J. L. Oexlein of Nuremberg

as the source for the woven portrait, but the resemblance is not very close and the tiny crown is so clear that it could hardly have been misinterpreted. I am grateful to Herbert J. Erlanger, who owns an example of this medal, and to Henry Grunthal, Curator of European Coins at the American Numismatic Society, for enabling me to study this and other medals of Catherine II. I should also like to thank Mrs. G. H. Southam, who told me that her mother owned Voltaire’s woven portrait, and Mme Lambert David herself, who sent me a transcription of the inscription. Henry Gibbon of the Historical Society, Philadelphia, where the Library Company’s Voltaire letter is deposited, was kind enough to confirm the endorsement.

8. *Chambre du Coeur de Voltaire*. Engraving by F.-D. Née from a drawing by G. Duché de Vancy made at Ferney in 1781. 13 x 17 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Gift of W. H. Huntington, 83.2.1050



A Pictorial Biography of Prince Shotoku

ALEXANDER C. SOPER

Professor, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

Among the Japanese paintings currently on exhibition is a pair of hanging scrolls given to the Museum by Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer in 1929, which illustrate the legendary biography of Prince Shotoku (Figures 1 and 2). Like most narrative *kakemono* of their type from the medieval period, these are of medium size, about five and a half by three feet, and are executed in opaque colors on silk. Each shows a great number of scenes at small scale, some expanded to cover a wide surface, others squeezed down to the minimum required for intelligibility. The separating elements are buildings, bits of landscape, or the conventionalized cloud layers called *suyari*. The overall design is ladder-like, without any diminution in size from step to step except at the very top. The style is one perfected in the Kamakura period (1185-1333), with clear, precise drawing and softly harmonized colors.

In the traditional and popular view of early Japanese history, Shotoku Taishi – the Crown Prince Saintly Virtue – is the first great hero. He lived at a time of rapid, far reaching, and frequently bloody changes, throughout which he is remembered as maintaining a consistent stand in favor of the new ways. When he was born, around 574, Japan was still isolated, deeply conservative, and culturally backward. During his lifetime the doors were opened wide for the first time to admit an ever increasing stream of visitors. In the beginning this influx was primarily Buddhist, and from the Korean kingdoms (more advanced in the ways of civilization because of their relative closeness to China). The newcomers were for the most part monks, emissaries bearing holy relics or images, and temple craftsmen. In 607 the balance was powerfully altered by the arrival of an envoy from imperial China, recently reestablished under the Sui dynasty; and in return the first Japanese students were dispatched to the continent. Less than a generation after Shotoku's death in 622, the results of this intensive cultural stirring became apparent on a national scale with the new Taika constitution, a complete overhaul of the Japanese political and economic structure, designed to conform with the Chinese ideal of centralized government carried out by a trained bureaucracy.

In all of this Shotoku seems to have been the foremost champion of the imported ideals, both religious and secular. The records show him as a devout and tireless Buddhist, a temple builder, the patron and friend of Korean missionaries, even a commentator and lecturer on the scriptures. At the same time he is described as a Confucian paragon, wise in the lore of books and steadfast in practicing the code of a good ruler. I say “seems to have been” because almost no statement about his career can be made with absolute confidence. All the records are prejudiced in his favor (and against his adversaries), even the relatively objective national history *Nihon Shoki* or *Nihongi*, completed in 720. He lived at a time when governmental authority had been preempted to a very great extent by a powerful nonimperial family, the Soga. All of Shotoku’s adult life was spent in collaboration with, and under the shadow of, the most successful of Soga chieftains, Umako. The latter was strong enough to dictate the choice of four rulers in succession between 572 and 593: the three brothers Bidatsu, Yomei, and Sushun, and Bidatsu’s widow (and half-sister) Suiko, all of whom were doubly tied to him through marriages with the Soga family. Sushun he is said to have had murdered. Shotoku, Yomei’s eldest son, he kept permanently from the throne in favor of the puppet Suiko.

By good luck his hardheaded plans apparently led him in the same direction as did the prince’s idealism. The two were dramatically allied for the first time in the brief civil war of 587 that destroyed organized opposition to the introduction of Buddhism. It is perhaps a roughly accurate measure of the prince’s capacity for leadership that he was barred from the succession and given instead the name and some of the functions of a regent. Presumably he was both too dangerous for the first position, and too peaceable and prudent to struggle against the limitations of the second. In large measure he seems to have functioned as a kind of vice-president for cultural affairs and protocol, at a time when such matters happened to be of great political importance.

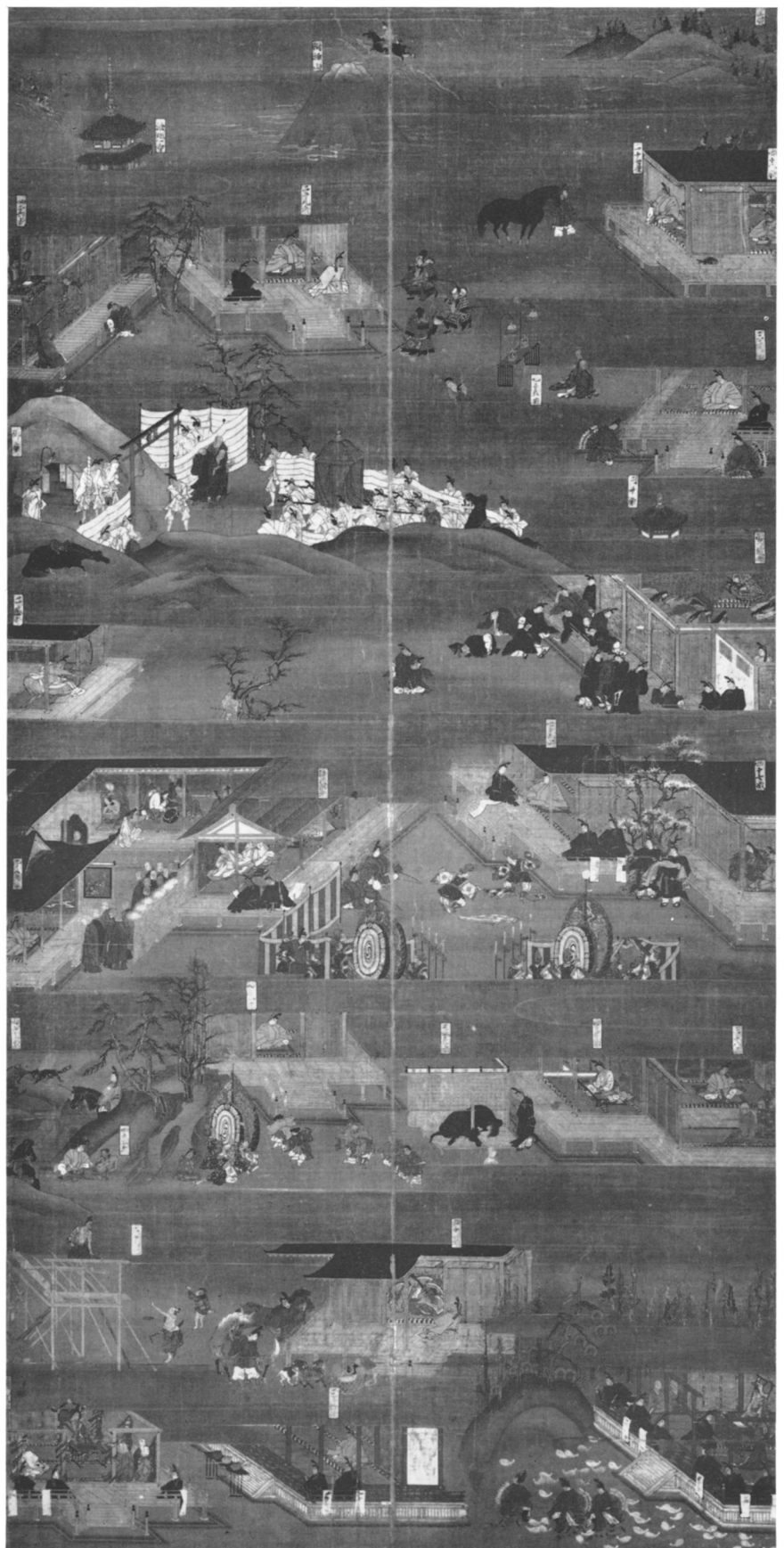
The potential precariousness of the alliance is highlighted by the catastrophe of its abrupt ending in the next generation, after the deaths of the two principals. The Soga chieftain of the early 640s, Iruka, was hasty and brutal (or at least is made to seem so in the records, like Richard III). Thinking his rise blocked by Shotoku’s eldest son, Yamashiro no Oe, he sent his warriors to raid the other’s headquarters at Ikaruga (also the site of the famous temple Horyuji). Shotoku’s mansion was burned down, and although his male descendants escaped with their lives, a few days later they left their hiding place in despair and all committed suicide – by one account, inside the Horyuji pagoda. That was in 643; in 645 Iruka was surprised and murdered at a court audience, by enemies he had never suspected; and all the rest of his family was at once exterminated.

In China, where Buddhist piety and Confucian idealism were familiar, a career like Shotoku’s would probably have won him no more than a routine notice in the dynastic history. In backward Japan he was honored as a unique figure, so wonderfully wise and good that his status inevitably rose from human hero a long way toward divinity. The cult that grew up around his name in later centuries was a relatively restricted one, since it was supported chiefly by the famous temples that he had founded, rather than



LEFT AND OVERLEAF:

1, 2. *The Biography of Prince Shotoku*. Japanese, probably mid-XIV century. Hanging scrolls, colors on silk, 67 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 33 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches each. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, The H. O. Havemeyer Collection, 29.100.470,471



by powerful descendants (as in the case of the Fujiwara clan), or a nationwide sect like the Shingon branch of Buddhism. At Horyuji, where it was strongest, the monks taught that he was none other than an incarnation of the universal savior Kannon, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. He was considered, quite erroneously, the sculptor of the great wooden Kannon in the Yumedono chapel at Horyuji, which was thus a kind of self-portrait. An even more remarkable claim was made in the twelfth century with reference to a sculptured group, representing the Buddha Amida with his two bodhisattvas, supposedly stolen from the temple's Golden Hall at an earlier period. It was asserted that the statues had in the mystical sense represented the prince's family, trebly deified, with Shotoku's mother standing for the Buddha, the prince for Kannon, and his consort for the second bodhisattva, Daiseishi.

The basic source of information used in the medieval cult to describe the prince's life was a highly eclectic biography, the *Shotoku Taishi Denreki*. This is undated; modern Japanese scholarship has established that it was written in 917 by a Kyoto court official, Fujiwara Kanesuke. Most of it is pure hagiography, composed (by the author's admission) to fill in details that had been scanted in earlier accounts. The structure, however, is that of annals, and much of the material is drawn from the official *Nihon Shoki*, either by quotation or by summary. In this portion a simple formula is followed. If the prince's name is lacking in the history, he is inserted as the chief actor. If the action taken was good, it is ascribed to his initiative. If evil, his figure is partly withdrawn to the sidelines, and usually he participates only by adding a gloomy prophecy at the end: "Misfortune will come of this."

Much of the element of legend in the *Denreki* seems to derive from sources far more remote in time than Shotoku's life. Some of the childhood episodes read like echoes from the early years of the historic Buddha. Conception is marked by a preternatural event; the child is astonishingly precocious; he is a devoted student, and among his playfellows far outstrips the rest in strength and skill. On the other hand, the ideal of behavior that he illustrates is often based on Chinese ethics. His first wise utterance as a toddler is an explanation why the pine tree is more to be honored than the peach (its virtues are strength and endurance, instead of mere ephemeral beauty). What he studies with unflagging industry is the art of calligraphy, with the style of the great Chinese Wang Hsi-chih as his model. On several occasions he illustrates the Confucian virtues of filial piety, loyalty, and ceremonial courtesy before his father or the ruler. Again, three of his most memorable miracles have to do with the power of flight, and two at least seem inspired by Taoist lore, where the journey through the sky is commonplace. His famous black horse carries him on a long celestial excursion, over the top of Mt. Fuji; and when he travels to China, in an episode described below, he does so in the classic mode of the Taoist dreamer, in a car drawn by green dragons.

The supernatural element in Buddhist legend is exploited most often by the theme of rebirth, and the memory of past lives. An important part of Shotoku's unique prestige came from the fact that he was thought to be the reincarnation of a great Chinese Zen master, who had lived in a secluded monastery on the sacred Central Peak,



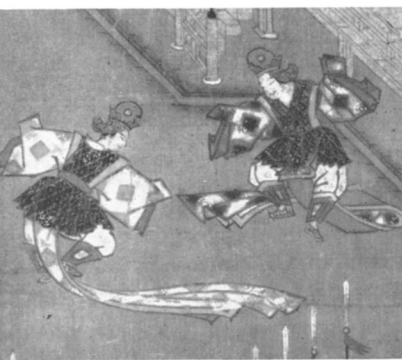
Barbarian envoys

Mt. Heng. The most elaborate piece of fiction in the biography surrounds this claim with a filigree of naïve circumstantial details. In reading over the Chinese text of the Lotus Sutra, Shotoku notices that one sentence in the manuscript is incomplete. He remembers that in his prior life on Mt. Heng he had possessed a copy in which the missing characters were included. Twelve years later, in 607, when the first Japanese envoy, Ono no Imoko, is sent to Sui China, the prince gives him instructions as to how to reach the mountain temple to ask for the scroll. Imoko returns in due course with a Lotus manuscript, and a picturesque story of his reception by the three ancient monks still living there and his visit to the tomb of their dead colleague, the Zen master. It turns out that the wrong scroll has been brought, through the carelessness of a novice-servant in the monastery. Shotoku rectifies the error by a miracle. He retires to his “Hall of Dreams” to enter into a trance. When he rouses himself the right scroll lies on a stand before him, brought back by his spirit. Later the news comes from Mt. Heng that the prince paid the retreat a personal visit, driven there in his dragon car with 500 retainers. He searched out his former cell, took up the one sutra scroll, and then left without a word.

The miracle with which the *Denreki* opens has a curiously familiar ring for readers in the Western world. His mother-to-be, the princess Anahobe, “dreamed one night of a gold-colored priest, most fair to see, who stood before her saying: ‘I have made a vow to save the world, and to lodge myself for a time in Your Highness’ womb.’” Asked who he was, he answered that he was the world-saving Bodhisattva, who dwells in the West. The consort replied: “I shall follow this command with all my heart.” Exactly a year later, on the first day of the New Year, as she was walking through the palace grounds, she gave birth without warning when she reached the stables. From this circumstance the prince, whose proper name was Toyosatomimi, “Bounteous Keen-eared,” came to be called throughout his life Umayado, the “Stable Prince.”

I have left out of this summary secondary details that dilute its resemblance to another, more familiar birth story. The princess’ first reaction to the apparition’s statement is an orthodox Buddhist one: “This handmaiden’s womb is full of filth; how should it lodge one so exalted?” The mode of conception, too, is exotic: the priest leaps into the girl’s mouth. On the other hand, at a later point in the biography one meets another strange echo, the description of a tomb found to be empty, with no sign of its occupant except a neatly folded garment. (The deceased is not Shotoku, but a starving man whom he has tried to befriend.) Unfortunately for the armchair diffusionist, both this mystery and the stable-yard birth are recounted in the *Nihon Shoki* of 720, while the annunciation episode seems to have been added only in the ninth century. If there is a strain of Christian influence among the heterogeneous sources of Shotoku’s story, the circumstances of its transmission are wholly obscure.

One other direction developed in the *Denreki*, an appeal to common humanity, may be summed up in a brief quotation, describing the virtues of the prince’s best-loved consort, who died with him: “The consort was by nature intelligent and astute. When her lord’s body itched, she knew where to scratch without his pointing out the place.



Court dancers

When he wished to summon his retainers, it was she who gave the orders. Whatever he thought she knew in advance. In cold weather she kept him warm, and in hot weather cool.”

The first important cycle of paintings devoted to the legend of Shotoku Taishi was probably executed at Shitennoji, the monastery built (in modern Osaka) as a thank offering by the prince and Soga no Umako after their victory over the anti-Buddhist junto in 587. A biography “on the walls at Shitennoji” is mentioned as a source of information both in the *Denreki* of 917 and in an undated, shorter text on which the latter in part depends, the *Shotoku Taishi Den Hokekiki*. The earliest series still extant is a set of ten large silk paintings that were executed in 1069 as wall coverings for the Edono or “Painting Hall” of Horyuji. These were removed in 1788 and made into five two-panel screens, in an attempt to reduce further damage to their already much deteriorated surfaces. They are now exhibited in the special building for Horyuji treasures in the grounds of the Tokyo National Museum. Their painter, one Hata Munezane, came from Settsu, the Osaka district in which Shitennoji was the principal temple. Unquestionably he knew the latter’s cycle well, and must have incorporated much of it into his work at Horyuji. The Edono set, in spite of its mid-Heian date, shows many survivals of the landscape formulae that, with other elements of T’ang style, had dominated Japanese painting in the eighth and ninth centuries. Its unusually generous dimensions, and the way in which its design elements – building groups, clusters of figures, hillocks and trees – are laid out on long axes slanting out of the background, make it look not unlike some of the landscape panoramas found in the great eighth-century series of cave shrines at Tun-huang, on the far western border of the T’ang empire.

The cult of Prince Shotoku reached its height in the late Heian, Kamakura, and Nambokucho periods, roughly 1100-1400, as part of a general revival of Buddhist institutions and activities around Nara. A great many pictorial lives of the prince were painted during this period, and in succeeding centuries as late as 1600, in various forms and sizes for widespread distribution among temples devoted to his memory. An exhibition of works of this type, held at the Nara museum in the spring of 1965, brought together 32 examples, ranging in date from the Horyuji set of 1069 to replacements done for the Shitennoji chapel by Kano Sanraku in 1623. The temples involved spread all the way from the Kobe neighborhood on the Inland Sea to Ibaraki, northeast of Tokyo. Two versions, Horyuji’s and Shitennoji’s, showed the extra-large dimensions of wall partitions. Four were hand scrolls, and the rest were hanging paintings.

The interrelationships between these illustrations are far too complex for discussion here. From the iconographical standpoint, a great many of the scenes must have had a common origin, perhaps in the original Shitennoji cycle. Compositional devices, color schemes, styles of draughtsmanship, and ways of rendering architecture are, however, extremely varied. This contrast between iconographic interdependence and stylistic heterogeneity applies almost as strongly to the subgroup of hanging scrolls, *kakemono*, as to the whole exhibition. From the simple standpoint of elaboration *vs.* abbreviation,

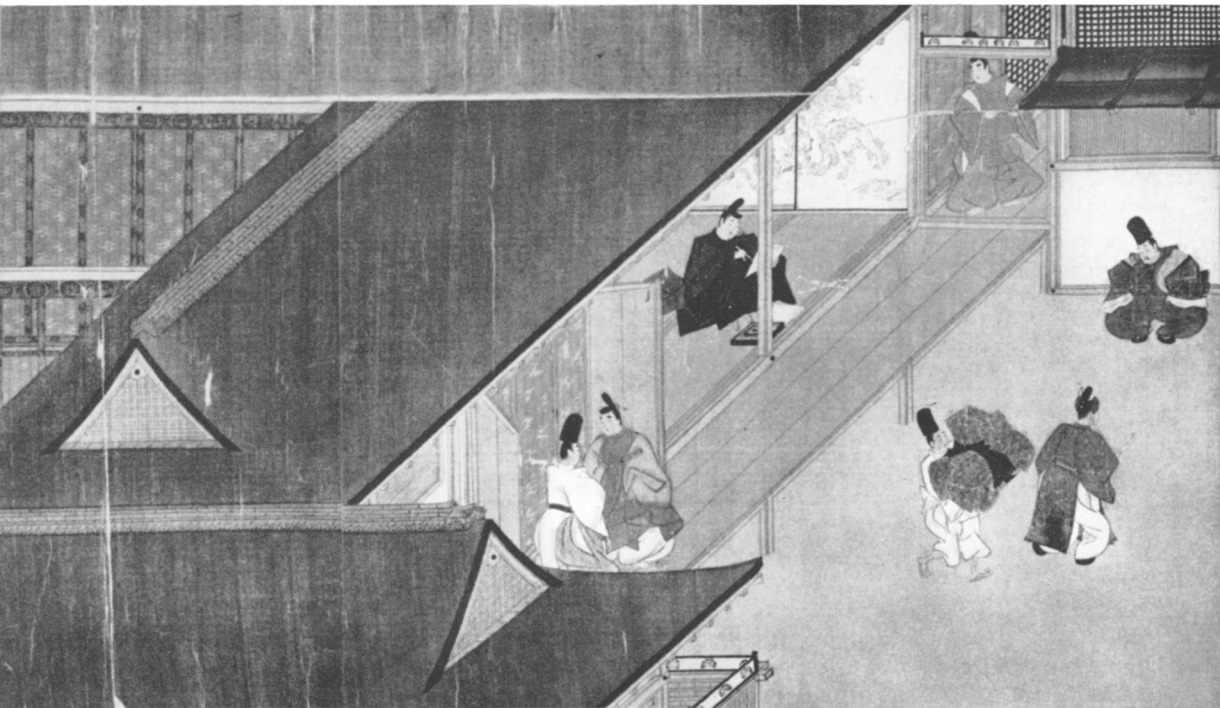


The baby prince with his parents

three sets show one extreme by telling the story in ten large rolls apiece. At the other end of the scale, one set compresses its biography into two *ḱakemono* of medium size. This last, the property of a temple called Daizoji in the Yoshino mountain district south of Nara, is most interesting in the present context, since in all respects it is exceptionally close to the Metropolitan Museum's scrolls. Its dimensions, $50\frac{3}{8} \times 28\frac{3}{16}$ inches, are somewhat less, and so there are not quite as many scenes. It may be a diminished copy of the Museum's pair, or both may have derived from a lost common ancestor.

The catalogue of the Nara museum show lists a total of 118 episodes illustrated throughout the versions exhibited. The largest number found in any one version, 87, occurs on one of the ten-roll sets. The Metropolitan's pair has 62. This relatively large number is possible in so restricted an area because the two *ḱakemono* are laid out with an ingenious compactness. A few scenes of first importance are rendered generously, with plenty of space and picturesque details. The majority are handled briefly, and a good many are set closely together – quite disregarding their chronological order – so that they can share a common landscape or architectural background.

3. *Detail of the Miracles of the Kasuga Shrine, by Takashina Takakane and assistants, Japanese. Dated 1309. Hand scroll, colors on silk, height about 16 inches. Imperial Household Collection, Tokyo. Plate 58 of Kasuga Gongen Genḱi-e (Tokyo, 1963)*





4. *Conception, birth, and ceremonial washing of the prince*

A few details of particular interest from the Metropolitan Museum version will give an idea of the scope and quality of the illustrations. (In these, as elsewhere, identification of subject is an easy matter when the episode is well known and its details are understandable. In addition, each scene is named and given a numbered chronological position by means of a small label alongside.)

Figure 4 is devoted to the prince's birth and childhood. The annunciation, labeled "Entry into the Womb," is shown in a small scene at the upper right. Downward and to the left is the birth, taking place out-of-doors, in front of the horse stalls, with portable curtains set around for privacy. The princess and her ladies have the voluminous robes and long, unbound hair familiar in picture scrolls of court life from the twelfth-century illustrations of *The Tale of Genji* on. Directly above is a bathing scene, with the baby being held by Emperor Bidatsu, his uncle. The sliding screens behind him are decorated with paintings of water and sandy promontories.



5. *The prince praying to the Buddha*

6. *Prodigies performed by the young prince*

The “Second Year” scene is shown in Figure 5: the precocious infant kneels and prays to the Buddha.

The rather confused group of children in Figure 6 may be analyzed into four components. In counterclockwise order, these begin at the upper right with a compact group around the seated prince, shown as a boy in his eleventh year. The picture drastically abbreviates what in the *Denreki* story is a kind of practice court audience. There should be 36 attendant lads, in symmetrical groups. The point of the anecdote is that the prince encouraged all of his friends to talk at once, each on whatever topic he wished, frivolous or weighty, and was able to answer each one with perfect appropriateness. This went on for several days, and was maintained on the hero’s side at an unvarying level of pertinence and sense, even when some of the boys stole home to be primed with exceptionally difficult topics by their parents.

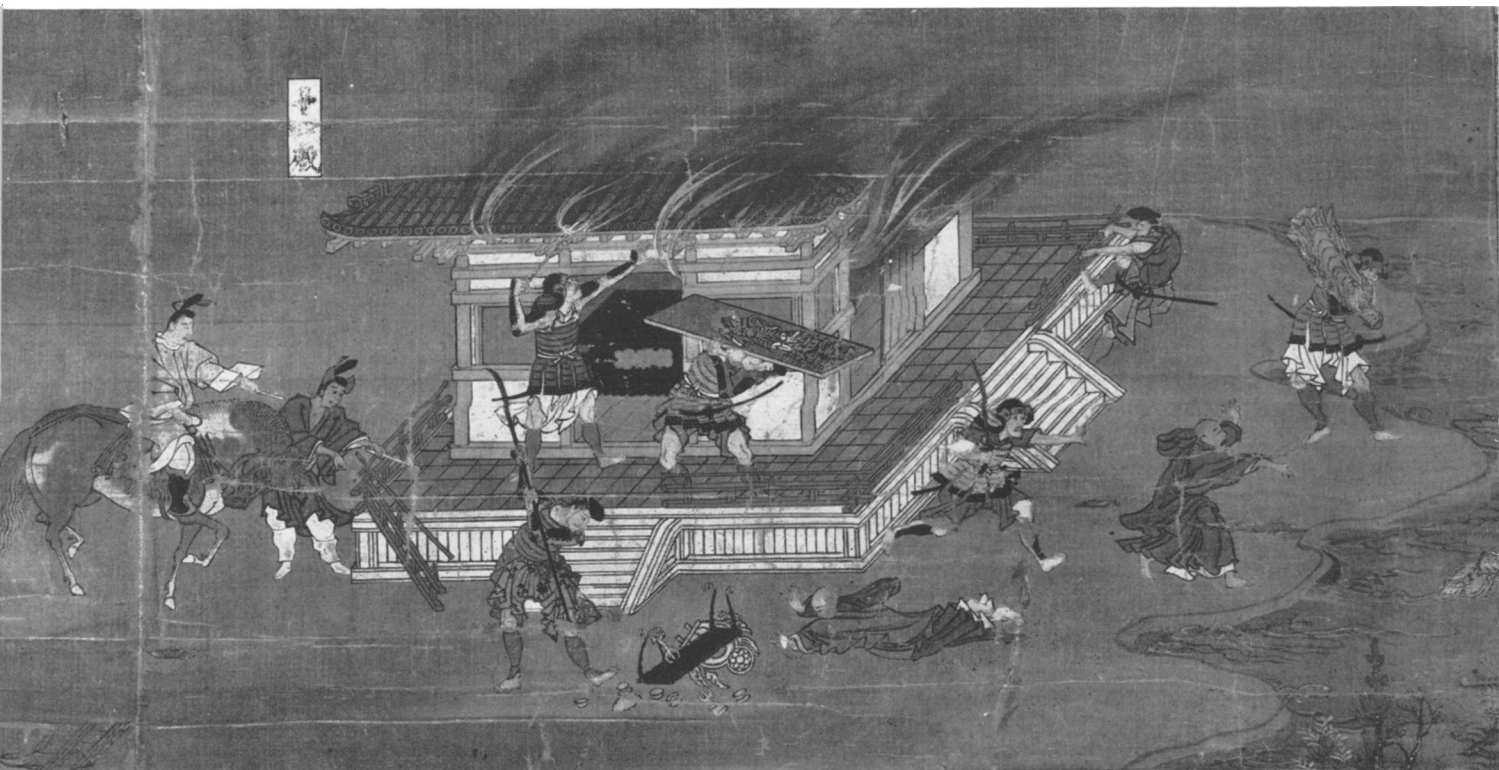
To the left and down are two illustrations that show the prince’s physical prowess: first his ability to soar into the air and “dash along like a bolt of lightning”; and then his mastery in “stone and bow” contests, here simplified into a race. The remaining group shows his meeting a year later, in 583, with the Korean diplomat Illa (in Japanese, Nichira), who was to become his lifelong friend. The *Denreki* concentrates on this personal relationship, which is entirely lacking in the *Nihon Shoki* version. Shotoku is said to have gone in disguise, meanly dressed and with a dirty face, to catch a first glimpse of the distinguished visitor. At once the latter picked him out, crying “There goes a *shinjin* (a godlike being)!” The boy tried to escape by darting away, at which Illa “kicked off his shoes and ran after him.”



The warriors distributed across Figures 7 and 9 belong to two successive moments in the last, violent phase of the introduction of Buddhism into Japan. The story in the *Nihon Shoki* goes that Soga no Umako in 584 built a private chapel to house a stone image brought over from one of the Korean kingdoms, installing there a Korean monk and three newly ordained Japanese nuns. Resentment at court against this innovation was led by two vigorous spokesmen for the isolationist policies of the past, the better known being the chieftain Mononobe no Moriya. In 585 this faction succeeded in frightening Emperor Bidatsu into revoking the permission he had given for limited Buddhist worship. Moriya thereupon descended on the chapel with his warriors, pulled down its pagoda, set fire to the wreckage, and threw the stone statue into a nearby canal (Figure 8). The destruction of the chapel is shown in Figure 7, with Moriya giving orders from horseback. The door wrenched off by one trooper has a painted Guardian King on its inner side. Another soldier is smashing the lacquered black altar table and its paraphernalia with the butt of his halberd.

Two years later, under a new and pro-Buddhist ruler, the tables were turned by Soga maneuvering. Moriya, fearing assassination, shut himself up in his fortified country mansion. When attacked there by government troops, he and his clansmen defended themselves so stoutly that the issue was long in doubt. At a crucial point, "Prince

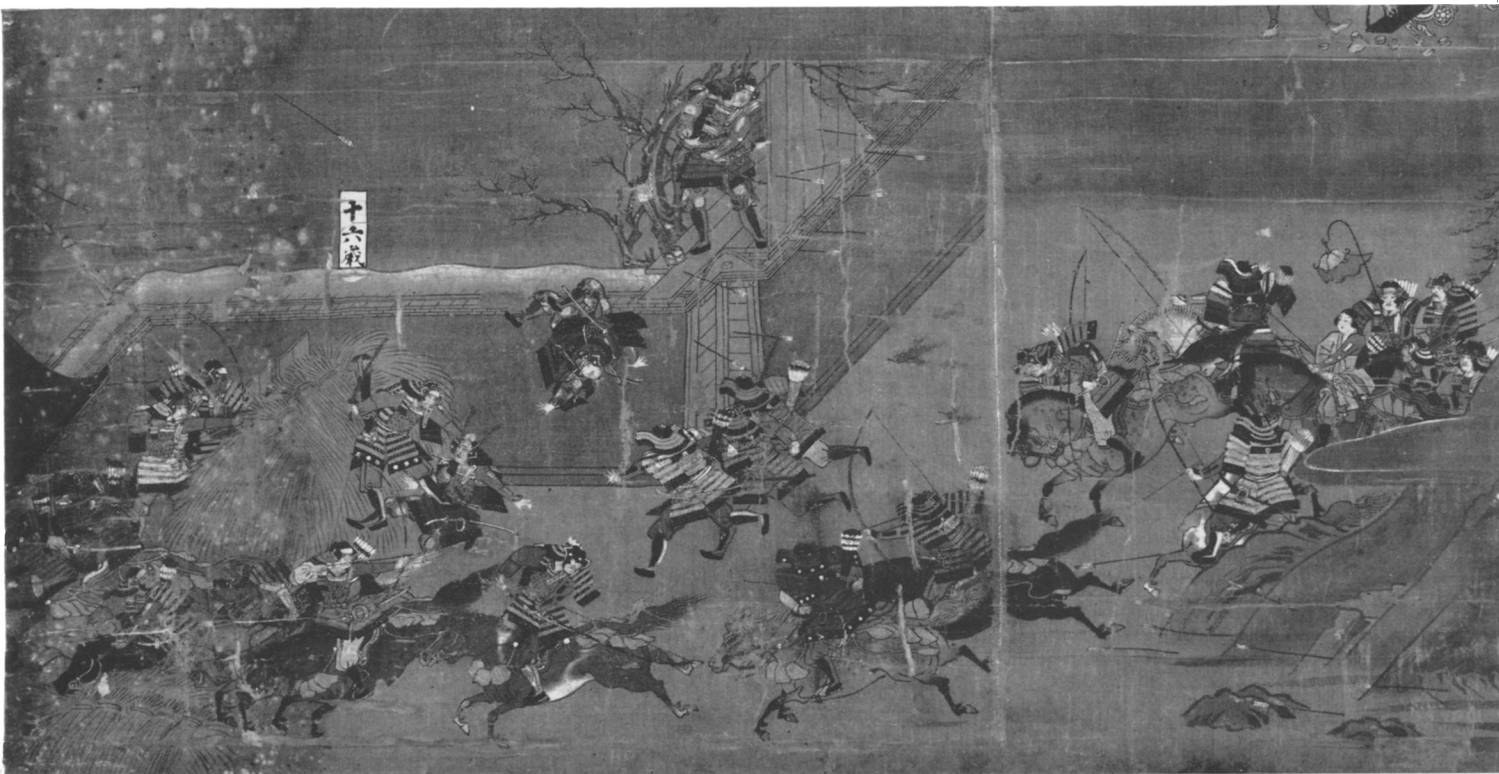
7. *The burning of the Soga chapel*





8. *A warrior throwing the Buddha image into the canal*

9. *The attack on Moriya's stronghold, and his death*



10. *Moriya's defeat and death*



11. *The prince praying to the
Guardian Kings*

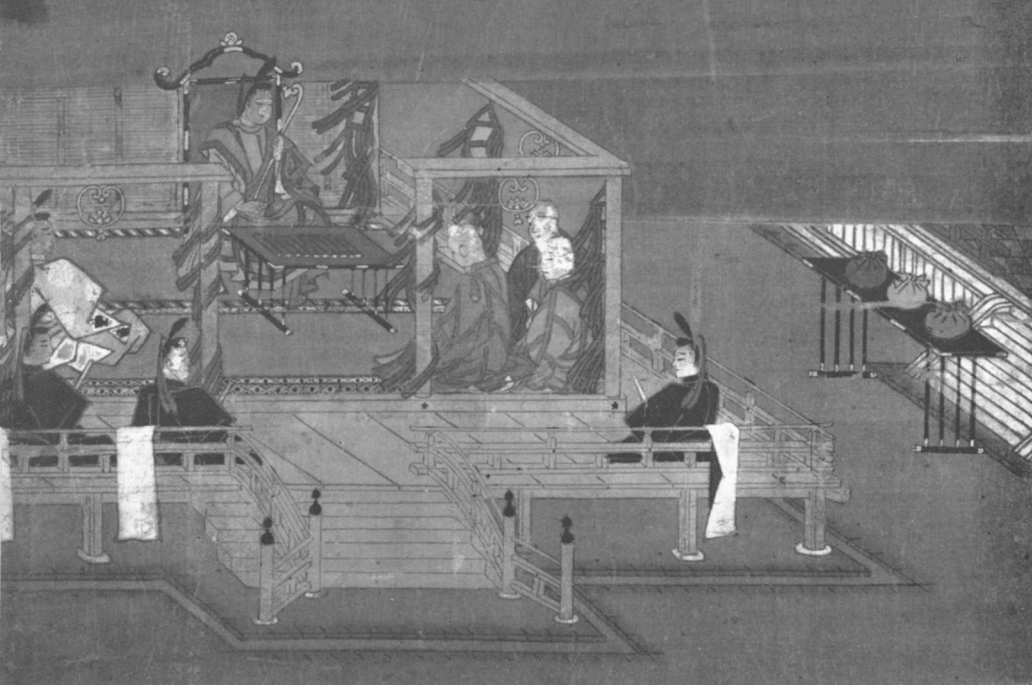


Umayado" turned the balance by magic. He cut down a tree, swiftly fashioned from it miniature images of the Four Guardian Kings (the Shitenno, or Lokapala), and with Umako prayed for their help, promising to build them a pagoda-temple if they brought victory.

In Figure 11 Shotoku, depicted as an unarmed youth, is on his knees praying. One miniature Lokapala image and part of a second are clearly visible on the ground in front of him; presumably the other two have disappeared in the course of repair work to the silk along the edge of the roll. At the left is a spirited attack on the enemy's fortified gate (Figure 10). Moriya, who had been directing the defense, is shown at three consecutive moments: defiantly erect on top of the wall, falling with an arrow in his neck, and in the process of decapitation by an imperial trooper.

12. *The prince riding into battle*





13. *The prince lecturing on the Lotus Sutra*

Shotoku's legendary fame as a transmitter of Buddhist teachings to Japan is primarily connected with two scriptures, one the famous *Hokkekyo* or Lotus Sutra, the other the relatively obscure *Shomangyo*. The scenes in Figures 13 and 14 show him lecturing on these before court audiences, wearing a monk's robe over his princely attire and sitting in an abbot's high-backed chair. The right-hand scene (Figure 14) is given fuller attention because of the peculiarly felicitous nature of the occasion. Though the *Shomangyo* is in other respects a barely noticeable item in the enormous mass of Mahayana Buddhist lore, it has one special asset: its chief protagonist is a female ruler—like Empress Suiko. The prince in his thirty-fifth year carried out his lecture in obedience to an order from Suiko and in her presence; as the *Denreki* says, “mounted upon the lion throne and holding the yak's-tail fly whisk.” On the night when he finished, “lotus petals fell, two to three feet in length, until they filled to overflowing an area thirty to forty feet square. . . . When on the morrow this was reported, the empress marveled greatly and went in her carriage to see the site. On the spot she vowed to erect a temple hall, which became the present Tachibanadera.”

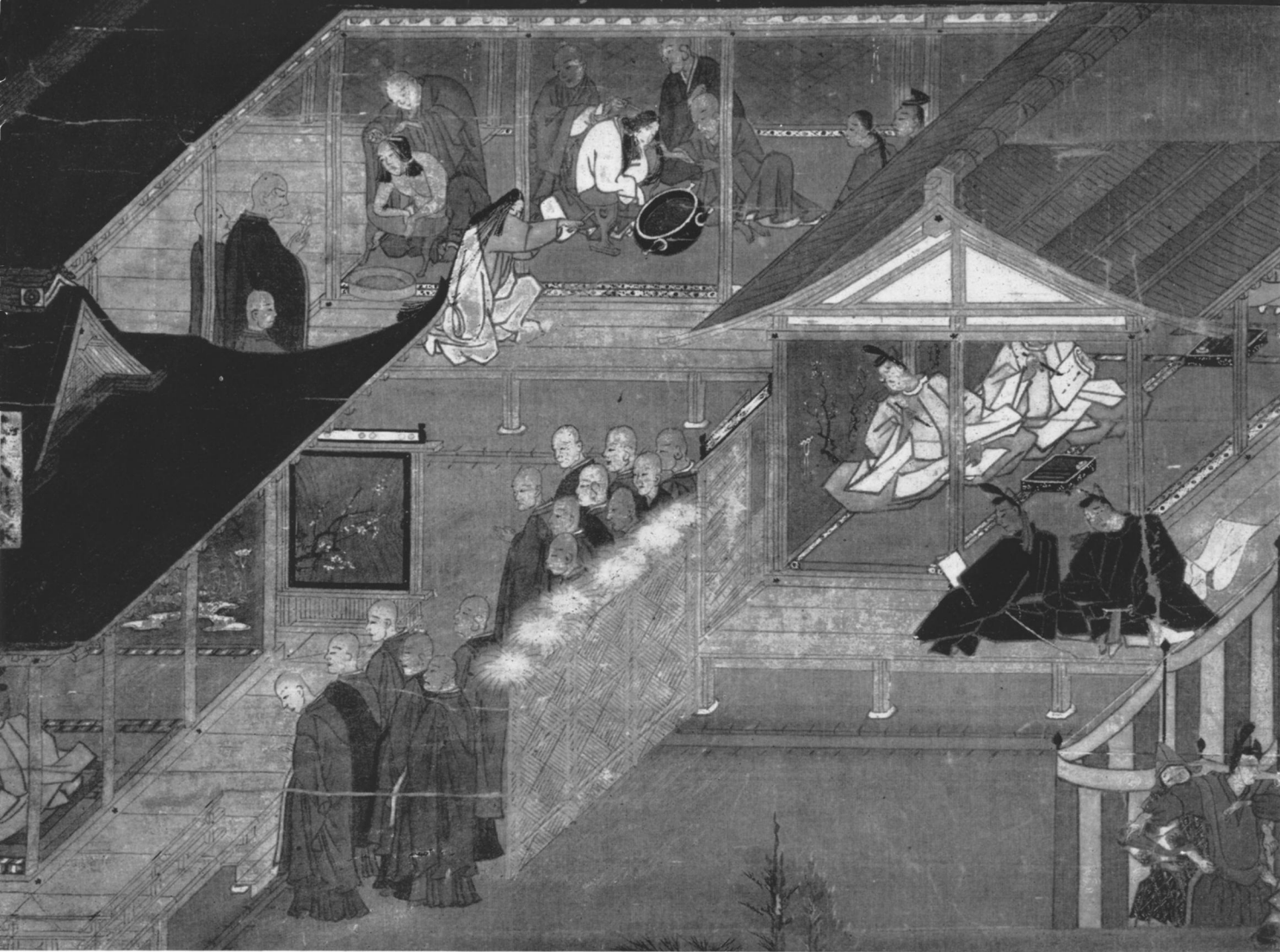
The other unusual feature of the scene, the crowd of ghostly Buddha heads in the background, must have been invented to heighten Shotoku's majesty as a teacher. In other respects the scene follows the conventions of secular art. The building is represented without a roof, to make its interior visible. The high courtiers sit on the verandah with their trains disposed over the railing behind them; the archers of the guard stand watch in the courtyard below.

Like most Buddhist paintings in Japan, the Metropolitan's rolls are unsigned. The attribution to “Tosa Tsunetaka” with which they came to the Havemeyer collection represents the sort of haphazard guesswork out of which Japanese scholarship began to emerge two generations ago. Tsunetaka was a relatively minor court artist of the

late twelfth or early thirteenth century, whose chief reason for being remembered is that he held – *in absentia* – the post of vice-governor of Tosa, a province on the south side of the island of Shikoku. Apparently for this reason only, he was claimed as “first ancestor” of the Tosa school, whose earliest *certain* representative was the early fifteenth-century Yukihiro. Many temple paintings must have been attributed to Tsunetaka simply because they looked old and were done in the *Yamato-e* or native Japanese manner, colorful and decorative, that eventually became the stock-in-trade of the Tosa line. The Metropolitan’s pair must be at least a century later than Tsunetaka’s vague dates. Their treatment in many respects – compositions, coloring and drawing, an interest in small realistic details – presupposes a knowledge of the great *Yamato-e* picture scrolls executed around 1300, particularly the monumental Biography of Priest Ippen

14. *The miracle after the prince's lecture on the Shomangyo*





15. *Scenes of court and priestly life*

by En'i, finished in 1299, and the group by Takashina Takakane centering on the Miracles of the Kasuga Shrine (Figure 3), dated 1309.

As in those masterworks, the story is told by small, carefully drawn, rather static figures, placed in interestingly varied, more or less realistic settings. The bright colors of garments and armor are enhanced by areas of white and deep black court robes. Important details may be shown clearly even at miniature scale, as is the ritual equipment of Umako's doomed chapel. One distinction, in particular, is made as vividly as in the Kasuga scrolls. Where the decorations of secular palace interiors are shown, in the two adjacent buildings in Figure 15, for instance, they take the form of landscape paintings in the high-colored *Yamato-e* style. On the other hand, the room in which the sculptor Tori Busshi is shown assembling a bronze Buddha image has a sliding-screen painting done in the new Zen style, an imitation of a Southern Sung monochrome landscape (Figure 16). In the better-known scrolls this contrast is given a

clearer sociological basis, in that the ink paintings are limited to what are unmistakably the dwellings of Buddhist priests. In the Metropolitan's version the room, dominated by the seated figure of Shotoku as observer, looks like part of a secular house; presumably it was understood as a Buddhist interior because of the sculptor's activity.

Doubtless because the Biography was executed at a less exalted level of patronage than the Ippen and Kasuga series, by a less inventive (and less generously paid) master, such highly interesting passages are few. Most of the details are fairly conventional. Occasionally, where the subject is most routine, as in the figures of courtiers seated along a verandah, the level of drawing falls off abruptly, as if the artist were overcome by boredom or turned the passage over to an apprentice.

The fourteenth century marks the first stage of a rapid decline in the quality of *Yamato-e*. The most evident signs of a late date are on the one hand feebleness of drawing and muddy coloring, and on the other a disagreeable stridency: compositional discords, harshly accentuated coloring and gilding, tasteless intrusions of Chinese drawing tricks. Since none of these are present in the Metropolitan's scrolls, their date should probably not be later than the middle of the fourteenth century, at the very end of the Kamakura regency or in the first decades of the long, eventually catastrophic Nambokucho civil war. A possible clue to their general period and place of manufacture comes from the fact that their closest known cousins still in Japan, the pair at Daizoji, belong to a remote temple in the Yoshino mountains, the region in which the Southern Emperor and his faction took refuge in 1337. The Metropolitan's Biography, being somewhat more complete as a narrative and superior in workmanship, may have been done earlier in the same period for a Yoshino temple patronized by the refugee court.

16. *Palace interiors, with a sculptor's workshop at the right*



Notes



*Herrick House (built in 1855),
by Alexander Jackson Davis
(1803-1892), American. Watercolor,
25 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 30 inches. Harris Brisbane
Dick Fund, 24.66.10*

“When the installation becomes more important than the objects to be shown,” said Mr. Rorimer, “the museum designer has failed in the principal requirements of a museum – the showing to best advantage of its works of art.” It was this conviction that led him, in speaking of *The Cloisters*, to de-emphasize the building that he, along with the architect Charles Collens, designed. “Prominence has been given the exhibits by making the modern architectural setting unobtrusive,” he wrote. “Though the backgrounds are medieval in style, the simplest precedents have been followed.” But as every visitor knows, *The Cloisters* is more than an appropriate setting for

Few architects had more influence in spreading the Gothic Revival style in America than Alexander Jackson Davis. Without writing books on the subject, as did his famous associate and friend, Andrew J. Downing, Davis had clients erecting Gothic stores, churches, cottages, mansions, libraries, schools, and prisons. Although his personal taste and his flair were for the Gothic, Davis also designed many a Greek Revival building, as well as Tuscan, Egyptian, and “rustic” ones. In fact, the amount of designs that Davis made for all sorts of structures in all sorts of styles was prodigious. The Metropolitan Museum owns an enormous collection of Davis material, including one of his two professional diaries or daybooks, shorthand sketches on the backs of envelopes, sets of plans, elevations, and sections for single buildings, and finished watercolor project drawings. This month some of the latter are on view in the Auditorium Lounge.

J. S. B.

medieval art. It is a very enjoyable place to be in, largely because of its distinction as a work of architecture. The harmonious proportions of its rooms, the intimacy and informality of its scale, the graceful integration of old and new, all combine to form a whole that is greater than any of its splendid parts. The recent selection of *The Cloisters* as a New York landmark, and the installation there of a commemorative plaque by The New York Community Trust, serve to draw attention to its unique qualities, not only as a museum, but also, in Aline Saarinen’s words, as a “living, lovely evocation.”

G. W., JR.

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THE CLOISTERS: Open weekdays, except Mondays, 10-5; Sundays and holidays 1-5 (May-September, Sundays 1-6). Telephone: WADsworth 3-3700. MEMBERSHIP: Information will be mailed on request.

