7 The Encounter with Indian Culture through Buddhism in Japan - Making of an Anime Film "Buddha"

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1. My experience on making an anime film "Buddha"

I start my paper on my experience of making an anime film "Buddha", the original manga written by Osamu Tezuka (1928-89), the most famous Japanese cartoonist, manga writer/ artist, animator, and producer. His best known anima is "Astro Boy" ("Tetsuwan Atomu" in the Japanese original title). He is often credited as the Godfather of Anime, the god of comics and so on, often compared with Walt Disney.

"Buddha" is one of Tezuka's last epic manga works that began in 1972 and ended in 1983. This manga won the award for Best U.S. Edition of Foreign Material at the 2004 and 2005 Eisner Awards, the award for Best American Edition of Foreign Material at the 2004 and 2005 Harvey Awards, and its anime film was nominated for the 2012 Japan Academy Prize for Animation of the Year. Actually it had been said that it was impossible to produce this manga as an anime film because Tezuka's unique interpretation of the Gautama Buddha's life and thought are rather controversial and ideological. His portrayal of the Buddha's life is often criticized as too humane and against the authentic Buddhist philosophy by some scholars and monks. Apart from above controversies, "Buddha" was only one master piece that had remained without being animated.

The animated feature-length film "Buddha", directed by Kozo Morishita, animated by Toei Animation and distributed by Toei Company and Warner Bros. Pictures, was released on May 28, 2011 exactly during the aftermath of the Tôhoku earthquake and tsunami. This year is also the celebration of the 750th memorial of Shinran, a founder of the Pure Land Buddhism, the most widely practiced branch of Buddhism in Japan. I am one of supervisors of this anime film and gave advices from the aspects of ancient Indian culture and performing arts.

The manga "Buddha" which actually consists of 14 volumes is planned to be trilogy of amine films. The first part begins with birth of Buddha and ends by his entering priesthood, the second part which will be released February 8, 2014, ends by his attaining enlightenment to be called "Buddha", and the last part under planning will end by his death.

In this paper, I will focus on my reconstruction of the ancient Indian culture through my experiences as a supervisor of "Buddha" and indicate a few special features of cultural transformation through my researches on the encounter with Indian culture through Buddhism in Japan. Finally I will point out what I learned through this experience

2. My methodology of reconstructing the ancient Indian culture

It is quite difficult to reconstruct the ancient Indian culture because of the scarcity of historical materials. No archeological remains of Buddha's time are available today. Buddhist architecture had developed from the third century BC onward. One of the earliest Buddhist sites still in existence is the great stupa at Sanchi, which was probably built by the Mauryan King Ashoka (273-236 BC).

The most informative materials are sculptures and reliefs carved on the elaborate stone gateways around stupas at Sanchi and plenty of limestone reliefs to adorn the great stupa at Amaravati. The Buddha's life and Jataka tales are depicted on these sculptures and reliefs which mostly belong to the Satavahana period dating from the second century BC to the second century AD. Through the investigation of them, it is possible to get information of court lives in the royal palace as well as those of common people, the military procession, performing arts, musical instruments, dance posture and so on.

Preceding Sanchi and Amaravati, the Bharhut sculptures which belong to the Sunga period from the third to the second century BC, also provide the useful information on the ancient Indian's lives.

The other important archeological remains are the Ajanta cave paintings which date from the second century BC to the seventh century AD. The early rock-cut caves belong to the Satavahana period that can be agreed with Sanchi and Amaravati though these caves have less number of paintings. The later caves belonging to the Vakataka period have the finest colorful paintings describing Jataka tales. They are especially useful for reconstructing the ancient Indian costumes, ornaments, and hairstyles addition to aforementioned information.

Addition to above Buddhist remains, Sanskrit, Pali and Tamil literatures including *Veda*s,

Buddhist sutras, Jataka tales, and epics are also important to reconstruct the ancient Indian culture. Among them, I especially relied on *Nâmya-úâstra* for the scene of dance and music performed in the royal palace of Kapilavastu.

3. The reconstructed ancient Indian culture

Now I proceed to explain my reconstruction of the ancient Indian culture by referring to above archeological materials. As my main interest is the history of Indian performing arts, I especially focus on musical instruments and costumes addition to daily necessities and the ancient way of life.

a. Dance scene in Kapilavastu

In the scene of the royal palace of Kapilavastu, dancers and musicians try to please young Siddhartha. Japanese usually have an idea that music played by the *sitâr* and the *tablâ* is typical Indian. Because these musical instruments have developed after the Muslim invasion to North India, I did not use the Hindustani music but the simple and traditional Carnatic song for dance called *jatisvaram*, which I actually sang and my friend Bharatanâmyam dancer choreographed for the scene. Though we cannot listen to the same music of Kapilavastu, I chose traditional Carnatic song so as to avoid the influence of Muslim culture in this scene. It is no doubt that the composition chosen here is much older than the Hindustani *sitâr* music.

b. Musical instruments

Musical instruments featuring in the scene of Kapilavastu are the *m[daEgam*, the bamboo flute, the *esraj* (instead of the *râvaGahasta*, a stringed instrument played with a bow) and the *nammuvaEgam* (instead of *tâlam*, small symbals) that are all considered to be ancient. *Nâmya-úâstra* mentions different types of musical instruments: chapter 29 treats the chordophones including varieties of *vîGâs*, chapter 30 aerophones including the bamboo

flute (the *vaCœa*) and the conch shell (the *œankha*), chapter 31 ideophones (the *tâlam*), and chapter 33 membranophones including the *m[daEgam* and other varieties of drums.

The actual shapes of these musical instruments can be reconstructed especially with reference to the reliefs of Amaravati and the paintings of Ajanta caves. Among them, the most common stringed instrument is a harp-type *vîGâ* with seven or nine strings and another one is a lute-type. A group of musicians and dancers depicted in these paintings, sculptures and reliefs suggest that orchestra music consisting of different type of musical instruments with dance was flourishing in the ancient India.

c. Costumes

It is most difficult for me how costumes should be drawn in the anime film. In the ancient India, women usually wore no upper cloths but waistcloths. Actually women in the Tezuka's original manga wear only waistcloths. Moreover, a cloth without cut and stitch like a sari has been considered to be pure according to the Indian epics and wearing stitched upper cloths became popular after the Muslim invasion. Since the anime film should be enjoyed by families including children, we put upper cloths on women to avoid sexual or obscene expression.

The elaborate ornaments including head-dresses, necklaces, ear-rings, bangles, belts and anklets can be found in the Ajanta cave paintings though nose-rings and finger-rings are productions of the later days. We can also observe the development of weaving techniques of dress materials there. Since it is difficult to draw such elaborate ornaments and complicated patterns of dress materials in anime films, some contrivances to draw them with rather simple lines are indispensable.

d. Architecture, Furniture, vessels, toiletries etc.

The most typical characteristics of architecture in this period were walled cities with large gates and multi-storied buildings with windows and doors constructed with bricks, wood, and stones. The furniture, vessels and toiletries used in those days were not so different from those of todays. The architecture and its interior appearing in Tezuka's original manga looks like that of rather later period.

e. Battle fields

The military procession and the battle fields appearing in this anime film excite us a lot with their furious movements. The military troop of this period consisted of four different types of army, namely infantry, cavalry, carriages with one or pair of horses, and military elephants. There were various weapons including swords, clubs, spears, axes, pikes and shields, bows and arrows, armors, and flags with emblems. A head was usually covered by a turban and a helmet was rarely worn.

4. The encounter with Indian culture in Japan

The official introduction of Buddhism to Japan is dated to 552 and this new religion has completely taken a firm hold on the Japanese life in the Asuka period (538-710) and the Nara period (710-794) though the spread and practice of this religion is much earlier since the third century AD according to the Chinese sources. This period can be considered to be a phase of internationalization. Along with the Buddhism, various foreign cultures from China and Korea and also from India and other Asian countries were brought to Japan.

It was regarded as the important policy for the Government to adapt foreign culture for the betterment of state governance. In this period, the exchange programs were conducted by the Government: Japanese scholars were sent to

foreign countries to learn the advanced culture and foreign scholars were invited to train them. The Japanese scholars Kenzuishi and Kentôshi (Japanese envoy to the Sui and the Tang Dynasty of China) were sent to China to study Chinese culture from 607 (the Asuka period) till 894 (the Early Heian period). Their purposes were to learn advanced technologies and knowledge, to collect Buddhist sutras, and to gather the information of foreign countries.

In 736, two Buddhist monks, Bodaisenna (Bodhisena) from South India and Buttetsu (Fattriet) from Vietnam were invited to Japan. Bodhisena was one of the most famous Indian monks who led the Daibutsu-kaigen-hôyô, the celebration of a newly made great Buddha image at the Tôdaiji temple in Nara in 752. In this occasion, various performing arts including Gagaku (the orchestra music, also called Bugaku when it is performed with dance), Gigaku (the mask dance drama), Syômyô (the Buddhist chant) and the other local performing arts were performed. We can recognize the Indian influences in them.

a. Gagaku

Gagaku is one of the oldest performing arts preserved for more than 1400 years in Buddhist temples, Shintô shrines, and the Imperial Court. The 80 musicians and dancers from Silla in the Korean Peninsula visited Japan and gave the performance of their dance and music in 453 is the earliest record of importation of Gagaku. Apart from the theoretical similarities with the ancient Indian music, there is a group of compositions called Tenjikugaku (Tenjiku is the ancient name of India in Japanese) which Bodhisena and Fattriet, two Buddhist monks were said to train musicians and dancers of the Shitennôji temple in Osaka.

The existing repertoires of Tenjikugaku are as follows: Ama-ninomai (Mother Goddess and the second dance), Genjoraku (finding serpent),

Bato (an Indian King, Pedu), Karyobin (Karavinka bird), Seigaiha (a wave of the Lake Quighai), Sokoko (styrax), Bairo (an Indian King, Bairochikana?), and Bosatsu (Bodhisattva).

b. Gigaku

Gigaku consists of a procession called Gyôdô and a pantomime with comical elements. It was once performed as a religious service conducted mainly on the Buddha Jayanti day at Buddhist temples. It declined around the 16th century and died out. Today only the masks, costumes, and a few documents have been preserved in the Shôsôin, the Hôryûji temples and a few other places. Gigaku had international characteristics whose origin could be traced to West Asia, India as well as China. There characters appearing in Gigku performance are divided into four differnet types: Kojin (West Asians or Aryans), Gojin (People of Wu), Nankaijin (those who come from the southern sea), and Irui (beasts and birds). Today, traditional performing artists are trying to reconstruct Gigaku in various ways.

c. Shômyô

The word 'Shômyô' is derived from *œabda-vidya* (the knowledge of sound syllables) in Sanskrit. Shômyô is the Buddhist chant said to have originated in the Vedic chant. It was brought to Japan through Indian and Chinese monks along with the introduction of Buddhism. Because of its localization in these countries, there are three types of Shômyô: Bonsan in Sanskrit, Kansan in Chinese, and Wasan in Japanese. The basic construction of Shômyô presentation called Hôe (assembly for *dharma*) includes a dramatic presentation of the Buddhist doctrine: Bai (praising Buddha's beauty), Sange (pouring flowers), Bonnon (praising Buddha's voice) and Shakujô (crosier).

5. The transformation of Indian culture

Before brought to Japan, the Indian culture might had been transformed in China, Korea, and other Asian countries, and again indigenized

in Japan. Investigating the process of transformation is also an interesting topic. I will take up a few typical examples here.

a. Aryan vs Dravidian

Ama-ninomai, one of the Tenjikugaku repertoires of Gagaku, is a mask dance. The dancers of Ninomai which describes an old man and a woman with comical movements wear masks with dark brown skin symbolizing Dravidians. While the mask with red skin, a big nose and eyes worn by a dancer of Genjoraku and that of Bato symbolize Aryans. Masks of Gigaku also share the similar characteristics. The mask of Kojin has Aryan characteristics and that of Nankaijin has Dravidian characteristics.

b. Kinnara or Kalavinka

Karyobin (also called Karyobinga) derived from Kalavinka, one of the Tenjikugaku repertoires, is performed by the children who set wings on their back and dance with small cymbals. Originally a bird living in the Himalayas is called Kalavinka and we can often come across in the Buddhist sutras as a bird with melodious voice living in the paradise. On the other hand, Karyobin or Kalavinka is a celestial musician with a human head and a bird body in Japan, that is usually called Kinnara in India. The process of changing the name from Kinnara to Karavinka is not clear.

c. The five-stringed lute-type vina

Kinnara depicted in the Ajanta caves is holding the five-stringed lute-type vîGâ. In Japan, the same type of lute called 'Raden-shitan-no-gogen-biwa' is preserved in the Shôsôin, the Imperial Repository near the Tôdaiji temple constructed in the seventh century. This is the only existing musical instrument of this type in the world and even obsolete in China, India, and around the Silk Road. Though the musical instrument is preserved, its music is obsolete in Japan, too. Today musicians and scholars from China and Japan get together and try to reconstruct its music.

6. Concluding Remarks

We can find a lot of Indian elements in the Japanese performing arts brought along with Buddhism. Though they might have been transformed in China and Korea and then again modified in Japan, I have tried to find a link between the traditional Japanese performing arts and those of India. Consequently, it can be said that the Japanese have regarded India as the birthplace of Buddhism and a treasure house of the ancient Buddhist culture.

Because of the cultural diversity, our own culture has become enriched till today. Though different cultures often crush each other, any culture can never be isolated from one another. Being either happy or unhappy for us, the encounter with different cultures brings something interesting and even exciting, and then it gives us creative imaginations.

Addition to cultural diversity, we share many common features as we know that the Buddhist philosophy is shared by the people living in many Asian countries even though political hostiles exist among them. I may wear Indian dress yesterday, Japanese dress today, and Western dress tomorrow. I may wear Indian saree, French watch, and Japanese shoes at the same time. This is a cultural fact today. Let us find common features and enjoy differences.

Finally I will point out four practical perspectives through my experience of supervising a film "Buddha". First, the basic principle of Buddhism has never died out, become our background, and enriched our ideas though it was born and brought up in the ancient and traditional Indian culture, traveled to several countries, and then transformed for over two thousand years.

Second, to know and to learn other cultures make it possible to objectify ourselves better

than before. Through the investigation of the ancient Indian culture for this film, I could deepen my understanding of the ancient Japanese culture. To know others means to know ourselves objectively. Then it makes us possible to explain our own culture to others in better way.

Third, supervising films especially in the case of treating historical themes is an indispensable process in order to get the global repetition. The Times of India says that "Mahabharat", an anime film presented by Jayantilal Gada (PEN) and produced by Kushal Gada and Dhaval Gada, released on 27th Dec. 2013, script gets scholar's approved. This news shows the importance of objective approaches as there might be many versions of "Mahabharat" because of its popularity. In case of "Buddha", there are three supervisors, one is on Buddhist philosophy, one is on architecture, and I am on culture and arts. This also shows a good example of teamwork. Diversification of specializing field of team members helps to attain the satisfactory results.

Fourth, Japanese anime could get a global acceptance without suffering the Galapagos syndrome. Some scholars point out its apolitical nature by comparison with those of Walt Disney that usually carries an American political ideology, namely "Democracy". Because of this message hidden in films, the latter have not been appreciated well in some Asian countries. To the contrary, Japanese anime has focused more on children's growth, family affairs, friendship, and other familiar everyday concerns which everybody can share.

Today India is gaining global attentions as a growing market due to its population growth and economic development. For the further mutual relationship of business operations, I would like to emphasize the necessity of understanding culture and customs. Though I am not a business person, I believe that cross-cultural communication is always the fundamental principle for successful business.

Pictures for reference: