

## Lecture 04 Faces of Nara

### 0. Intro

- The maturation of the imperial system during the Nara period as seen in three different "faces": its private face, public face, its cosmopolitan face.
- Three cultural productions (not without political ramifications) will anchor our study of the Nara period today as they represent these three faces of Nara: Man'yôshû (an anthology of poetry), Tôdaiji (a huge Buddhist temple), Shôsôin (an imperial storehouse).

### 1. The Private Face: Man'yôshû ("Collection of 10,000 Leaves")

- Over 4500 poems put together during Nara period.
- Preface is in Chinese and it followed the form of Chinese collections.
- Contains *chôka* (long poems) and *tanka/waka* of 5/7/5/7/5 syllable pattern.
- They generally express private sentiments, but do contain political aspects.

### 2. The Public Face: Tôdaiji

- Emperor Shômu (724-749) est. Tôdaiji and heavily patronized Buddhism.
- Commissioned Tôdaiji (built 743-752) in NE hills of Nara
- Main hall contains huge Vairocana/Roshana Buddha: 60 feet tall, 360 tons. (designed by 2nd generation Korean immigrant)
- Done in Tang China style temple architecture. Rebuilt in 1710.

### 3. The Cosmopolitan Face: Shôsôin

- Built in 756,
- Raised about 8 feet and built in a "log cabin" type style.
- Contains Emp. Shômu's personal artifacts and items from continent.
- Many of its contents are still in very good condition:

Buddhist sutra of cause & effect "Birth of the Buddha bowl"; Incense pedestal  
Priest's staff & other religious articles; musical instruments; jade bowls; mirror  
and enamel cloisonné; ink stones, brushes and ink; go game board Emperors'  
belt and chair, etc.