

Faces of Nara

*“The capital at Nara,
Beautiful in blue earth,
Flourishes now
Like the brilliant fragrance
Of the flowers in bloom.”*

*-Manyôshû
(The Ten Thousand Leaves)*



大德王請滿已餘無復
慧善解脫所作已畢捨諸重擔速得已利
諸有結得大自在住清淨戒善巧方便
莊嚴證八解脫已到彼岸其名曰具壽阿若
憍陳如具壽阿說侍多具壽婆湮波具壽
訶那摩具壽婆帝利迦大迦攝波優樓頻
迦攝伽耶迦攝耶提迦攝舍利子大目犍連
阿摩陀位於學地如是等諸大智賢者



Problems & Parameters

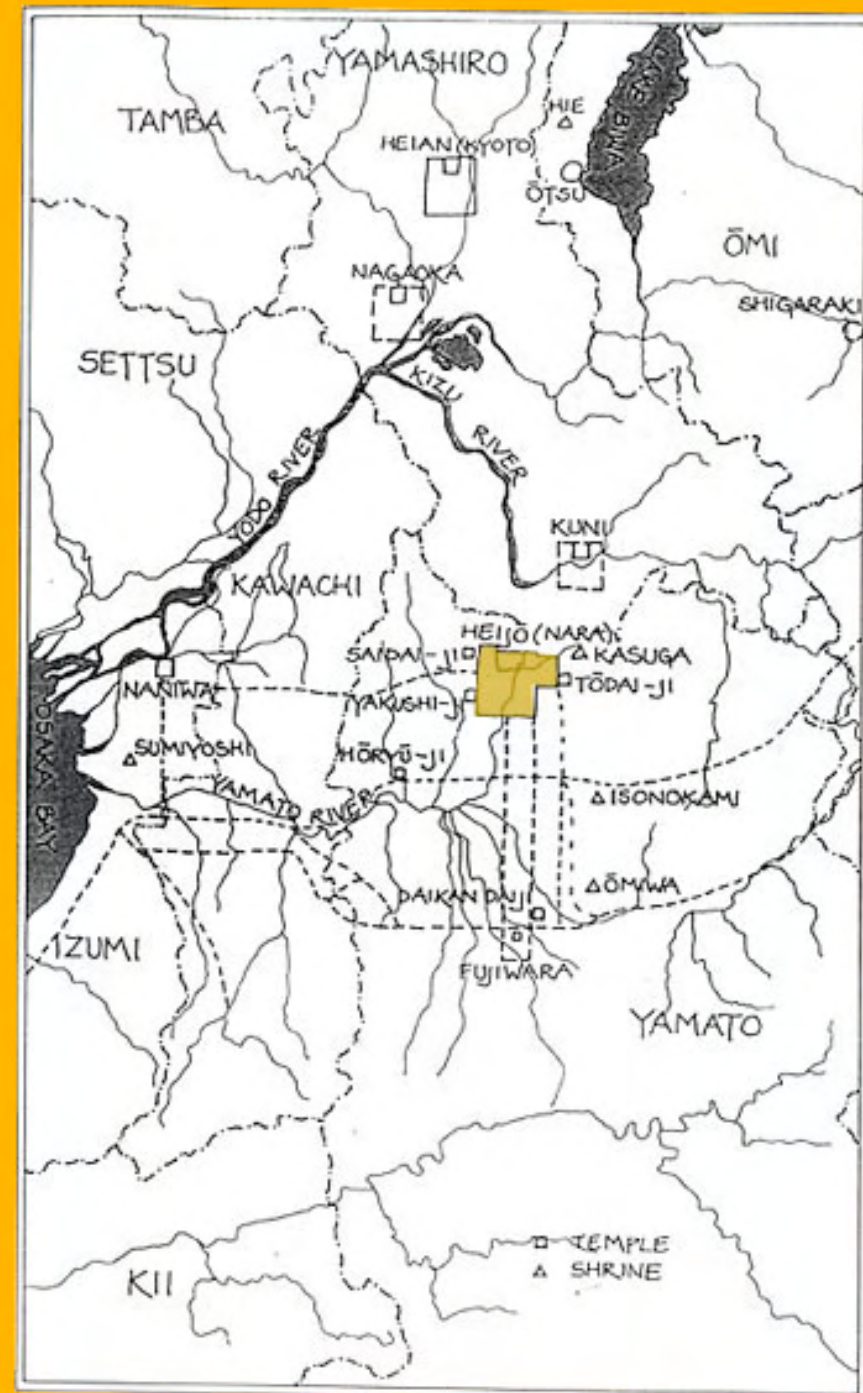
- Consolidating imperial rule through . . .
 - a. Legal codes
 - b. Urban planning
 - c. Religious display

1. Imperial Face Lift

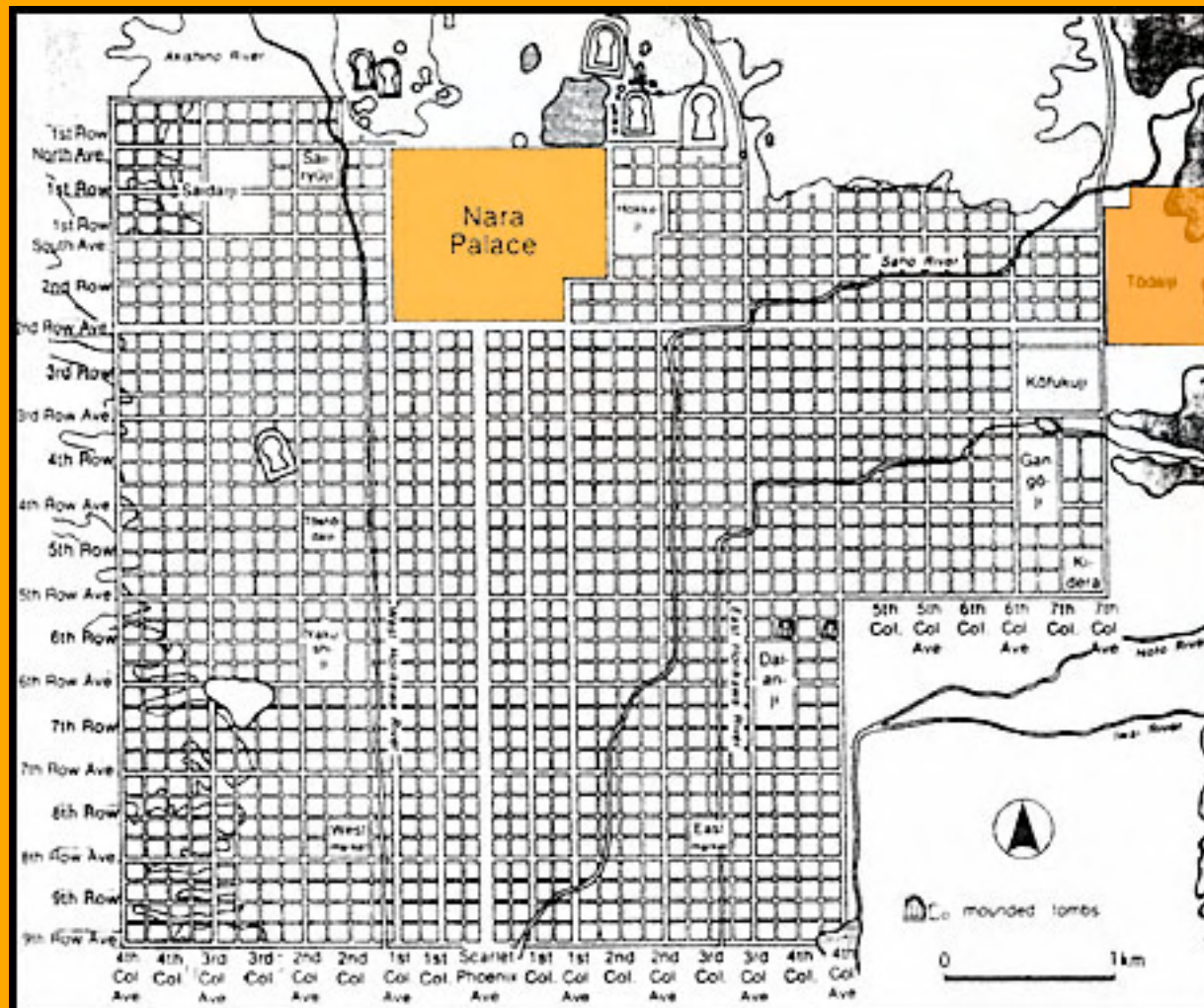
- a. New ideas: The Taika Reforms, 645
- b. New laws: The Taihō–Ritsuryō Code, 701–2
- c. New “histories”: Kojiki (712), Nihonshoki (720)
- d. New capital: Heijō (Nara), 710–784

Map of Kinai Region

- New Capital of Heijō (Nara) based on model of Chinese capital of Ch'ang-an at 1/3 scale.
- Sited according to Chinese feng-shui.
- Temples and shrines protect the perimeter, especially the northeast.



Heijô (Nara)



Nara Palace

Mibu Gate

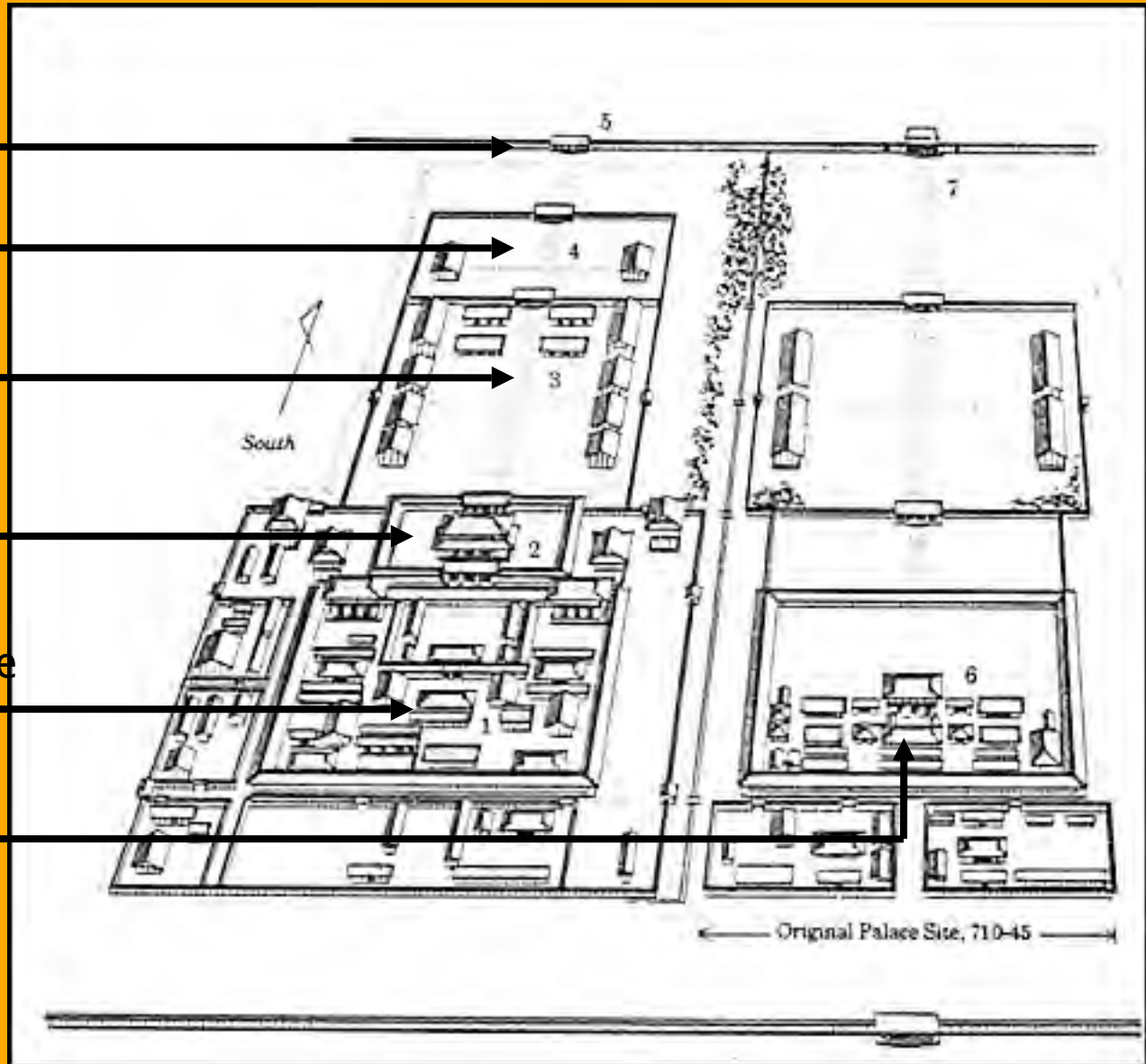
Assembly Area

Eight Ministries

Audience Hall

Imperial Residence

Western Palace



2. The Cosmopolitan Face

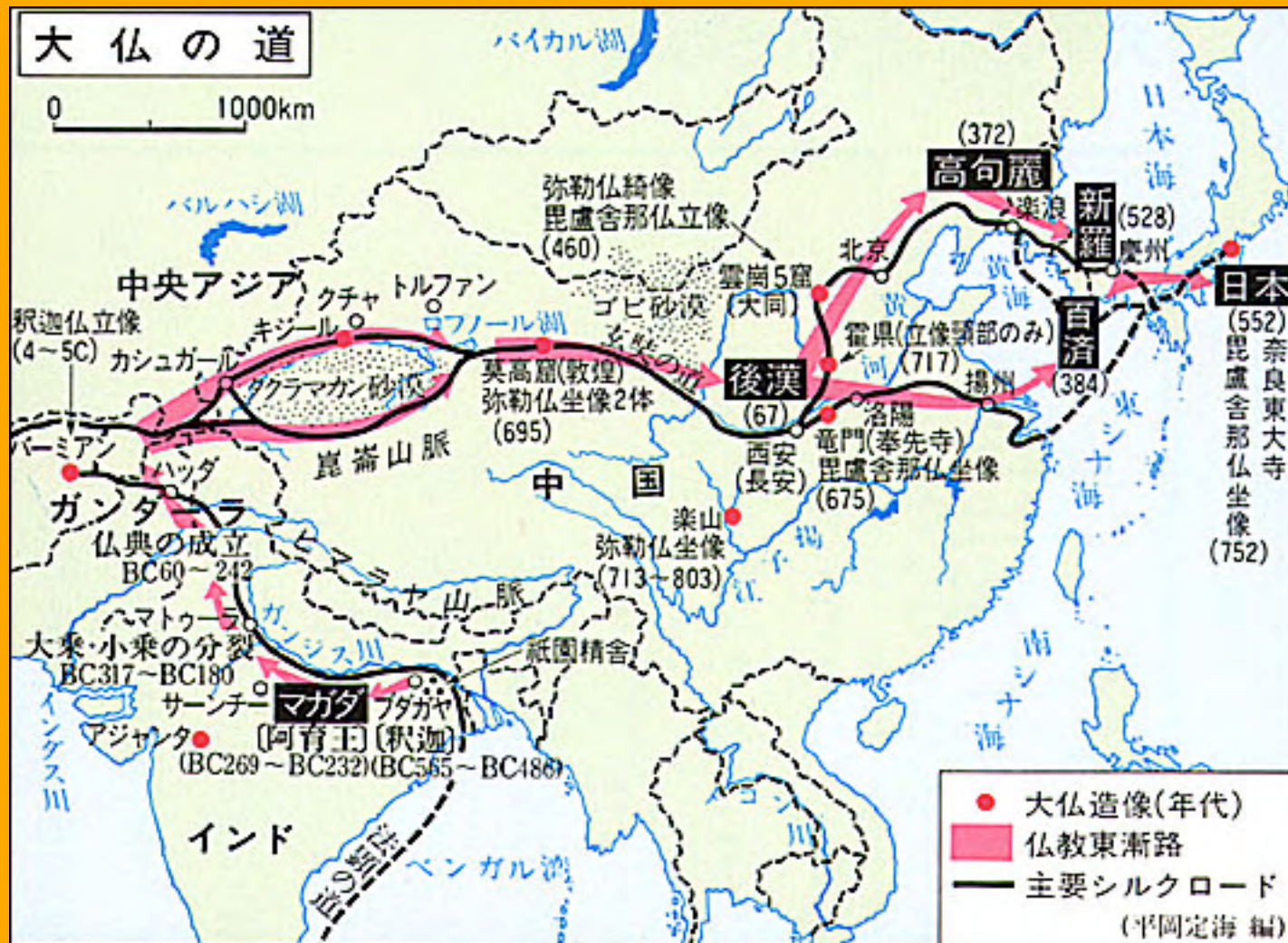
a. Japan at the end of the Silk Road



b. The Shôsoin: Imperial Treasure House



The Silk Road



The Shôsôin



3. The Public Face

- a. Tôdaiji and the provincial temple system
- b. Buddhism as an imperial state religion

東大寺

Golden Light Sutra (Konkyômyô-kyô)

金光明最勝王經序品第一

三藏法師玄奘譯

如是我聞一時薄伽梵在王舍城鷲峯山頂
於寂清淨甚深法界諸佛之境如來所居興
大慈蓋衆九万八千人皆是阿羅漢能善調
伏如大鷲王諸漏已除無復煩惱心善解脫
慧善解脫所作已畢捨諸重擔遠得已利盡
諸有結得大自在住清淨戒善巧方便智慧
莊嚴證八解脫已到彼岸其名曰具壽阿若
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阿難陀住於學地如是等諸大耆闍各於
晡時從定而起往詣佛所頂禮佛足右繞三
匝退坐一面

復有菩薩摩訶薩百千万億人俱有大威德
如大龍王名稱普聞衆所知識施戒清淨常
樂奉持忍行精勤經無量劫超諸靜慮繫念
現前闍闍慧門善備方便自在遊戲微妙神
通速得惣持辯才無盡斷諸煩惱累深皆亡
不久當成一切種智降魔軍衆而擊法鼓制
諸外道令起淨心轉妙法輪度人天衆十方



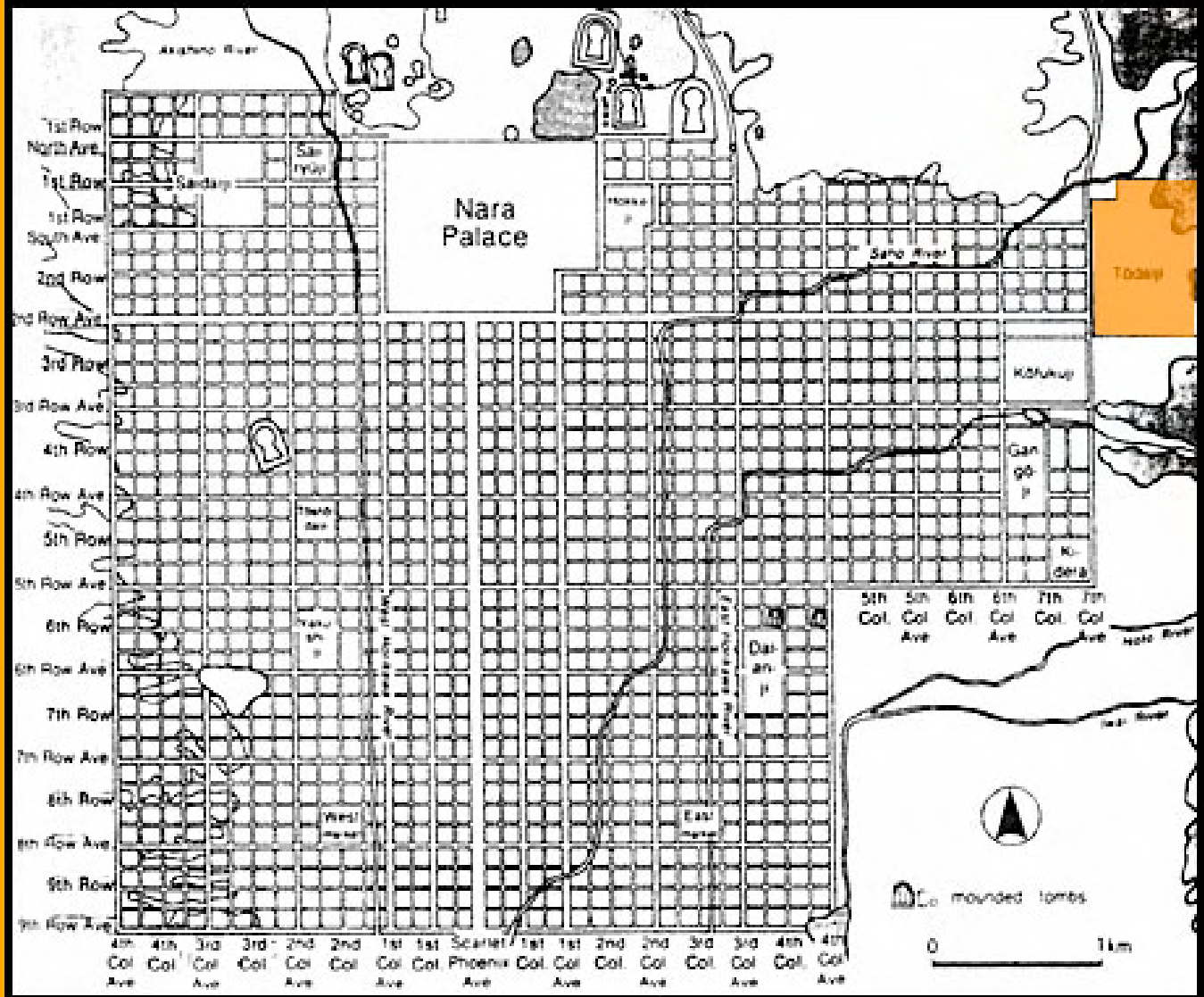
Provincial Temple System
(Kokubunji)

Flower Garland Sutra (Kegon-kyô)

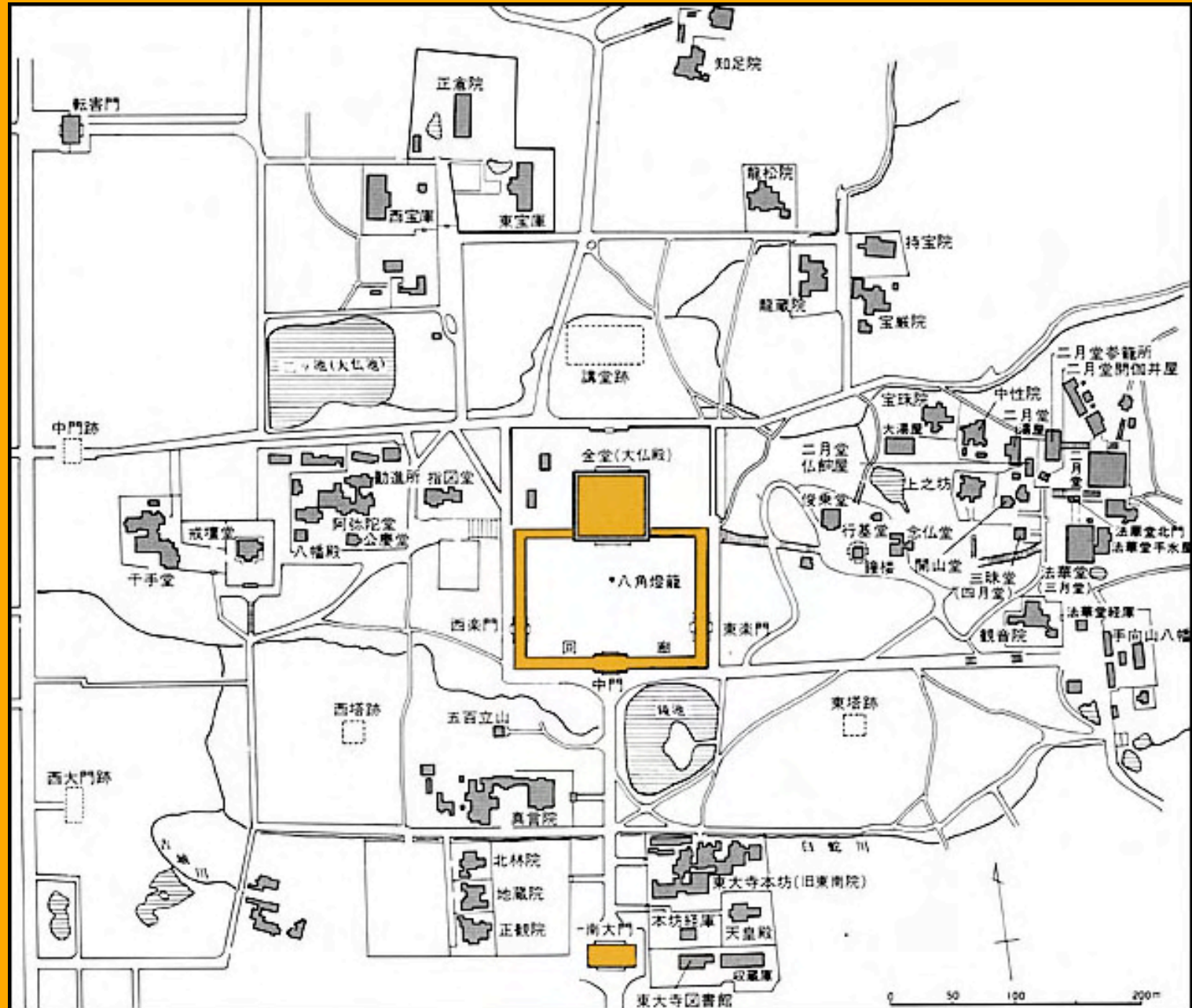


(This copy is a treasure of Tôdaiji and dates from 1195)

Nara



Map of Tôdaiji Complex



Daibutsuden



Nandaimon



Entrance Plaque Done in Emperor Shōmu's Calligraphy



“The Golden Light Sutra and the Four Heavenly Kings . . .

. . . guard the Temples of the Realm.”

Originally posted in the Nandaimon



Guardian Kings





Daibutsuden (Great Buddha Hall)

- Built after casting of the Great Buddha, 752; present one dates from 1707
- Originally 86 meters long (today: 57 m. long, 47 m. high, 52 m. wide)
- Largest timber-framed building in the world
- 190,000 tiles on roof
- 227 site supervisors, 917 master builders, 1,483 laborers, 1,000 cooks!

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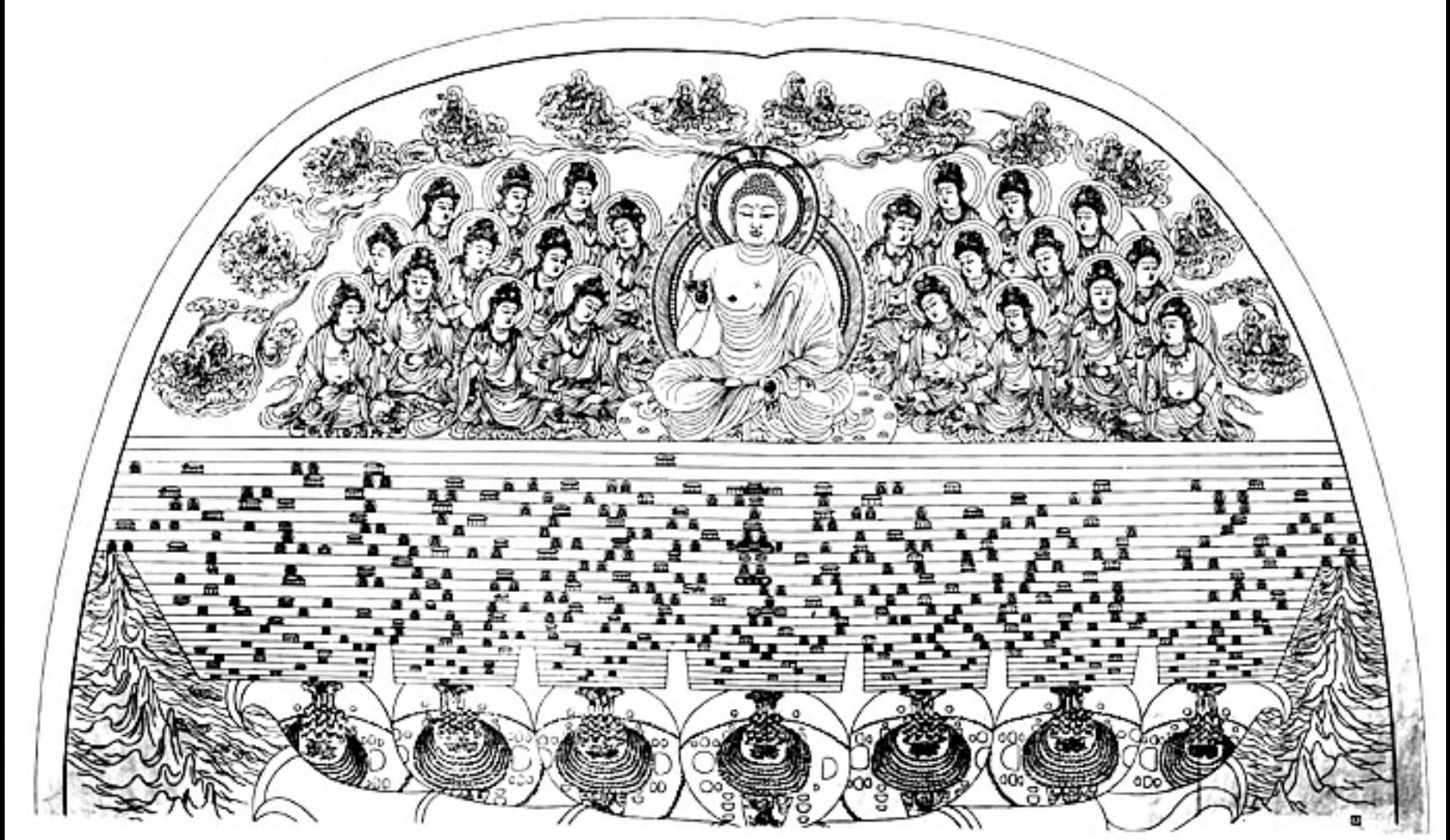
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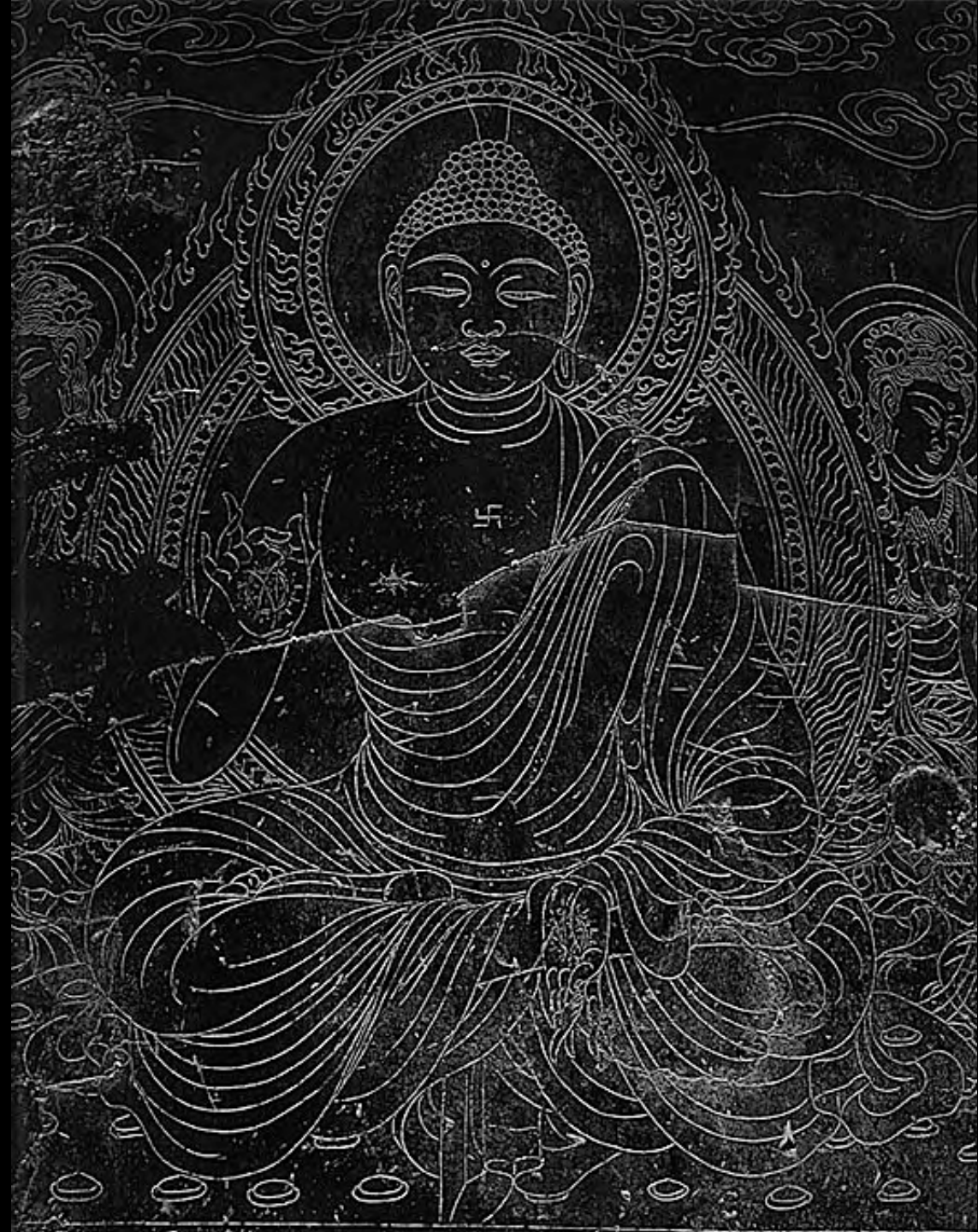
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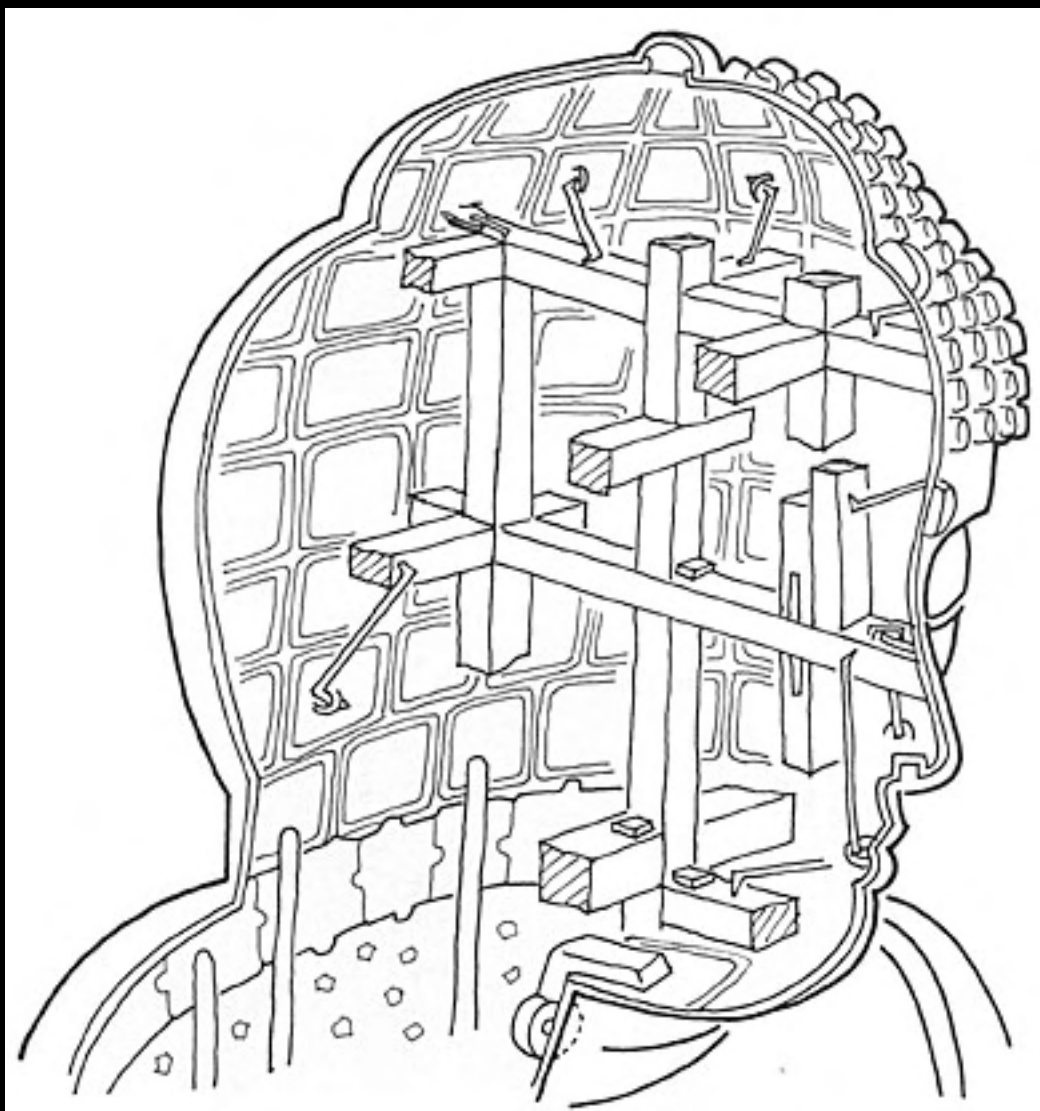


*“The Buddha’s body fills the cosmos . . .
Yet always on this seat of enlightenment.
In each of the Buddha’s pores
Sits Buddhas many as atoms. . . ,
He sits in each and every land,
Pervading the lands one
and all;
Enlightening beings from everywhere gather
All coming to the scene of enlightenment . . .
The profound knowledge
of the Buddha
Enters everywhere in the cosmos.”
-- The Flower Garland Sutra
(Kegon-kyō)*











- 966 curls of hair,
2 years to cast
- Byakugô, “white hair”
at center of forehead =
“third eye” of wisdom



- Torso sculpted apart from head.

- An image-making team led by Kuninaka Kimimaro, a Korean, constructed a clay model of icon over a frame of wood, cloth, and lacquer.

- Another Korean, Takechi, headed the bronzing operation in eight stages.



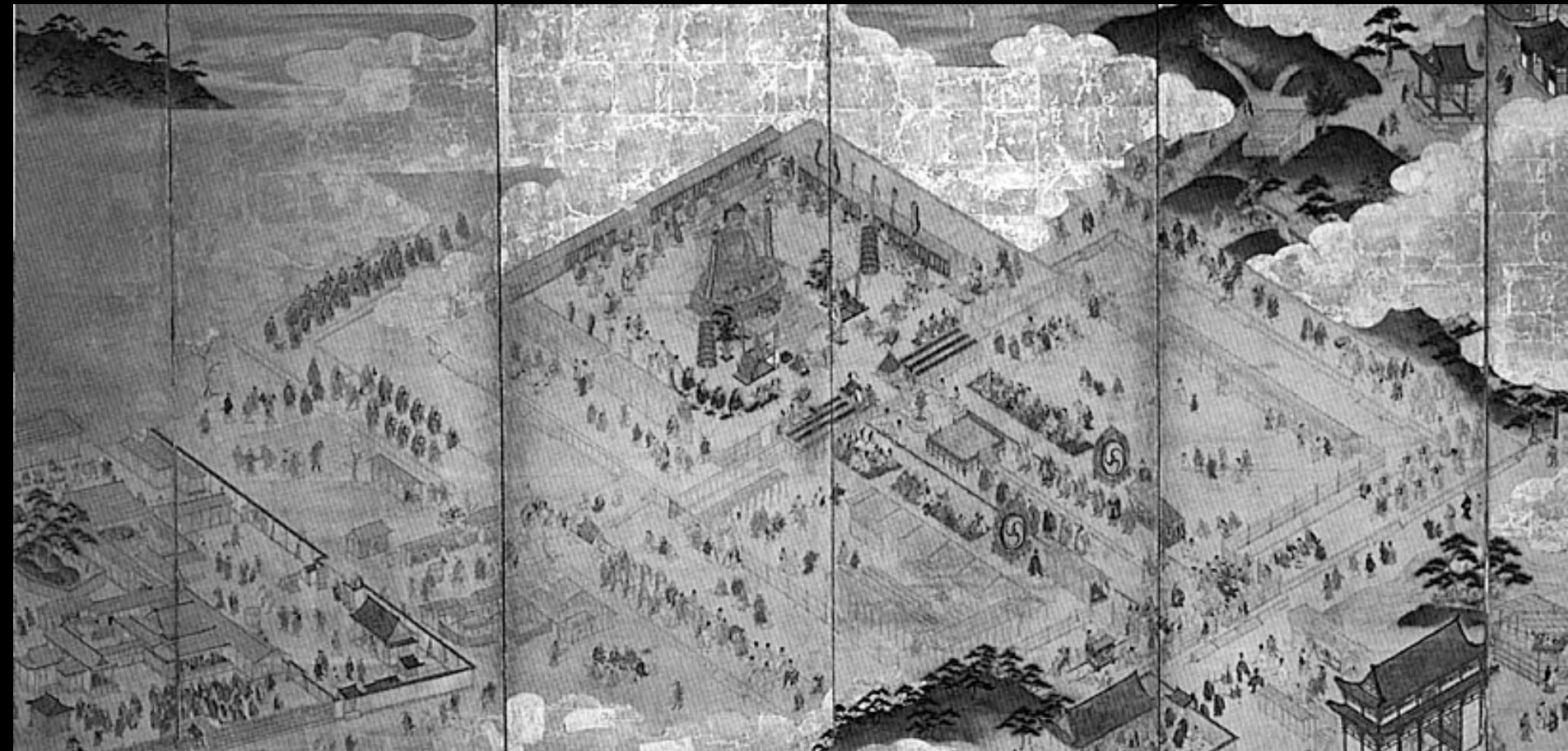




- Bronzing complete by 749, but gold needed for plating of the cosmic Buddha.
- Shōmu orders priests to pray to kami and buddhas to help find gold.
- Gold discovered in northern Japan in 749; plating completed thanks to the gods and buddhas.



Eye-opening Ceremony, Fourth Month 752



- Under direction of monk from India, Bodhisena
- Over 10,000 monks arranged in courtyard
- 7000 courtiers and 4000 court musicians
- Dancers in flowing saffron robes and masks of Buddha





- Hoods over Buddha's eyes pulled away by long ropes held by all present.



- A cosmic reflection of Buddha's universality and of kokubunji (imperial universality)

