

The reign of Emperor Shǐ mǔ extended from 724-749 CE. It was marked by attempted coups and rebellions, as well as natural disasters and epidemics. Following the Confucian thought that the natural order and the social order should reflect each other, Emperor Shǐ mǔ tried to be a

among the contributors were monks of Korean heritage: R ben, the first Chief Abbott of the temple, and Gy ki, a monk who solicited donations and recruited workers. The work was backbreaking and in some cases deadly. The statue and temple required the work of " ... plasterers, quarriers, masons, carpenters, cabinet makers, tile makers, sawyers, shinglers, thatchers, potters, mat makers, bamboo craftsmen, draftsmen, lacquerware specialists, seamstresses, founders, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, sculptors, painters, dyers, gliders, engravers, and food preserve

Having respectfully succeeded to the throne through no virtue of our own, out of a constant solicitude for all men, We have been ever intent on aiding them to reach the shore of the Buddha land. Already even the distant seacoasts of this land have been made to feel the influence of our benevolence and regard for others, and yet not everywhere in this land do men enjoy the grace of Buddha's law. Our fervent desire is that under the aegis of the Three Treasures, the benefits of peace may be brought to all in heaven and earth, even animals and plants sharing in its fruits, for all time to come.

. . . We take this occasion to proclaim our great vow of erecting an image of Lochana Buddha in gold and copper. We wish to make the utmost use of the nation's resources of metal in the casting of this image, and also to level off the high hill on which the great edifice is to be raised, so that the entire land may be joined with us in the fellowship of Buddhism and enjoy in common the advantages which this undertaking affords to the attainment of Buddhahood.

It is we who possess the wealth of the land; it is we who possess all power in the land. With this wealth and power at our command, we have resolved to create this venerable object of worship. The task would appear to be an easy one, and yet a lack of sufficient forethought on our part might result in the people's being put to great trouble in vain, for the Buddha's heart would never be touched if, in the process, calumny and bitterness were provoked which led unwittingly to crime and sin.

Therefore all who join in the fellowship of this undertaking must be sincerely pious in order

The Great Buddha and Tōdai-ji temple were consecrated in 752. The "eye-opening" ceremony was attended by visitors from the Asian continent. The 17,000 attendees included monks and nobles from Japan, as well as monks and dignitaries from China, Korea, and India. Of course, the reigning Empress Kōken was there. So was her father, the retired emperor Shōmu.

Shōmu played an important role at the dedication. As the person most responsible for the building of the statue and temple, he held the paintbrush as the statue's eyes were painted. This rite was seen as an invitation to the spirit of Buddha to enter the statue (Morimoto 2002).

The statue and Great Hall were impressive achievements. The *Daibutsu*, or Great Buddha, was more than 60 feet high and included three million pounds of metal covered with gold. As many as 350,000 people contributed to constructing the statue. The Great Hall in which the statue sat was 150 feet high and 300 feet long. It incorporated a blue-tiled roof, white walls, and lacquered pillars (Huffman 2010).

The ceremony sent a message to people in attendance about the power and stability of the Japanese government. It also demonstrated the emergence of Buddhism as the state religion. According to scholar James L. Huffman, "The government had located itself in a city of perhaps 100,000 people, modeled after the Chinese capital Chang'an

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