

Design and Structure of Momoyama and Edo Period Pagodas (1)

— Pagodas in Chūgoku, Shikoku, and Kyūshū —

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The research reported here deals with the remaining structures of Buddhist pagodas built during the Momoyama (1573-1615) and Edo (1615-1868) periods. These pagodas constitute the greater half of all pagodas in Japan. The research attempted to clarify the main characteristics of these pagodas, while adding some comments on design and structure. For convenience, the investigations were divided into three regions, excluding Hokkaidō and Okinawa prefectures where there are no pagodas. This report deals with pagodas in the western region encompassing Chūgoku, Shikoku, and Kyūshū.

(1) There are numerous structures built in the late and final Edo period still remaining in this region. The majority of these took a long time to complete, most likely because of insufficient funds and deficiencies in carpentry skills. Seven pagodas around the Inland Sea were built by the carpenter's group from Oku county in Okayama prefecture, giving a glimpse into the mobility of carpenters at that time.

(2) Very few of the Structures have pillar-interval and length proportions that match the standards given in the widely circulated lumber allotment manual of that period. However, the pillar-interval proportions of the three three-storied pagodas built by the Okayama carpenter's group at the end of the Edo period are all the same. This would seem to reflect one aspect of the building standards of that group.

(3) Stylistic techniques of details, such as the bracket complexes and eaves, are a mixture of native and Zen Buddhist styles. Probably the Zen style was used for the aura of high quality and decorativeness created by its complexity and difficulty. The fittings of the lowest tiers of the pagodas leave an unobstructed view through the interiors so that they have a liberated feel compared to the shut-in feel of pagodas built up to that time. This can be seen as planned for the convenience of pilgrims, an indication that the increase in mass pilgrimages

was causing changes in the character of the pagodas.

(4) Not one of the pagodas has a framework put together in the way that had been in use since the Nara and Heian periods (7th to 12th centuries). Only a few have central pillars; the rest are built in the *yagura* (tower) style. Further, in the late and final Edo period, the uppermost tiers were floored and given ladders so that people could climb to the top of the pagodas. This, too, can be seen as influence from the mass pilgrimages.

Note should be taken of the fact that the very nature of the pagodas changed and they took on the appearance of multi-storied buildings.