

Naritasan Shinshōji and Commoner Patronage During the Edo Period

©Patricia J. Graham

University of Kansas

The Shingon temple of Naritasan Shinshōji 成田山新勝寺 (popularly known as "Naritasan") is a sprawling religious complex located close to Narita Airport outside Tokyo. Along with the Meiji Shrine 明治神宮 and Kawasaki Daishi 川崎大師, it is one of Japan's three most visited religious sites during the New Year's season. Not coincidentally, all three are located in and around Tokyo, Japan's most populous urban center. Naritasan's main object of worship is Fudō Myōō (Skt: Acalanātha) 不動明王, one of the five Buddhist Wisdom Kings (*Godai Myōō* 五大明王).¹ In recent decades, this statue of Fudō has become so associated with its ability to ensure devotees' travel safety, especially for auto travel, that Naritasan now ranks first among temples nationwide where people go to purchase car amulets and to request ritual blessing of their cars by temple priests.² This fame has engendered the establish-

ment of numerous branch temples throughout Japan, where worshippers offer their prayers to Fudō Myōō's empowered replicas.³ Today, getting to Naritasan is an easy train ride of an hour or so from the city, but during the Edo period, the forty-three mile (seventy kilometer) distance took two days and one night of travel by foot and boat.⁴ Nevertheless, even then it attracted large numbers of visitors, mostly commoners from the city of Edo, who sought practical benefits from the temple's illustrious main deity and an opportunity for a short vacation in the countryside away from the congested urban environs.

My focus here is to illuminate the strength of motivations for, and manifestations of Buddhist patronage at Naritasan by commoners from the nearby metropolis of Edo, throughout the Edo period. The tangible results of commoner devotion primarily take the form of a fine group of well preserved buildings and numerous artifacts donated to the temple, both by Edo luminaries and anonymous Edo era townspeople. These artifacts include a large number of votive tablets (*ema* 絵馬), some painted by famous Edo period artists, and many others, made and donated by unknown commoners. Devotion to Buddhism on the part of Edo commoners has recently been addressed in English in a study of Sensōji 浅草寺, another important temple in the Tokyo area during the Edo period, but because most of the buildings there were destroyed during World War II, the author, not a historian of art or architecture, discussed the nature and significance of the religious practice at the site rather than the material remains their devotion wrought.⁵

¹ The five Buddhist wisdom kings are wrathful manifestations of the five most important Buddhas in the esoteric Buddhist pantheon. Among these kings, Fudo Myōō occupies the central position as manifestation of the supreme, cosmic Buddha, Dainichi (Skt: Mahāvairocana). He either stands or sits on a rock with his body framed by a aura of fire. His facial expression is fierce, with one eye peering up and the other down and two fangs, also pointing in opposite directions. He usually holds a sword in his right hand to slash demons and a cord in his left to bind them and also to capture devotees and lead them into Paradise. Iconographic information from: Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), p. , 175 and Louis Frédéric, *Buddhism: Flammarion Iconographic Guides* (Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1995), pp. 203-205.

² Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe, Jr., *Practically Religions: Worldly Benefits and the Com-*

mon Religion of Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), p. 42.

³ For a discussion of one of these branches, see Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), pp. 144-145.

⁴ Laurence R. Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki: Their Lives, Loves, and Legacy* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1997), p. 37.

⁵ Nam-lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensōji and Edo Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000).

This article is part of a larger book project in which I am engaged that assesses Buddhist faith and power as manifested in devotional pictures, sculpted icons, and sites of worship associated with mainstream sects of Buddhism in Japan from the seventeenth century to the present. I have chosen to focus here on patronage at Naritasan as a means of emphasizing a significant new group of influential patrons of Buddhism that first emerged during the Edo period: urban commoners. Commoner support of Buddhism did not replace that of the elites, the high ranking samurai and courtiers who were from Buddhism's earliest days in Japan the religion's most ardent supporters, and who continued to patronize nationally renowned head temple complexes and familial sites of worship. Rather, it created a new and powerful core group of supporters for Buddhism, whose enduring patronage has enabled certain institutions to thrive to the present. Understanding modern Japanese Buddhism's prosperity, and the religion's continued stimulation of artistic production, requires a solid grasp of urban commoner patronage networks that emerged first during the Edo period at places such as Naritasan.

Surprisingly, this temple and its treasures have received remarkably little attention from scholars of early modern Japanese art and architecture. Not until 1981 did all the major Edo period buildings at Shinshōji become designated as Important Cultural Properties (*jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財). Many scholars with whom I informally discussed my research on this site have never visited the temple, or have only heard of it because of its proximity to the Tokyo airport. I assert that this omission is due to three significant misconceptions about Edo period Buddhism and its influence on the arts and architecture of the time, which some scholars have recently begun to question.

The first misconception is the widely held conviction that Buddhism had declined in cultural importance by the Edo period and, institutionally, had become so degenerate that it could not encourage devout belief.⁶ This accounts in part for

⁶ Scholarship that accepts the degradation of Buddhism during the Edo period is reappraised in Paul B. Watt, "Jiun Sonja (1718-1804): A Response to Confucianism within the Context of

misconception number two: a dearth of scholarship on late premodern (post-Muromachi period) Japanese Buddhist art and architecture, except for study of a limited corpus of materials, because of the belief in its aesthetic inferiority, especially as associated with materials produced by and for commoners.⁷ Scholars have been preconditioned to regard only those Japanese Buddhist arts and architecture, created during Japan's ancient and medieval eras (roughly the seventh through mid-sixteenth centuries), for temples in and around the

Buddhist Reform." in *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture*, edited by Peter Nosco (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 188-191; and more fully in Janine Tasca Sawada, "Tokugawa Religious History: Studies in Western Languages," in *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 39-64, see especially pp. 51-56 (section on Buddhist Studies). Nam-lin Hur's study of Sensōji, cited in note 1 above, is an important contribution to the understanding of Edo period Buddhism as practiced by urban commoners.

⁷ On the acceptance of the inferiority of Edo period Buddhist art and architecture, see Neil McMullin, *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 266-267. Among the limited corpus of Edo period Buddhist arts for commoners that have long been appreciated in both Japan and the West are Zen painting and calligraphies and selected self-taught Buddhist sculptors admired as *mingei* (folk art). On these standard canonical materials defined as Edo period Buddhist, see Tsuji Nobuo, ed., *Edo no shūkyō bijutsu: Enkū, Mokujiki, Hakuin, Sengai, Ryōkan* (Religious Art of the Edo Period: Enkū, Mokujiki, Hakuin, Sengai, Ryōkan) (Tokyo: Gakushū Kenkyūsha, 1979). For a historiographic study of Western language writings on religious architecture and arts in relation to that of other arts of the early modern era, see Patricia J. Graham, "Early Modern Japanese Art History: An Overview of the State of the Field," *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 2-21. For discussion of religious art see pp. 19-20 and for an extensive bibliography of writings in English on religious sites, icons, and other devotional arts, see pp. 99-100.

great early imperial and political capitals of Nara, Kyoto, and Kamakura, as among the supreme monuments of Japan's cultural heritage. This pre-eminence of early Buddhist material developed in the late nineteenth century, when the political and economic leaders of Japan created the chronological parameters of the nation's aesthetic canon which remains largely unchanged today.⁸

These first two issues lead to a third widely held misunderstanding: that because Buddhism was not important in the Edo period, the best building designers, artists and craftspeople of the era devoted themselves to the production of secular rather than religious arts and architecture. Recent studies in Japanese, especially catalogues of highly popular exhibitions by the eminent Japanese art historian

⁸ See Christine Guth, *Art, Tea, and Industry: Masuda Takashi and the Mitsui Circle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially chapter 4; and John Rosenfield, "Japanese Buddhist Art: Alive in the Modern Age," in *Buddhist Treasures from Nara*, edited by Michael R. Cunningham (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art; New York: Distributed by Hudson Hills Press, 1998), pp. 232-244. Only recently have some early modern Buddhist art and architecture associated with elite rather than commoner culture become a focus of scholarly attention. These materials include painting and calligraphy by Chinese monks, who founded the Ōbaku Zen sect in the mid-seventeenth century, and their followers, and an analysis of the religious center of Chikubushima, an island in Lake Biwa, assessed in the broader context of Toyotomi family patronage of religious institutions. On Ōbaku, see the first exhibition English language catalogue on the subject by Stephen Addiss, *Obaku: Zen Painting and Calligraphy* (Lawrence, Kansas: Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, 1978). Japanese scholarly interest followed with the first of many museum exhibitions taking place at the Kobe Shiritsu Hakubutsukan, *Ingen Zenshi to Ōbakushu no kaiga ten* (Exhibition of Paintings of the Zen Master Ingen and the Ōbaku Sect) (Kobe: Kobe Shiritsu Hakubutsukan, 1991). On Chikubushima, see Andrew M. Watsky, *Chikubushima: Deploying the Sacred Arts in Momoyama Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

Tsuji Nobuo and some younger scholars, many of them his former students, have begun to reassess this contention.⁹ As for revisionist scholarship in Western languages, except for copious writings about Zen painting and calligraphy, a few studies of important sites associated with the highest echelon samurai,¹⁰ unusual images (by imperial nuns),¹¹ and some materials categorized as folk arts,¹² much of this later Buddhist art, and espe-

⁹ See Tsuji Nobuo, ed., *Shōmin bukkyō* (Buddhism of Commoners) in *Zusetsu Nihon no bukkyō* 5 (Japanese Buddhism in Pictures) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1990); Shibuya Ward Shōtō Art Museum, ed., *Kinsei shūkyō bijutsu no sekai* (The World of Early Modern Religious Art) (Tokyo: Shibuya Kuritsu Shōtō Bijutsukan, 1995); Sakai City Museum, ed., *Butsu o kizamu: kinsei no inori to zōkei* (Carving for Buddhism: Prayer and Sculpture in the Early Modern Period) (Sakai: Sakai-shi Hakubutsukan, 1997); Tsuji Nobuo, *Yugesuru shinbutsutachi: Kinsei no shūkyō bijutsu to animizumu* (Playful Buddhas and Kami: Animism in the Religious Art of the Early Modern Era) (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2000); and Yamashita Yūji, "Happiness in Japanese Art: Jakuchu, Shohaku, Hakuin." in *Happiness: A Survival Guide for Art and Life*, edited by David Elliott and Pier Luigi Tazzi (Tokyo: Mori Art Museum, 2003), pp. 210-215.

¹⁰ Particularly, Andrew Watsky's study of Chikubushima, cited in note 8 above.

¹¹ See Patricia Fister's provocative look at religious art created from an unorthodox material, "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, nos. 3-4 (Fall 2000): 213-38; and her bilingual catalogue, *Art by Buddhist Nuns: Treasures from the Imperial Convents of Japan (Ama monzeki to amasōno bijutsu)* (New York: Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, Columbia University, 2003).

¹² These include sculptures by illustrious monks such as Enkū 円空 (1628-1695) or Mokujiki Gyōdō 木喰行道 (1718-1810) and studies on Ōtsue 大津絵 (folk paintings made at Ōtsu). For recent Western language studies of these materials, see for example Jan van Alphen, *Enkū*

cially its architecture, remains overlooked.¹³

The still widely accepted canon of premodern Japanese art seeks to demonstrate both that the Japanese possessed a cultural heritage equal to that of European nations, and that Japan belongs to the modern world of academic scholarship. As with the European art historical canon, the Japanese one highlights objects dignified by their great age, by the elite status and wealth of their patrons, and by their association with identifiable artists or artistic lineages. More recent Buddhist arts and architecture, especially those found at temples largely patronized by commoners, such as Naritasan Shinshōji, are still generally omitted from this canon.

Temple records indicate Naritasan Shinshōji's founding took place in the year 940 by imperial order in response to a miraculous occurrence. A rebellion by a local warrior required the then reigning emperor Suzaku 朱雀天皇 (923-952) to dispatch troops to eastern Japan. He also ordered the priest Kanchō 寛朝 (916-998) to travel to the area together with a sacred icon of Fudō Myōō, borrowed from the Fire Offering Hall (*Gomadō* 護摩堂) at the Kyoto temple of Jingōji 神護寺. This statue was believed to have miraculous powers because the founder of Shingon Buddhism, Kūkai 空海 (774-835), had carved it himself for Jingōji on the occasion of a rebellion in the year 810. Kūkai used the statue as a focus for his pleas to Fudō, in a Shingon *goma* 護摩 or fire ritual, to successfully stop the rebellion. The priest Kanchō's duty was to perform this same *goma* ritual, again imploring Fudō to render his divine intervention and restore peace. On the last day of the three-week ritual, troops quelled the rebellion. However, when the priest attempted to lift the

statue to take it back to Jingōji, it had inexplicably grown too heavy to move, and an oracle declared that Fudō wished the statue to remain there forever to aid the locals. Thereupon the emperor ordered a temple constructed on the spot to house it and named it Shinshōji ("the temple of the newly won victory").¹⁴ Although the temple maintains that the image enshrined in its Main Hall today is the same one described in this legend, art historians disagree, dating the statue to the second half of the thirteenth century.¹⁵ Visitors to the temple can only see it on specially designated *kaichō* 開帳 (parting the curtain) days; always on view is its more recently made *maedachi* 前立 (stand-in), placed in front of the closed reliquary that houses the sacred statue.¹⁶

Still, because of its distance from the political and religious center of the nation in the Kansai region, the temple remained a remote, rather humble, provincial institution until the Edo period, when the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542-1616), moved his capital to the area. According to temple

¹⁴ Shinshōji, ed., *Shinshū Naritasan-shi* (Newly Compiled History of Naritasan) (Narita: Daihondō Konryū Kinen Kaichō Hōshū Jimukyoku, 1968), pp. 14-15. See also Reader, pp. 143-144; and Karen Mack, "The Visual Rhetoric of Imagery in Warfare: Fudō Myōō and the Five Great Kings of Light," in Jan Mazrek and Morgan Pitelka, eds., *Situating Asian "Art Objects" in Ritual, Performance, and the Everyday*, (forthcoming).

¹⁵ The Japanese government has designated this statue as a *Jūyō bunkazai* (Important Cultural Property); for an illustration, see *Jūyōbunkazai Iinkai Jimukyoku*, ed., *Jūyō bunkazai 3 (chōkoku III)* (Important Cultural Properties, vol. 3, Sculpture Part 3) (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbun, 1973), p. 103 (plate 483). The original statue now resides at Nan'in at the Shingon sect headquarters site of Mount Kōya. I thank Karen Mack for this reference.

¹⁶ For an illustration of this *maedachi* statue, see Naritasan Shinshōji, ed., *Sōran Fudō Myōō* (General Survey of Fudō Myōō) (Narita: Daihonzan Naritasan Shinshōji, 1984), p. 36 (plate 32).

1632-1659: Timeless Images from 17th Century Japan (Antwerpen: Ethnografisch Museum, 1999); and Meher McArthur, *Gods and Goblins: Japanese Folk Paintings from Otsu* (Pasadena, CA: Pacific Asia Museum, 1999).

¹³ For a rare reassessment of Edo period Buddhist art in English, see Robert T. Singer, "Old Worlds, New Visions: Religion and Art in Edo Japan," in *Edo: Art in Japan 1615-1868*, edited by Robert T. Singer (Washington, D.C: National Gallery of Art, 1998), pp. 203-258.

records, Ieyasu supported Naritasan because the temple's abbot (Yūban Shōnin 宥鑊上人) had converted him to Buddhism. In a show of support for Ieyasu, his closest supporters, the Tokugawa collateral families, followed his example and patronized the temple as well. Concurrently, Ieyasu required the Sakura daimyo, within whose domain the temple lay, to oversee the temple's upkeep.¹⁷ Ieyasu may have sought the divine protection of Shinshōji's main deity for several practical reasons. First, because Naritasan was situated northeast of Edo, he may have likened the site to the Tendai sect headquarters of Enryakuji 延暦寺 atop Mount Hiei 比叡山, northeast of Kyoto. Enryakuji had been founded to protect Kyoto from the unlucky northeast direction, and Ieyasu may have hoped Naritasan could protect Edo in the same way.¹⁸ Also, military and political success accounted for Naritasan Shinshōji's founding, an auspicious association for his aspiring hegemony.

Although Ieyasu was said to patronize the temple, it was not until the reign of the fourth Shogun, Tokugawa Ietsuna 徳川家綱 (1639-80; ruled 1651-80), that the Shogunate embarked on a major building project there, the reconstruction of the Main Hall in 1655 (PLATE 1). Today, this small, fairly conventional building, now a Yakushi Buddha Hall (Yakushidō 薬師堂) and used as a calligraphy school classroom, remains standing along the main road of Narita City leading to the temple. Subsequent building projects sponsored by the military elite never materialized due to increasing financial strain on the Bakufu treasury and waning fortunes of the daimyo during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Consequently, the temple's first age of florescence, in the early eighteenth century, was fueled instead by massive funding from ordinary citizens.

Spearheading this new initiative was the wildly popular and, eventually, affluent Kabuki actor, Ichikawa Danjūrō I 市川団十郎 (1660-1704). Danjūrō was born into the Horikoshi 堀越

¹⁷ For information on Ieyasu and daimyo support for Naritasan, see *Shinshū Naritasan-shi*, pp. 494-495.

¹⁸ *Shinshū Naritasan-shi*, p. 494.

Plate I



merchant family of Edo, although the family had once been samurai.¹⁹ Devotion to the valiant traits of this samurai heritage is apparent in his choice of heroic characters and their noble deeds. Danjūrō's success stemmed from his invention of a rough and masculine style of movement (*aragoto* 荒事), one of the hallmarks of which featured his imitation of the ferocious stances of the virtuous and powerful Buddhist deities he revered. Sometimes he played the role of Fudō Myōō so forcefully that viewers imagined the deity had come to life before their eyes.²⁰ Danjūrō I kept a diary in which he recorded his deep feelings for Buddhism. In it, he claimed that he owed this talent to Fudō himself, who had taught him in a dream the secret of his penetrating glare.²¹

¹⁹ This information comes from the writings of Ichikawa Danjūrō II. See excerpted translations in Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 35-36 and note 3.

²⁰ Kominz, p. 81.

²¹ Some accounts of Danjūrō I indicate he believed himself a "living embodiment" of Fudō Myōō, but I concur with Kominz's assessment, based on Danjūrō's own writings, that he considered himself simply a devoted follower of the deity. Perhaps the living embodiment assertion stems from a misinterpretation of records describing viewers' impressions that when they saw him performing, they saw the deity come to life in their presence. For such a comment, see: Timothy T. Clark, et al., *The Actor's Image: Print Makers of*

Danjūrō became associated with Shinshōji because of ancestral ties to the area. His devotion to the temple grew stronger after his prayers to the temple's Fudō Myōō resulted in the safe birth of his first child in 1688. As thanks to Shinshōji's Fudō, he began writing and starring in Kabuki plays with themes featuring the god's miraculous powers. He also had his son, Kuzō 九藏 (Ichikawa Danjūrō II; 1688-1758), whom he considered as "Fudō's gift," play the part of the deity Fudō Myōō in the fifth month of 1697 in the play in which he made his stage debut, "The Origin of the Soga Warrior" (*Tsuwamono Kongen Soga* 兵根源曾我). During the run of the play, audience members responded to the presence of Fudō on-stage in an unprecedented manner, with prayers and offerings as if the theater was a temple hall.²² That same year, an unidentified artist of the Torii school of Ukiyoe printmakers (possibly Torii Kiyonobu 鳥居清信; 1664-1729) created a scene-by-scene illustrated record of this production (**PLATE 2**). Illustrated here is a critical scene in which, little Kuzō, as Fudō, stops a fight between two twelfth century warriors of whom one, Gorō (played by Ichikawa Danjūrō I), is also pictured.

Several years later, in 1703, Danjūrō authored and starred in another play about Shinshōji's Fudō, *The Avatars of the Fudō of Narita Temple* (*Naritasan Bunjin Fudō* 成田山分身不動). This play opened around the same time the sacred image was having its Edo debut at a *degaichō* 出外朝帳 (temporary displays of sacred images; literally: "external parting of the curtains") in Edo at Eitaiji 永代寺, a Shingon sect affiliate located in the Fukagawa 深川 district, the largest concentration of religious institutions east of the Sumida River.²³ Danjūrō and the temple's new and ener-

the Katsukawa School (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago in association with Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 162. For Kominz's discussion of Danjūrō's writings on his belief in Buddhism, see Kominz, pp. 61-64.

²² Kominz, p. 69.

²³ On the dates of Naritasan's *degaichō* in Edo see Hiruma Hisashi, *Edo no kaichō* (Temporary Viewings of Sacred Images During the Edo Period) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa, 1980), pp. 150-151; and

Plate 2



getic abbot Shōhan Shōnin 照範上人 (died 1724), who took over temple administration in 1700, probably hatched a scheme together to raise money for the temple by holding this Edo *degaichō* around the same time as the play's opening, so as to give the deity and its temple great publicity.²⁴ Keishōin 桂昌院 (1627-1705),²⁵ mother of

Shinshū Naritasan-shi, pp. 208-209.

²⁴ Kominz, pp. 92-93. The *degaichō* took place from the 17th day of the fourth month through the 27th day of the sixth month; the play ran from the 21st day of the fourth month through the 13th day of the seventh month. See Hiruma, p. 152.

²⁵ Keishōin was a fervent, lifelong devotee of Shingon, who exerted considerable influence over her son throughout his life, and encouraged popular faith in Buddhism by funding numerous temples that commoners frequented. On Keishōin and Tsunayoshi's patronage of Buddhism, see Donald H. Shivley, "Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, the Genroku Shogun," in *Personality in Japanese*

the fifth Shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi 徳川綱吉, contributed to the financial success of this event through large donations she made to the temple as thanks for having the statue and other temple treasures that were displayed at the *degaichō* brought to Edo Castle for her own personal viewing, after the *degaichō* ended and before it was returned to the temple. (Because of her high status, she could not freely go to places of worship frequented by commoners.)²⁶ A devotee of Shingon Buddhism since childhood, she lavishly donated money to temples as a means of praying for her son's success as Shogun.

This sort of celebrity promotion of *degaichō* became a common occurrence at Eitaiji and elsewhere. *Degaichō* of Naritasan's Fudō at this temple occurred fifteen times until Eitaiji's destruction in 1898 (the Fudōdō still stands, though the present building dates to 1881), testifying to the continued popular appeal of Shinshōji's Fudō Myōō even in the Meiji era, a time of great Buddhist persecution (PLATE 3). The Ukiyoe printmaker Utagawa Hiroshige III (1842-1894) has depicted one of these *degaichō* at Eitaiji in his print, *Fukagawa Fudōson*, dated 1885, which shows a genteel crowd of worshippers approaching the temple. Realizing the strength of Shinshōji's devotees then, authorities placated them by allowing worship of the deity with a new Shinto name of "Ugokazu no mikoto" 動かさずの尊 or the "Unmoving Kami."²⁷

In spite of his public acclaim, Danjūrō remained a humble, devout Buddhist throughout his life, who openly proclaimed that he owed his success to his prayers and devotion to specific deities with whom he felt personal attachment, especially Fudō Myōō, but also the esoteric cosmic Buddha Dainichi, the Bodhisattva Kannon (Skt.: Avalokiteśvara),

Plate 3



and others.²⁸ Such pronouncements inspired his admirers to become fervent devotees of Buddhism in general, and Shinshōji's Fudō in particular. Because so many of them embarked on pilgrimages to Naritasan Shinshōji, sometimes under his leadership, and supported the temple by attending its *degaichō* in Edo, the temple became quite wealthy. Danjūrō's descendants helped this effort by promoting the temple and its deity among their fans throughout the Edo period.²⁹

History, edited by Albert M. Craig and Donald H. Shively (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 89-90, 103-106; and Tsukamoto Manabu, *Tokugawa Tsunayoshi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998).

²⁶ *Shinshū Naritasan-shi*, p. 495.

²⁷ James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 75.

²⁸ Kominz, p. 61.

²⁹ See for example, the discussion of patronage by Ichikawa Danjūrō V (1741-1806) in Laurence Kominz, "Ichikawa Danjūrō V and Kabuki's Golden Age," in *The Floating World Revisited*, edited by Donald Jenkins (Portland, Oregon and Honolulu: Portland Art Museum and University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 73. See also prints of Danjūrō V as Fudō Myōō in Timothy T. Clark, et al., *The Actor's Image*, plates 55 and 56.

Owing to the consistency of its popular patronage, this temple constructed some of the finest quality early modern temple architecture in Japan, which fortunately remains standing today. The first phase of the grand refurbishing of the temple began with completion of a new Main Hall (PLATE 4) and Bell Tower in 1701, a Three Story Pagoda in 1712 (PLATE 5), and a Sutra Hall in 1722. The Pagoda, Bell Tower and Sutra Hall have undergone major renovations in recent years to restore a sense of their original appearance, with brightly colored exterior surfaces and elaborate relief carving similar to that on the buildings at the Nikkō Tōshōgū Shrine.

The Pagoda's relief carving features a variety of auspicious imagery, much of it brightly colored (PLATE 6). This includes images of illustrious and virtuous Indian Buddhist and Chinese Confucian and Daoist heroes in deep relief carving above the doorways (pictured here is the Chinese Daoist recluse Qin Gao [J: Kinkō 琴高], shown riding a carp and reading a scroll) and unpainted, carved wood relief panels inset into the walls adjacent to the doors on all four sides, depicting a Zen subject, the Sixteen Rakan. Neither of these themes is normally associated with Shingon temples; they reflect the penetration into the Shingon Buddhist pantheon of broadly popular Chinese subjects during the eighteenth century. Such Confucian and Daoist mythology first grew popular on religious monuments — both Buddhist and Shinto — in pictorial art for military leaders in the Momoyama period. These were politically approved Chinese themes that reflected rulers' desires for longevity of their reign and progeny, the wisdom of their methods of governance, and that offered examples of meritorious deeds by ancient Chinese sages that were worthy of emulation and adoration. Not surprising then is the fact that the model for Qin Gao here is found on the north or interior side of the famous Yōmeimon middle gate at Nikkō's Tōshōgū Shrine.³⁰ Sophisticated urban commoners of the sort who patronized Naritasan also appreciated the steadfast virtuousness of

Kinkō. This Daoist recluse lived a peaceful life by the banks of a river, painting pictures of fish and playing the zither. One day, the King of the Fishes took him to his underwater realm for a visit. A

Plate 4



Plate 5



³⁰ Karen M. Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power: Art and Early Tokugawa Authority* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 87-92; Qin Kao is illustrated on p. 91.

Plate 6



month later, Kinkō returned astride a giant carp and implored his followers not to kill fish. Then, after a month, he vanished into the waters again, presumably having been transformed into an immortal of the sea. His popularity is attested to in his frequent depiction in popular arts associated with these commoners, particularly *surimono* (fine quality limited edition woodblock prints) and *netsuke* (decorative, finely carved toggles used to attach an *inro*, tobacco or medicine pouch, to the sash of a man's robe in the Edo period).³¹

The Sutra Hall was designed with a feature especially popular among Edo period devotees, a central chamber containing the complete collection of Buddhist scriptures, known as the *tripitaka*,³² housed in a revolving bookcase, in the belief that when turned by a worshipper, it could

³¹ See for example a *surimono* titled *Qingao Riding a Carp* by Totoya Kokkei (1780-1850) in the Spencer Art Museum, University of Kansas, published in Roger Keyes, *Surimono: Privately Published Japanese Prints in the Spencer Museum of Art* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984), plate 16; and an eighteenth century *netsuke* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, published in Barbra Teri Okada, "Netsuke: The Small Sculptures of Japan," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (fall 1980): 13.

³² The *tripitaka* (Jp: *sanzō* 三蔵), literally three baskets, or in this case, three groups of collected writings about Buddhism, which includes *sūtras* (texts expounding the teachings of the Buddhas), *vinayanas* (Buddha's commandments), and *śāstras* (commentaries on Buddhist doctrines). Definition from: Daitō Shuppansha, ed. *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary (Nichi-ei Bukkyō jiten)* (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, revised edition, 1991), p. 288.

transfer all the wisdom contained in its myriad volumes to him or her. Although the brightly-colored, high-relief style of relief carving on the exteriors of these buildings had first been applied to buildings for the military elite, by the eighteenth century, it had become standard on a wide array of shrines and temples, especially those in closest proximity to Edo, which were patronized by people from all walks of life.³³

By the early nineteenth century, hoards of commoners were regularly visiting Naritasan to pray to Fudō Myōō for protection against fires and epidemics and also because its relative proximity to the city made for an enjoyable excursion. These admirers often banded together in groups of confraternities, lay religious organizations (*ko* 講) that were composed of merchants or trades people of Edo, including geisha, fishmongers, woodworkers, firemen and Kabuki actors.³⁴ The temple was most crowded, as expected, on the designated *kaichō* viewing dates, twenty-three in total during the early modern era, when the temple displayed its sacred image of Fudō (PLATE 7). The throngs of spectators jostling with one another at these openings have been represented by Ukiyoe print-makers including Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国 (1769-1825), whose print is reproduced here.³⁵ When they visited, they donated numerous offerings to the temple, including votive tablets on a wide range of themes, from historical figures, deities, narrative tales, portraits of Kabuki actors, famous places, etc. (PLATE 8). Among these is an *ema* by the Ukiyoe print designer Utagawa Kuniyoshi 歌川国吉 (1797-1861) of an Edo fire brigade, dedicated by a group of firefighters in

³³ For example, similar-style decoration on eighteenth century buildings are found at Yakuōin atop Mount Takao. For a variety of Kantō and central Honshū religious structures with this type of decoration, see Tabata Minao, et al., *Shaji chōkoku: Tachikawa ryū no kenchiku sōshoku* (Sculpture for Temples and Shrines: Architectural Decoration of the Tachikawa Lineage) (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1994).

³⁴ *Shinshū Naritasan-shi*, p. 273.

³⁵ See also an illustration by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (died 1885) in *Shinshū Naritasan-shi*, plate 3 (preceding page 199 in text).

1833.³⁶

The final premodern building phase at Naritasan commenced in the early nineteenth century, in response to the temple's then escalating popularity (**PLATE 9**). In 1830, its Main Gate (*Niomon* 仁王門), known today for its giant lantern, was rebuilt with funding from members of the Edo fish market association, whose name the lantern bears, and which remains responsible for its periodic replacement. After first being restored in 1768, the 1701 Main Hall was finally replaced by a new, larger structure in a more up-to-date style, dedicated in 1858 (**PLATE 10**). Funding for this 1858 project came from donations from over 10,000 worshippers, an effort coordinated by the local Sakura daimyo (**PLATE 11**). The exterior has extensive wooden relief carving on the walls and doors of themes not traditionally seen at Shingon temples, but which were especially popular in the late Edo period: the Confucian Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety and the Five Hundred Rakan. These images were carved over a ten year period by an artisan named Matsumoto Ryōzan (dates unknown) 松本良山 and the Rakan images were based on a famous set of paintings of the same theme by the foremost Edo-based Kano school painter of the day, Kano Kazunobu 狩野一信 (1816-1863), which were painted for the Tokugawa family temple of Zōjōji 増上寺 in central Edo.³⁷

³⁶ For others, see *Shinshū Naritasan-shi*, pp. 211-225 (chapter 9). Many of the temple's famous votive tablets, by illustrious artists of Edo are illustrated in Ōno Masaharu and Ogura Hiroshi, *Naritasan Shinshōji no ema* (Votive Tablets of Naritasan Shinshōji), *Naritasan Shiryōkan zuroku* 2 (Narita: Naritasan Shiryōkan, 1979). These donations have continued to the present; a large group are on display in the temple's museum, located in the basement of its mammoth, *tahōtō*-style, Great Pagoda of Peace (*Daitō*), completed in 1984.

³⁷ For materials related to the copies made by Ryōzan, see Tōkyō-tō Minatoku Kyoiku Inkkai, ed., *Kano Kazunobu Gohyaku Rakan zu* (Paintings of the Five Hundred Rakan by Kano Kazunobu) (Tokyo: Minatoku Kyoiku Inkkai, 1983), figs. 31-48.

When the 1858 hall was built, the older Main Hall was actually moved to a location behind the new one, turning it into a *Kōmyōdō* 光明堂 (Hall Dedicated to the Buddha Dainichi), and its form was modified (the flooring around its outer chamber and veranda were removed) (**PLATE 12**). This arrangement is visible in a picture of the main temple compound in the 1858 "Illustrated Guidebook to Narita, Record of a Pilgrimage to Narita" (*Narita meisho zue; Narita sankei ki* 成田名所図会成田參詣記) illustrated by Hasegawa Settei 長谷川雪提 (1819-1882). Later, prior to construction of the current Main Hall in 1968, the temple relocated both these buildings to their present sites at the complex. At that time, the 1858 Main Hall became a *Shakadō* 釈迦堂 (Hall for Veneration of the Buddha Shaka).

The final construction of this mid nineteenth century building boom was the 1861 Votive Tablet Hall (*Gakudō* 額堂), an open-air structure where large-scale votive tablets dedicated to the temple by devotees would be displayed (**PLATE 13**). The Kabuki actor Danjūrō VII (1791-1859) paid for this building with an unprecedented donation of 1,000 *ryo*. Danjūrō VII was famous for his extravagant lifestyle, which annoyed the authorities so much that they banished him from Edo for ten years, beginning in 1842.³⁸ But during this period, he continued to act, mostly in Osaka, and amassed even more wealth, hence his lavish donation.

Constructing temples on the scale of Naritasan was obviously beyond the means of humble village parishioners. Rather, Naritasan Shinshōji reflects the large sums temples within the orbit of Edo were capable of collecting from ordinary and wealthy townspeople. The temple typifies a particular type of Edo period Buddhist complex patronized by sophisticated urban commoners, whose taste emulated that of the elites. These patrons desired buildings with the lavish, decorative aesthetic found on religious buildings for the elites as well as iconographic programs, particularly Chinese Confucian and Daoist, and Zen related themes, that elites preferred. Yet the wide variety of subjects found on the *ema* that these patrons donated to the temple testifies to the richness of

³⁸ Kominz, pp. 105-106.

Plate 7



Plate 8

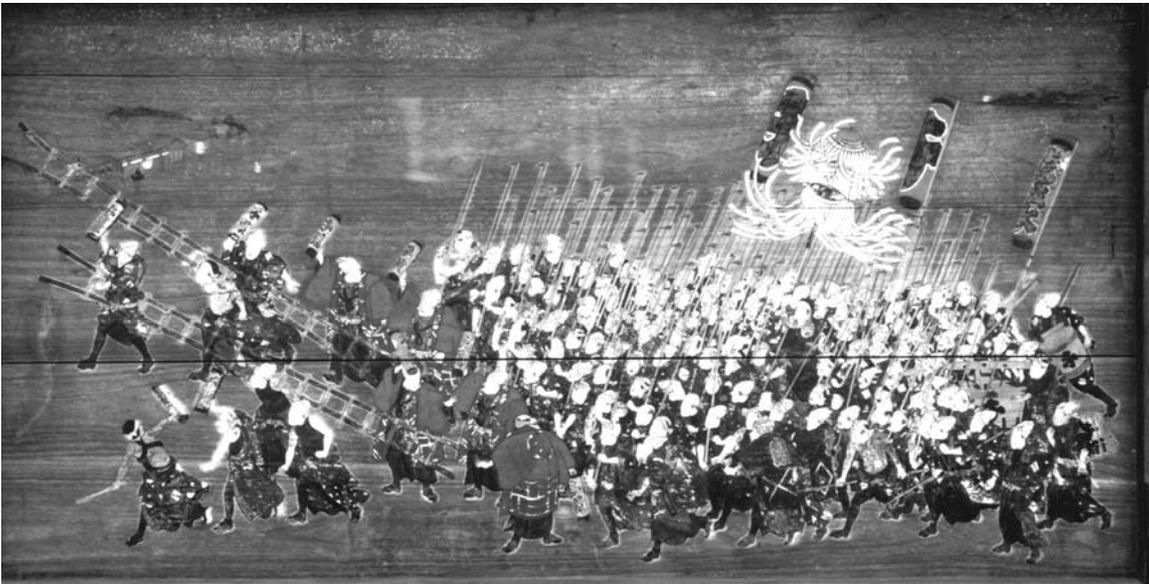


Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11



Plate 12

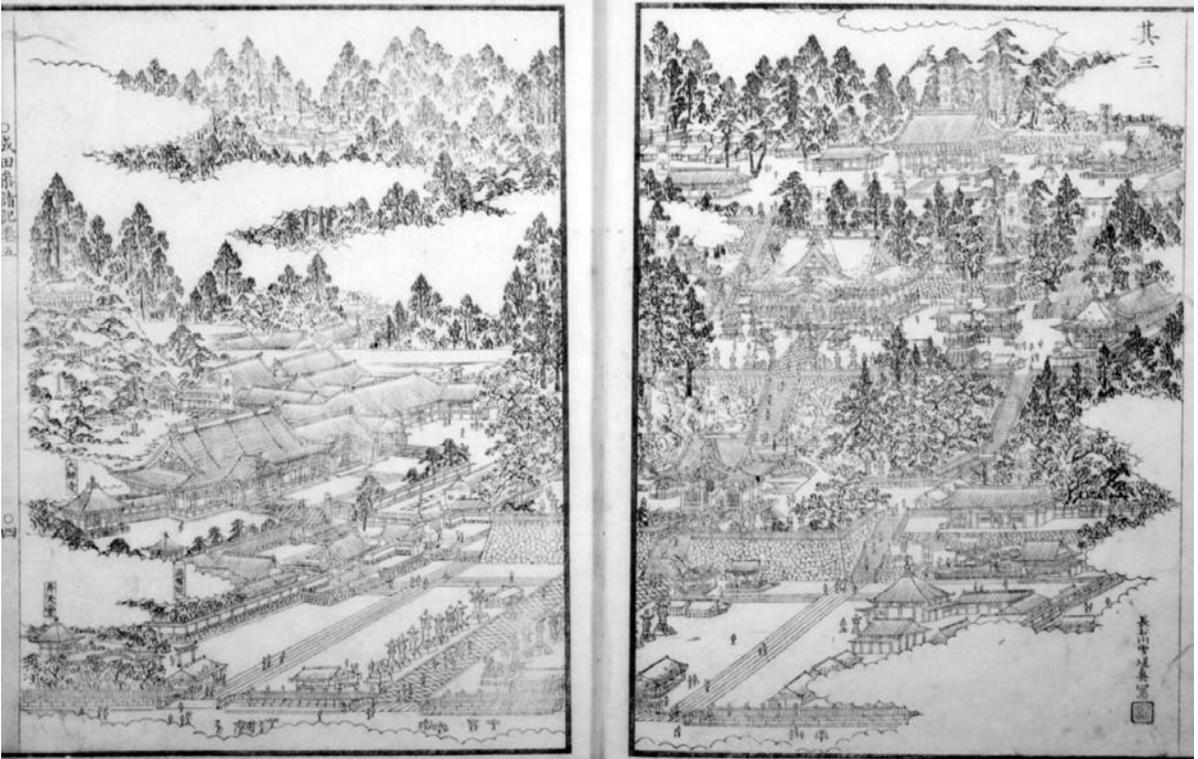


Plate 13



patrons' interests, and especially to the highly personal nature of their hopes and prayers. In general, commoners donated money for temple buildings and artifacts, especially votive tablets, in order to receive some kind of personal gain, a way for them to accrue the merit necessary to have their prayers for a better life in this world or the next answered. In contrast, elite samurai patronized the temple because of the deity's ability to secure political success, or because, as in the case of the Sakura daimyo, they were required to do so by the Shogunate.

Naritasan Shinshōji got its start with official patronage by the Tokugawa clan and their retainers. Yet the temple thrived because of its proximity to Edo and its fortuitous patronage by Ichikawa Danjūrō I, his descendants, and the acting clan's fans, the working class commoners of the city. Elite patronage never entirely vanished; the temple received the continued support of the Sakura daimyo, who coordinated the efforts to raise money for new buildings in the early nineteenth century. However, commoner support by far superseded this in scope and enabled the temple to become the major religious center that it is today.

Widespread popular patronage of Naritasan Shinjōji continues into the present, with the post World War II buildings even more grand in scale than their Edo predecessors. This trend is clearly visible when comparing the four extant generations of its main worship hall, three from the Edo period, and the present structure, dating to 1968 and designed by renowned architect Yoshida

Isoya (1894-1974).³⁹ Many of the *ema* donated to the temple by individuals even today echo the pleas of visitors of centuries earlier for Fudō to help with both other-worldly and material benefits (including, of course, prayers for traffic safety). However, temple officials and the thousands of persons who have donated funds to Naritasan building campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s still call upon the divine powers of Fudō to help achieve a more universal goal that is not unlike the one which inspired the temple's founding: the achievement of world peace.⁴⁰

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are by the author.

1. 1655 Main Hall at Naritasan Shinshōji, now the temple's Yakushidō.
2. Unidentified artist of the Torii school (possibly Torii Kiyonobu, 1664-1729), *The Origin of the Soga Warrior (Tsuwamono Kongen Soga)*, 1697. Woodblock printed book in ink on paper. 22.5 x 15.5 cm. Photo courtesy of The Library of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.
3. Utagawa Hiroshige III (1842-1894), *De-gaichō* at Eitaiji, *Fukagawa Fudōson*, 1885. Woodblock print in ink and colors on paper. Vertical *ōban* size, ca. 38 x 25 cm. Photo courtesy of Naritasan Shinshōji.
4. 1701 Main Hall at Naritasan Shinshōji, now the temple's Kōmyōdō.
5. 1703 Three-Story Pagoda at Naritasan

³⁹ Other famous buildings by Yoshida include two buildings in Nara, the Museum Yamato Bunkakan (1960) and the Chūguji Main Hall (1968), published in *Japan Architect* (Feb. 1969).

⁴⁰ The *tahōtō*-style Great Pagoda of Peace (*Daitō*), dedicated in 1984, contains a time capsule with wishes for world peace donated by various world leaders, and the Shōtoku Taishi Hall, dedicated to the spirit of Prince Shōtoku (Shōtoku Taishi; 574-622), completed in 1992, is also a monument to world peace, inspired by the Buddhist-influenced principle of unity and harmony included in Prince Shōtoku's famous Seventeen Article Constitution of 604 C.E.

Shinshōji.

6. Detail of the east side of the 1703 Three-Story Pagoda at Naritasan Shinshōji.

7. Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825), *Naritasan kaichō no zu*. Woodblock printed triptych in ink and colors on paper; vertical *ōban* size, each sheet ca. 38 x 25 cm. Photo courtesy of Naritasan Shinshōji.

8. Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861), *Ema* of an Edo fire brigade, dedicated by a group of firefighters, 1833. Painted wood. 143 x 250 cm. Photo courtesy of Naritasan Shinshōji.

9. 1830 Main Gate (*Niomon*) at Naritasan Shinshōji.

10. 1858 Main Hall at Naritasan Shinshōji, now the temple's Shakadō.

11. Section of the exterior wall relief panels with designs of Paragons of Filial Piety, at the 1858 Main Hall at Naritasan Shinshōji, by Matsumoto Ryōzan.

12. Nakaji Sadatoshi (1783-1838) and Nakaji Sadanori (1821-1870), authors; Hasegawa Settei (1819-1882), illustrator, Main buildings at Naritasan Shinshōji from the "Guidebook to Narita" (*Narita meisho zue; Narita sankei ki*), 1858. Woodblock printed book in ink on paper. ca. 27 x 33 cm. Photo courtesy of Naritasan Shinshōji.

13. 1861 Votive Tablet Hall (*Gakudō*) at Naritasan Shinshōji.