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OF

ART TREASURES

OF

TEN GREAT TEMPLES OF NARA

VOLUME TWO

THE HORYUJI TEMPLE

PART II

THE OTSUKA KOGEISHA
TOKYO
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ART TREASURES OF TEN GREAT TEMPLES OF NARA

VOLUME II

THE HÔRYÛJI TEMPLE

PART II

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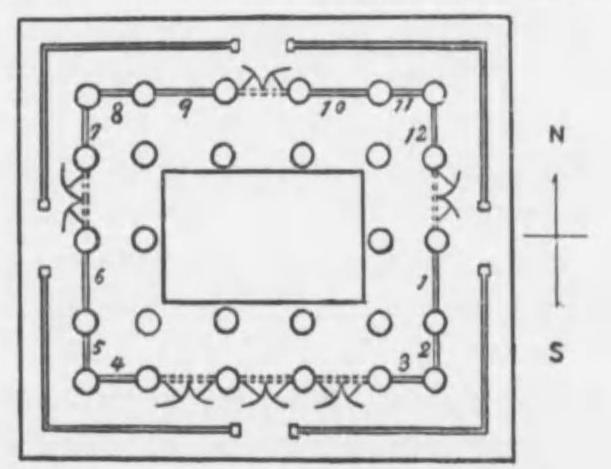
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Of all the buildings in the Hôryûji temple the Kondô or Main Hall is regarded as the most valuable by the consensus of the world. It is not only the oldest of all wooden buildings in Japan having been erected presumably in 607, but contains our earliest and most precious collection of statuary both bronze and wooden. Furthermore it is famous for its great wall-paintings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which, though time-worn and discoloured, strongly bespeak the wonderful ancient culture of the Orient. It thus appears that the Kondô represents one of the highest watermarks reached by our art in architecture, sculpture and painting. Its greatness lies in its artistic as well as historical merits. In architecture it is remarkable for boldness and freedom reflecting the Chinese style of the Northern Wei (386-535) dynasty in the main, although not unmixed with other elements as is shown for example by the entasis of its columns-a fact testifying to their stone origin. The type of its sculpture is chiefly Chinese. It is, however, derived from Indian art and is characterized with archaic sweetness. As for its painting it reminds us strongly of Indian workmanship brought into perfection by Chinese Tang painters and may easily take its place beside any masterpiece of the kind. The three major arts exemplified in the Kondô are each admirable in their own way, but it is undeniable that painting is the soul of this great monument of Oriental arts.

II

In its plan the Kondô has six columns in front and back respectively and five in sides. The central three spans of the façade (south side) are provided with doors and the three other sides with one in the middle. The rest of intercolumnar space is filled up with walls, on which is executed the painting under discussion. Thus we have two walls in the south, three each in



the east and west and four in the north. These twelve walls may conveniently be numbered as illustrated above beginning with the one to the left of the eastern entrance and ending with the one to the right of the same entrance. The walls are made of

three layers of stucco plastered on both sides of the frame consisting of braces of columns and sticks of split bamboo. The innermost layer is of clay, the middle of mixed clay, sand and fibre and the upper of refined sand and fibre very carefully prepared. The walls are some six inches thick, about a third of the diametre of columns. Patience and scrupulous care taken in the work cannot fail to excite our surprise and the labour was amply rewarded, for the walls have stood the test of more than a thousand years with innumerable earthquake shocks and terrible ravages of time. This is partly due to the solid structure of the hall itself, but we can never forget the superiority of the walls themselves. The painting is done on the priming of white chalk on the walls. The pigments, accurate analysis of which is yet to be made, apparently consist of inorganic mineral substances such as were mainly used for our native Yamatoye painting. It is really wonderful that the painter of this great work should have depicted such inimitable figure groups using a very unpliable medium in the dark hall with his brush held almost at right angles to the spacious wall surface.

Ш

Some of the themes are known, but others not. Of the twelve wall spaces four are larger (9 ft. 111 in. × 8 ft. 63 in.) and the rest smaller (9 ft. 111 in. × 4 ft. 11 in.). The former, of course the more important of the pieces, consists of No. 1 in the east, No. 6 in the west and Nos. 9 & 10 in the north. As to the subject-matter of these four larger walls, we have no authority except the Kokon-mokurokushô written by Kenshin, a descendant of Chôjimaru and the very man who once took charge of the Kondô. According to Kenshin, the west wall represents the Paradise of Amida, the east wall the Paradise of Tahô, and the two north walls the Paradise of Yakushi (east of the door) and the Paradise of Shaka (west of the door). That is to say, he thinks that they depict the Four Buddhist Paradises enumerated in Buddhist sutras. But he gives no detailed account as to how and why he came to indentify the

themes and ascribe them to the four points of the compass. There is no room for doubt about No. 6 only, because it occupies the western side, which is traditionally associated with Amida's Paradise, and the attributes of the attending deities—a water bottle and a diminutive Buddha on a diadem-make it absolutely certain that they are Amida's attendants Kwannon and Seishi. Yet for the other three larger walls there is no conclusive evidence for their identification. To try our hand at the venturous task of explanation: we see in No. 11 a Bodhisattva on a white elephant, which undeniably represents Fugen (Samantabhadra). According to the Buddhist sutra Hokekyô, the deity comes from the east. From the elephant's posture suggestive of a forward movement and Fugen's pose showing that it has come from somewhere else, it may not be far wrong to think that No. 11, though found on the north side, is intended to represent the easterly direction. The adjacent larger wall No. 10 must therefore be the Paradise of the East. Granting that it is so, we cannot but admit that No. 9 is meant for the Paradise of the North and No. 1 the Paradise of the South. The way of arranging Buddhist deities to the four cardinal points of the compass, though sometimes done in parallel order, usually take cross order as is perhaps the case with the present paintings - a fact testified by a mandala painting and the disposition of Shitennô or gods of the four directions. Now we come to the question of the designation of these Four Buddhist Paradises. Accepted opinions usually assign them as shown in the diagram. To place Amida in the west

	Копкомуб-куб	Ноѕнаки-куо	PRIEST KENSHIN
EAST	Funò	YAKUSHI	YAKUSHI
WEST	Morveyu	Asmoa	Amina
SOUTH	Hôsuô	SHAKA	Hôsnò
NORTH	TENEGON (OR MINIOGÓ)	Miroku	SHAKA

is positively without dissent. Take, for instance, the mandala cosmography of esoteric or Yôgachârya Buddhism. Both in the Kongôkai and Taizôkai mandalas the west is always reserved for Amida. So our problem concerns the other three directions: whether the

east is intended for Yakushi or Fudô, the south for Hôshô or Shaka, and the north for Tenkoon, Miroku or Shaka. The theory founded upon the Konkômyô-kyô is one which we must consult first of all, since the sutra enjoyed great popularity during the Nara dynasty, when the picture was made. The sacred book rounds fourfold blessings which accrue from its belief in the monarch and ministers of state. laying stress on all lose relationship between the state and religion. In view of the fact that the Emperor Shômu ordered every district to erect its own Kokubunji and Kokubuniji for monks and nuns respectively in order to promulgate its teachings, it stands to reason to think that these four Paradises were painted at a time not far apart from the Emperor's reign and to consult the sutra for the themes of the work considering the rise of many temples relative to the Konkômyô-kyô. To have recourse to Buddhist scriptures is all right. But how is such a conclusion to be confirmed by the paintings themselves. If nothing definite is proved except Amida's Land, all our search must end in the discussion of the Four Buddhist Paradises from the standpoint of exoteric or non-Yōgacharya Buddhism in the Nara period. The solution is really a task almost beyond our power. However, look at No. 9 on the north wall. Here we notice a feature somewhat different from Nos. 1 & 10. In the latter attending deities are drawn with a hand raised and the other lowered or holding a flower with both hands. They are apparently painted to add to the dignity and impressiveness of the principal deities. Whereas the two ministrants of No. 9 are shown not only waiting on the central divinity, but paying homage with clasped hands in adoration, perhaps from listening to a sermon given by the deity himself. This gives us the reason for regarding him as Shaka. Besides the picture is placed in the north, the position assigned to Shaka by later mandalas of esoteric Buddhism. As to the rest Kenshin interprets the east as the Paradise of Yakushi and the south as that of Hôshô - a view coming very close to the theory held by esoteric Buddhism, but differing from it in assigning the east to Yakushi.

Esoteric Buddhism gives Ashuku the Paradise in the east, but a certain branch of it sometimes identifies Yakushi with Ashuku and so they have, as here, some connection with each other. Kenshin's theory is somewhat tinged with elements of esoteric Buddhism, which found its way into the Hôryůji during his times. Yet, if we cannot follow either the Konkômyô-kyô or Hôshaku-kyô in this matter, we have nothing to look to but the exposition offered by esoteric Buddhism. It is possible to think of the prevalence of some version of the Four Buddhist Lands such as esoteric Buddhism propounds during the time when the paintings were being made, but we have nothing to prove this conjecture. Although the authority for Kenshin's opinion is unknown, it seems to be most reasonable to accept his view when we take into consideration the actual design of the paintings.

IV

We now proceed to consider the eight smaller walls. They are all depicted with a Bodhisattva seemingly connected with the Four Buddhist Paradises. We cannot identify every one of them. But the deity of No. 3 being crowned with a diminutive Buddha must be Kwannon. So that of No. 4 is Seishi, as is evident from a water-bottle. In No. 11 is Fugen riding on a white elephant. In No. 12 we see Kwannon unmistakably from his diminutive Buddha. Except for Fugen these are all represented in a standing posture. Nos. 2, 5 & 8 delineate seated deities whose names are not ascertainable. Four larger spaces out of the twelve wall compartments having been devoted to the Four Buddhist Paradises, the remaining eight parts were apparently intended for a Bodhisattva each, two of them making a pair to flank a Buddhist Land. Only Kwannon and Seishi in the south are symmetrically arranged so as to show that they are guarding the Sacred Land, but the other figures do not present rigid symmetry. It appears, however, that Bodhisattvas drawn on the eastern and western walls each correspond with those of the opposite side, seated figures balanced with seated ones, and

standing figures with standing ones. The frieze of the chancel made up of twenty divisions, six in the north and south and four in the east and west, is similarly painted with a flying angel on each of them. Whereas flying Arhats executed on the frieze of the ambulatory were mostly plastered over during the repair of the Tokugawa period. We number eleven in all, with nine panels in the north and east and one each in the west and south. Besides, they are very indistinct, while flying Bodhisattvas on the chancel frieze are well preserved.

V

Now for the date of the mural paintings. Kenshin in his Kokon-mokurokushô attributes them to the hand of Tori. We need hardly say that his opinion is untenable considering their style and date of execution. If they do not date from the Suiko period, when Tori flourished, to what period do they belong? The late Mr. Takurei Hirako ascribes them to the reign of the Emperor Kôtoku (645-654). He draws our attention to the three Imperial donations of land recorded in the Shizaichô of the Hôryūji temple. The second made on Sept. 21, 647, was for the sake of a memorial service held to pray for the repose of the soul of Prince Yamashiro-no-ôye, who ought to have ascended the throne as son of Prince Shotoku, but died a tragic death. This must have been appropriated, as Mr. Hirako thinks, for the embellishment of the Kondô, but for no other purpose. He concludes that the frescoes under consideration were executed at that time. To establish the theory from the technical viewpoint, he says that the Kwannon of the Toindo in the Yakushiji temple, which may well be called the exact copy in bronze of part of the Horyûji frescoes, was cast by the Emperor's Consort Hashudo-Kôgô in order to pray for the peace of the deceased Emperor's spirit, as is told in the Yakushiji-engi (" Daigojibon " version); therefore the wall-paintings of the Hôryûji temple are to be considered to represent the pictorial style obtaining during the Emperor Kôtoku's reign. However, this attribution of the paintings of the Kondô, which was erected during the Empress Suiko's time, is chronologically incorrect according

to the advocates of the reconstruction theory of the Kondô, who regard the present structure to date from the Wadô era (708-714), the original Kondô of the Suiko period being destroyed by fire during the Emperor Tenchi's reign (670). Apart from the dispute whether to take the Emperor Kôtoku's time or the Wadô era, let us now look to the work itself to see if it offers any clue to guide us on the point.

VI

In the earlier T'ang period there seem to have been at least two schools of Chinese mural painting, represented by Yen Li-pen (图立本) and Wu Tao-tzū (吳道子) on one hand and by Yüch'ih Iseng (對遲乙 僧) on the other, According to documentary proof, Wu Tao-tzu's mural paintings were presumably in the so-called paihua (白悲) style or ink drawing; in other words they were principally made up of linedrawing. But at the same time he resorted to quite a different method popularly known as Wuchuang (% 裝) or Wu workmanship, which was drawing in deep India ink supplemented by a sort of shading so as to give the effect of solidity or projection of things in the round. No further detail is to be learned. Still we may well suppose that he gave a new impetus to Chinese painting and used the method more or less in his delineation of Buddhist subjects, which were introduced into China from Central Asia. Yüch'ih Iseng was, according to tradition, a native of Khotan. The clan Yuch'ih consisted of a number of divisions, some being naturalized in China as early as the dynasty of Wei. According to the chapter of Hsijung-chuan (西戎傳) in the Chiu-T'angshu (舊唐書), the king of Khotan himself belonged to the same Yüch'ih family. From this it seems but natural that Iseng, a painter from Khotan, should have stayed to work in the capital of China during the Tang dynasty. His nationality suggests that his workmanship differed greatly from the native Chinese style, although nothing exact is known from the lack of evidence. A T'ang author Chu Chinghsüan (朱景玄) says in his T'angchao Minghualu (唐朝名畫錄) that the artist was dexterous in producing the effect of solid objects, showing that he mastered the secrets

of the treatment of light and shade. The two methods apparently obtained in the fresco and Buddhist painting in the earlier days of the Tang dynasty and their exponents mentioned above flourished as leaders of artistic circles.

The wall-paintings of the Hôryūji temple make much use of line-drawing and are at the same time characterized with the use of shading in colours. Thus we may justly think that they are mainly in the Chinese tradition of Wu Tao-tzū supplemented with the technique of the Central Asiatic origin such as chiaroscuro introduced into Chinese painting by Yüch'ih Iseng. The most remarkable specimen of the art of Central Asia, especially Indian in character, is to be found in the sculpture of Sekibutsuan Cave in Keishû, Korea. It dates from the Shiragi period (57 B. C.-935 A. D.), when the artistic influence of Chinese art in the T'ang dynasty was strongest. In Japan the introduction of Tang arts reached its climax from the Nara epoch to the beginning of the Heian period. Now the style of the wall-paintings in the Kondo must have been brought into this country at the very moment when the earlier phase of T'ang painting burst into full efflorescence from the contact with the artistic tradition of India. Can it have happened during the reign of the Emperor Kôtoku, when in China Wüch'ih Iseng was still alive? Probably not because the two Chinese schools of painting cannot have found their way into this country in view of the great distance to be traversed and innumerable obstacles to communications at the time. Before the introduction of such technique into Japan half a century at least must have elapsed from the time of the two masters—an age corresponding to the earlier Nara period when the influence of T'ang art was at its zenith. The view endorses the ascription of the work to the Wado era keeping perfect harmony with facts showing the spread of Oriental culture in those days.

VII

Now let us consider the relations between Khotan and China. To trace their intercourse after Later Han times, Khotan paid a visit to China as her

tributary state in the Chienté era (572) during the Emperor Wuti's reign of the Later Chou dynasty. Again during the Sui dynasty in the Taiyeh era of the Emperor Yangti they came to pay their tribute. The state was known by the name Kustan(組織11,那), a corruption of its Sanskrit name as teachings of Buddhism from India prevailed in the country. In the Chenkuan era (627-649) of the Tang Emperor Taitsung it was incorporated into China. Mention is made of the place in the Hsiyüchi (西域記) written by the renowned priest Hsuanchuang (玄奘), who says: "The king reveres Buddhism and calls himself a descendant of the god Bishamon (Vaisravana)." Thus the place being the centre of the deity's worship, the T'ang governor of the protectorate was called by the name of Bishamon-governor. During Hsüantsung's reign Ch'é Taochèng (承道政) brought back by order a painting of Bishamon to China. The Emperor Kaotsung extended his frontiers far into the west conquering Tufau (Tibet), pushing to the Himalayas and subjugating Kashmir; in the northwest he vanquished Sit'uchueh (West Turk), which contained Kueitzu (K'utche) and Khotan, until his command reached as far as the Aral Sea. Hsüanchuang's route to India lay from Kuachou to Kueitzu, thence westward to the vicinity of the Aral Sea and turning south to Kashmir; but he returned by way of Khotan. It shows that already in the reign of Taitsung the foundation of the Chinese conquest of Central Asia was laid, consequently giving an idea how important a part Khotan played, lying as it did between India and China. Kueitzu was famous for its musical instruments. It was mainly from there that biwa (lutes) and kugo (harps) were brought to China. As for Khotan it excelled in the textile industry and its fabrics took the fancy of the populace in the Chinese capital as much as the tapestry from Kashmir and the embroidery from Kaoch'ang (Karohoja). T'ang enriched its life with productions of all these districts. We can well imagine how indispensable Khotan and other places of Central Asia were to achieve the greatness of China. We have seen Khotan was a

centre of Buddhism. Its importance to China as a

stepping stone for the spread of Indian Buddhism may easily be understood. At the beginning of the T'ang dynasty it became a dependency of China and served as a road along which culture made its way to the Chinese capital. Consequently T'ang learned more genuine Indian arts and came to imitate them.

VIII

From what we have considered so far, it is no wonder that we should find a large number of Indian elements introduced in the Hôryûji frescoes. In physical features figures delineated there have an Indian characteristic of thick lips. Broad lower lips different from realistic ones drawn in Ajanta paintings undoubtedly show some modification they underwent in Khotan, a process which was further exaggerated in China. The outline of the body is marked with a red line showing the perfection of realistic treatment. This is probably an Indian feature in view of its use in Ajanta paintings. The type of posture, drapery and ornamentation is essentially Indian in spirit or may rather be called the exact copy of Indian arts. The effect of mascular solidity and the flow of drapery lines are rendered by shading of colours, which originates in Indian realism and seems to be what is called Yüch'ih Iseng's method. A wall-painting in India is differently constructed from one in this country. The wall-surface of caves in Ajantâ for instance is covered with bricks, over which is spread a thin layer of cattle dung. The work is executed on a white coating thereon. Thus it has something in common with an European fresco. Whereas the wall-paintings of the Hôryūji temple are done in mineral pigments on primed walls made of sand and clay only. This difference in material is likely to produce the difference in their impression. But apart from the difference arising from the material and treatment, we witness a very large number of similar features in the representation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and are struck with the Indian character in the Hôryùji pieces. The outline of a face, the shape of facial features, the proportion of the body, the shaping of muscles-they are all rendered more beautiful than in the Indian works and rather too much attention

was paid in this direction. Still the works realize the secret of realistic representation with due attention to bodily movements and the change of posture, delineating deities suave, but also dignified in flexible brushwork suggestive of liveliness. Of all the deities represented there, Kwannon and Seishi of the wall No. 6 are the most successful in producing the effect of solidity. They both bend one of their arms and drop the other nearly to touch the skirt-the pose being much the same as that of the deity in Cave No. 17 of Ajanta. We cannot but think, however, that the grace of the execution of these tender, flexible deities with a bent arm very difficult to draw goes a step farther than the Ajanta picture. The crossed legs of the main deity Amida of the same wall are very realistically painted and lend themselves to the effect of stability quite free from stereotyped delineation. The wall-painting No. 6 is the best of all. Next come in superiority the walls No. 3 and No. 4. The Bodhisattvas depicted on them are superb in their fine posture. Such an exquisite workmanship was never seen in pre-Nara days and has disappeared altogether. Throughout the Orient it has remained the only monument of the glorious style, since later works lack the spirit of the tradition imitating its technique only-nay, failing mostly even in imitating part of details. The wall-paintings of the Hôryûji are a great masterpiece unique in all ages.

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The delineation of the outline of the face in the Hôryûji frescoes are of two kinds—one with a round face and the other with an angular lower jaw. The former is few, but the latter in a large number. Both are skilfully drawn either in profile or in "semi-profile" midway between profile and full face. A singular characteristic of the representation of Bodhisattva's face of the latter type is the peculiar way in which the bridge of a nose is drawn. In spite of the front view of the nose the direction of the face is shown by the bridge drawn in a thick straight line, which unifies all the facial features into the expression of dignity or of gracefulness when com-

bined with downcast eyes. Such a peculiarity is to be seen nowhere else. Whether it is of a Chinese origin or an influence of Turkish tribes then pressing on Chinese borders, it is very noteworthy that it is anything but Indian. The wall-painting No. 1 is an exception, in which Bodhisattvas have a rather square face and are far inferior in dignity. Though their faces are in profile, they have not the peculiar bridge of a nose. Besides, the grouping of the figures being too static, we can find no animation and must think the work decidedly weak. Apart from its artistic value, there is a certain material difference in the wall construction, etc., and this gives rise to a view that it presents a marked difference from the other pieces not only in its painter, but also in the date of authorship.

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If we set aside the question of a peculiar expression resulting from the unique facial outline and the drawing of the bridge of a nose, which is probably of a Chinese origin, nearly everything was directly inherited from Indian sources. Take, for instance, the knot of hair and hair-ornament. The impressive high knot of hair beautifully done was originally introduced from India in the T'ang period taking the place of a double knot and acorn-shaped knot of the previous age. In all probability it was invented in India for the special purpose of decorating images of great beauty and solemnity. It appeared in China as a new type of coiffure with the introduction of Indian arts. Shô-Kwannon enshrined in the Tôindô Hall of the Yakushiji temple has one; so have most Nara statues and nearly all single-block images of the Heian period. The hair-ornament consisting of jewels set in minutely perforated metal washers came into great fashion in T'ang days. Both the coiffure and hairornament are to be seen in Ajanta paintings (cf. Cave No. 1) and so we may conclude that they came from India. Various other ornaments, especially a braid strung with small gems in an old Indian style, are not seen in any Buddhist painting of our country except these works. The same remark applies to the type of a bracelet set with a jewel.

Not only such ornaments are Indian in style, but they are used in a true Indian fashion. As stated above, some of the Bodhisattvas are instinctive of Indian realism in the movement of their limbs. The subtle change of their posture is dexterously emphasized with the realistic delineation of ornaments, some swinging to and fro, others not changing their position, true to their nature and diversified in accordance with their make. For instance, examine the delineation of a bracelet in ordinary Buddhist painting. It is usually painted very stiff looking nothing but a hoop binding a limb. But here it appears changing its position with the movement of a limb as naturally as in an Indian picture. Similarly a jewelled braid clings to the body as if we could hear gems clinking. The spread of Indian arts eastwards revolutionized Chinese arts with new lessons of realism and ornamentation hitherto undreamed of. But no work attesting to this wonderful influence has been preserved in China. On the contrary, the wall-paintings of the Hôryùji, although their technique came to this country by way of China, faithfully preserve genuine Indian workmanship in its essential features even as regards such details as the delineation of the body, costume and ornamentation. They apparently represent an Indian style before it underwent the process of full assimilation in China.

XI

Of the decorative designs and striped patterns in drapery some are suggestive of their Indian or Central Asiatic origin, c. g. stripes of splashed patterns and round patterns fringed with beads on Bodhisattvas' skirt. There is a specimen of a round pattern with a bead fringe perhaps representing woodwork in the preaching Shaka's screen of Cave No. 17 in Ajanta. We have evidences that it was reproduced in China as a pattern of textile fabrics as early as the later Six Dynasties period or the beginning of the T'ang dynasty. This makes us think that the design was first imported into China from Khotan. Some specimens of brocades of the same kind presumably imported into Japan in the Nara period have been preserved. So

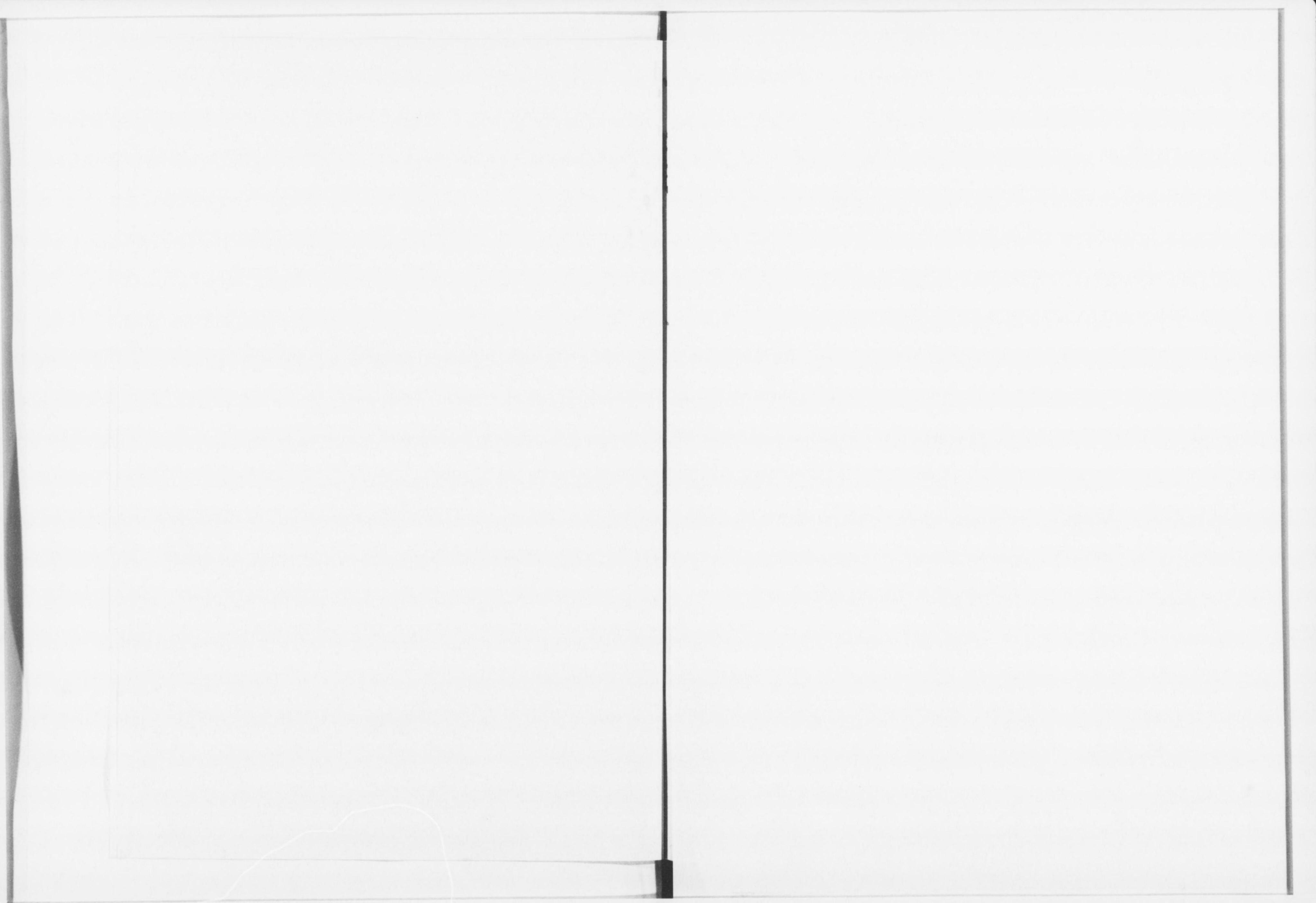
the artist of the frescoes must have copied from such textiles or their representation in painting. As for splashed patterns they abound in Ajantâ frescoes and we find identical ones in the Hôryûji pieces. The so-called "Taishi-Kantô" brocade, which came to this country very early, seems to have been used as a model in the execution of the wall-paintings. Lack of space forbids us to examine the ornamental patterns one by one. Suffice it to say that taken as a whole round patterns and stripes of spotted patterns derived from textiles were preferred to similarly Indian fine patterns of the "byakusôe" garment to be seen in later Buddhist images introduced into Japan in connection with esoteric Buddhism. In the same way the nimbus and rectangular throne are the exact copy of Indian models. Elsewhere they are only to be seen in the embroidery mandala in the possession of the Kanshûji temple.

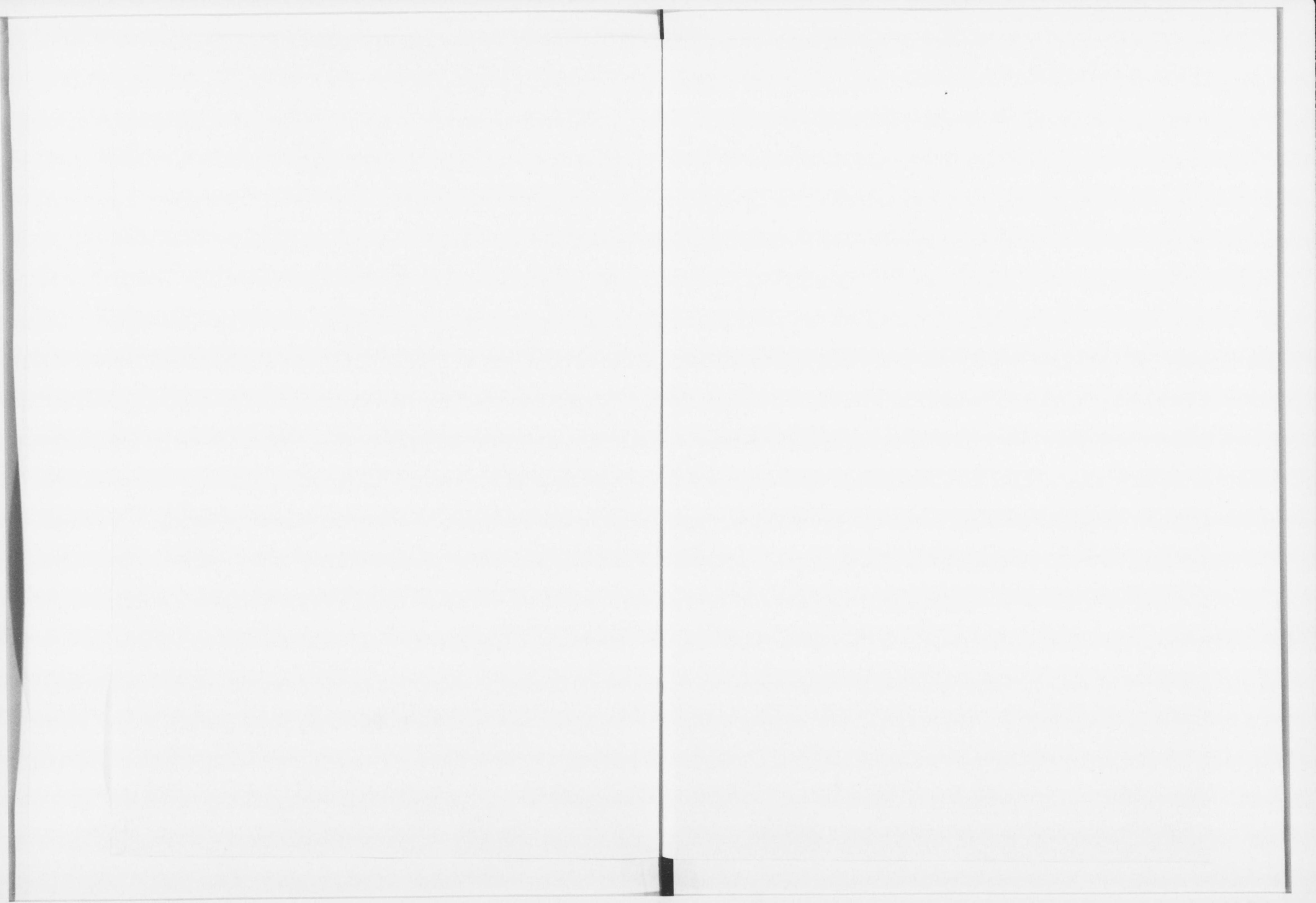
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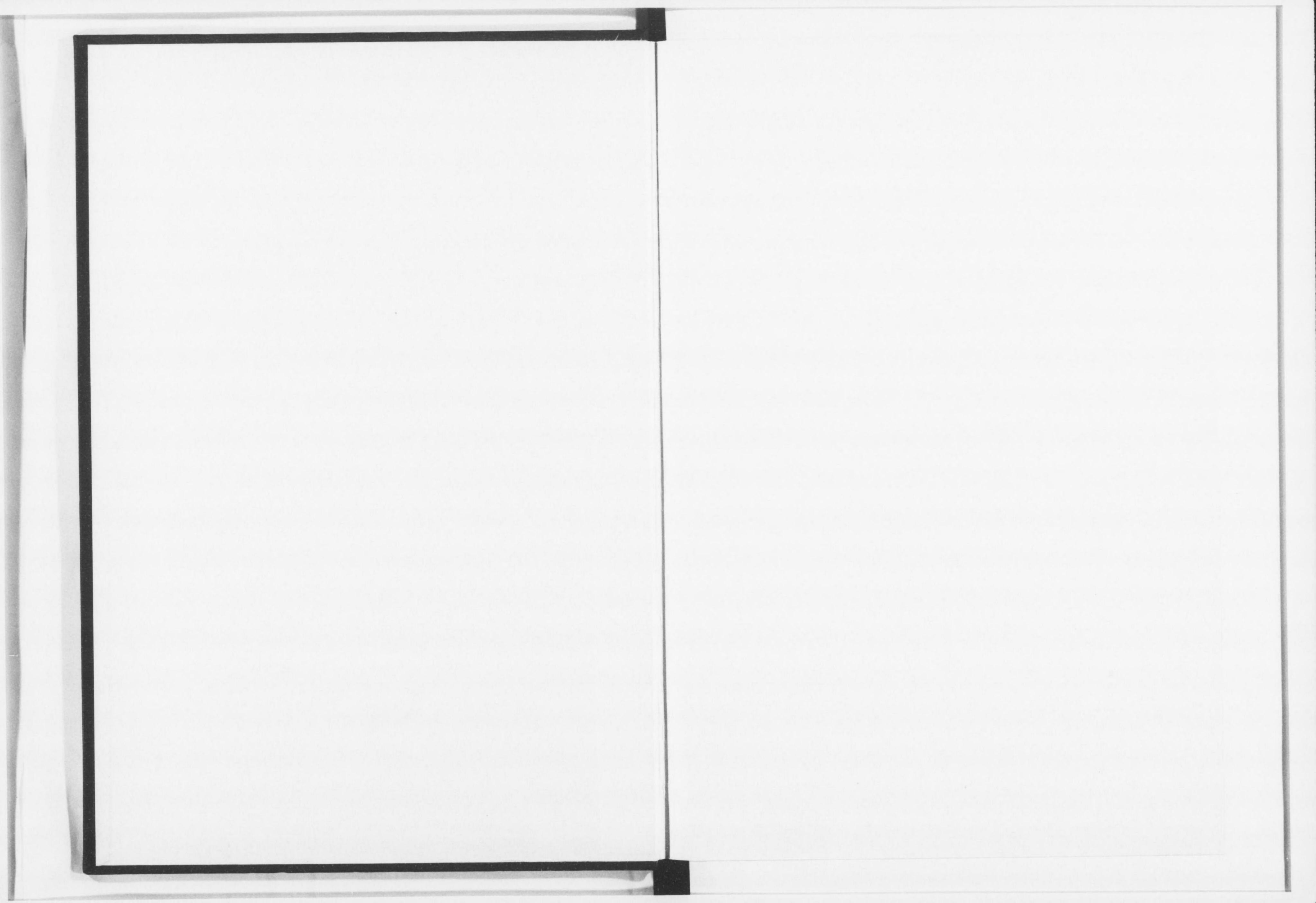
Lastly let us add what may perhaps be considered a Chinese modification of an Indian feature. Amida in the wall No. 6 presents a hand symbol called the sermon gesture. It is identical with what we see in

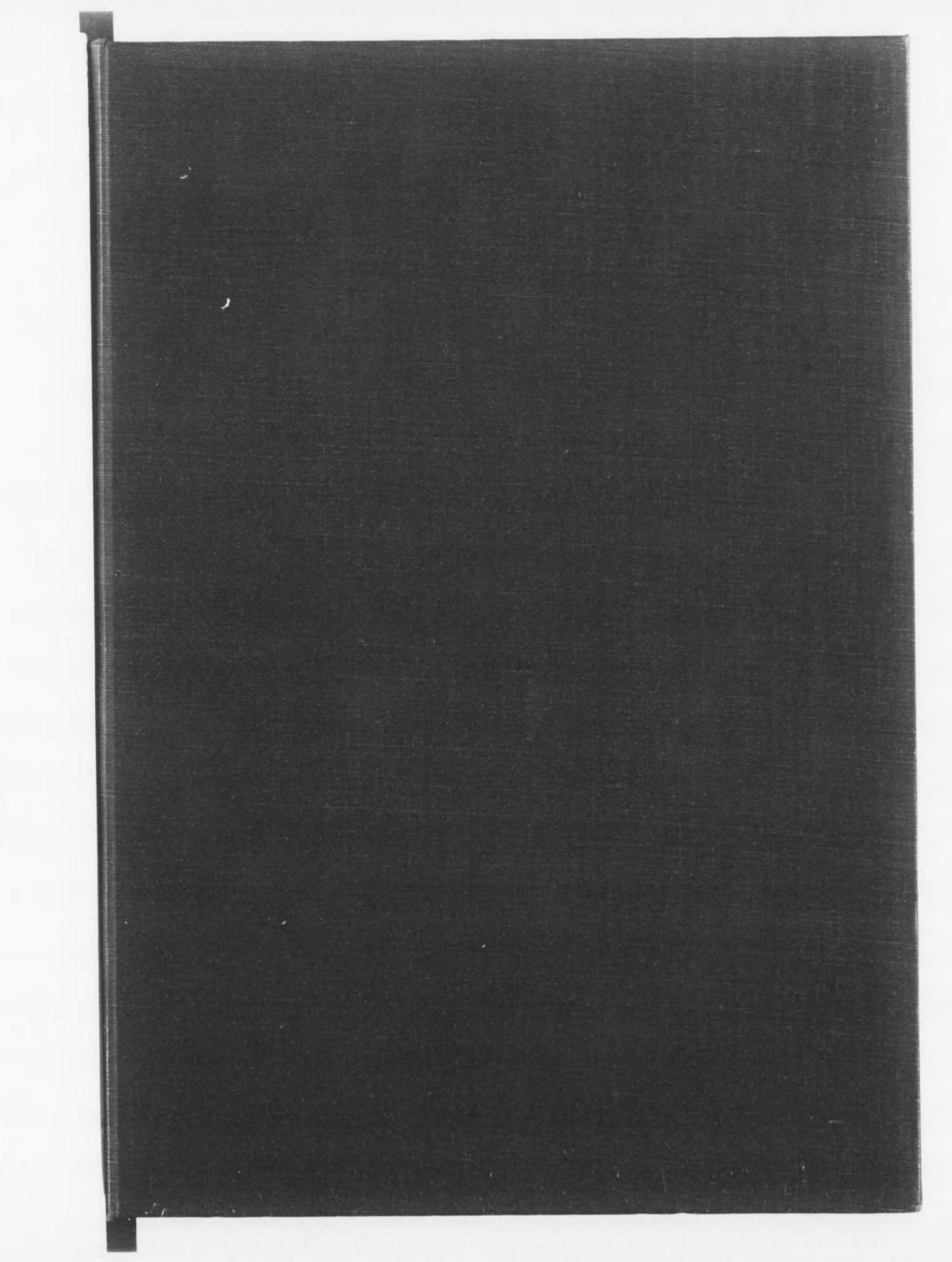
Shaka of Cave No. 17 of Ajantâ, but here Amida's left hand, though held in the same way, does not take the edge of the robe as Shaka does in the Ajantâ piece. Probably the symbol of the right hand is essential to indicate the act of preaching. Whereas the left hand was originally raised in that way so as to prevent the robe over the left shoulder from hiding the right hand—an act necessitated when one is seated on a throne, even though he is not giving a sermon. Therefore this type of the left hand not seizing the edge of the robe seems to be a Chinese modification losing sight of the origin of the act and regarding its formal beauty only. We offer the matter for further investigation.

It was during the T'ang dynasty that Buddhist arts in China made striking progress both in realistic and esthetic treatment. This was the result of the introduction of Indian arts. However, a greater stress was laid on enrichment rather than on realism. The perfect harmony of the two was attained not in China, but in Japan. The glory is to be seen in the monumental work preserved in the Hôryûji temple and nowhere else.









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