

**The Concept of *Danzō*: “Sandalwood Images”
in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture of the
8th to 14th Centuries**

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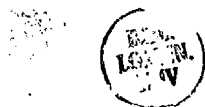


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1. The Meaning of the Term *Shōgon*

Shōgon (莊嚴) is a concept, which is central to the understanding of East Asian Buddhist art in general and I will argue to *danzō* in particular. Therefore, it is essential to explore the origin and meaning of the term *shōgon* before applying it to *danzō* and examining the expression of *shōgon* in the concept of *danzō*. The character *shō* (莊) means “festive, noble, a wealth of splendour” and the character *gon* (嚴) means “sacred, festive, awe-inspiring” and Dietrich Seckel has most appropriately translated the two characters as “sanctification through a wealth of splendour.”¹ It is a term which encompasses the religious and aesthetic as a dynamic, interrelated, harmonious whole.

The term *shōgon* originates in the two Sanskrit terms *alamkāra* and *vyūha*. The original meaning of *alamkāra* was not only to “adorn, beautify, add grace and beauty,” but also to “provide, make ready and fit for a purpose, prepare” and more specifically, “to put into the state of holiness and numinous efficacy by magic means.”² In ancient India, *alamkāra* originally had this magic-ritual meaning and the meaning of adornment only developed as a secondary connotation of the term. Amongst the numerous meanings of the term, regarding material things, *alamkāra* meant the making of *alam*, that is, the giving of strength required for something—things which bestow a consecrated condition upon a person such as amulets and ornaments.³ In this sense, *alamkāra* means ornaments and adornments, which are a manifestation of the sacred or spiritual and which in turn bestow consecration on their bearer. This demonstrates that although this particular

¹ Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 184.

² Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 184; Jan Gonda, “The Meaning of the Word *Alamkāra*,” in *A Volume of Eastern and Indian Studies Presented to Prof. F.W. Thomas* (Bombay, 1939), p. 103.

³ Jan Gonda, “The Meaning of the Word *Alamkāra*,” p. 111 and for a discussion of various other meanings of the word *alamkāra*, see p. 107.

meaning of *alamkāra* regarding material things carries the secondary connotation of the term as adornment, the original magic-ritual meaning of the term of “putting into a state of holiness” is still fully implicit.

The Sanskrit term *vyūha* has the meaning of “distribution, ordering the parts of a whole, individual description, form, manifestation, appearance, structure, group, multitudes,” to which the following meanings are closely related: beautification, ornament, beautiful order.⁴ However, the meaning of the word is “not a beautiful order for the sake of ornamentation, but rather a filling of the abstract emptiness [i.e., the desert] of [absolute reality] with variety. It may occasionally also be equated with individualisation and individual objects.”⁵ Therefore, the true meaning of *vyūha* is the dynamic materialisation of “abstract emptiness” or the sacred through an infinite variety of beautiful shapes and colours, which means that all things in existence no matter how insignificant are *vyūha* and adorn the world with their presence. At present, it is still not clear when the terms *alamkāra* and *vyūha* were used for the first time. However, both terms are frequently used in the sūtras, particularly in the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Sk: *Avatamsaka Sūtra*) and the *Lotus Sūtra* (Sk: *Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra*), and occasionally even appear in the title of sūtras such as the *Gandha-vyūha Sūtra*.

The Chinese term *zhuangyan* (莊嚴), from which the Japanese term *shōgon* is derived, can be found in China from at least as early as the 5th century and appears in the title of a number of Buddhist scriptures and treatises.⁶ The early popularity of this term in China is

⁴ Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 184; William Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899), p. 1041.

⁵ Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 184; D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, vol. 2 (London, 1950), pp. 151 and 206.

⁶ Helmut Brinker, “Sublime Adornment: Kirikane in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture,” *Orientations*, vol. 34, no. 10 (December 2003), p. 30.

further illustrated by the fact that the *Luoyang quielanji* (洛陽伽藍記; *Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*) by Yang Xuanzhi (楊衒之), completed around 547, mentions a Buddhist temple in Luoyang called Zhuangyansi (莊嚴寺; Temple of Adornments).⁷

It is not clear when the term *shōgon* first appeared in Japan. However, since the term frequently appears in sūtras—most often in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (J: *Kegon-kyō*; 華嚴經)—one can surmise that the term was known in Japan from at least 735, the year when the priest Genbō (玄昉; d. 746) brought the *Tripitaka* (J: *Issaikyō*; 一切經) to Japan. Amongst the sūtras and commentaries in Japan, there is an infinite variety of different types of *shōgon*, which are classified in various ways.⁸ However, amongst the great variety of different types of *shōgon* mentioned, one can distinguish three broad categories according to the meaning of the term *shōgon*: first, the adornment of Buddhist deities with their own virtues and good deeds; second, the adornment of Buddhist deities with ornaments; third, the adornment of the Buddha Land.

In the first category, the term *shōgon* is used in the sense that Buddhist deities adorn themselves with their own virtues and good deeds. This is based on the idea that the Buddha body (J: *busshin*; 仏身) and the Buddha Land (J: *butsudo*; 仏土) are interrelated to the human body and the physical world and can be “adorned” with virtues through religious practice such as ascetic discipline, meditation, wisdom and compassion in the same way as the physical body can be adorned with jewelry and ornaments.⁹ This

⁷ Brinker, “Sublime Adornment: Kirikane in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture,” p. 30; Yi-t’ung Wang, trans., *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang by Yang Hsüan-chih* (Princeton, 1984), p. 83.

⁸ For various types of *shōgon* and their classification, see Mochizuki Shinkō, ed., *Bukkyō daijiten*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Bukkyō daijiten hakkōsho, 1936; reprint, Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Konko Kyokai, 1966-68), pp. 2607-2609; and Oda Tokuno, ed., *Bukkyō daijiten* (Tokyo: Okura Shoten, 1929), pp. 771-772.

⁹ Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 184.

meaning of *shōgon* is well illustrated in this passage from the *Daishūkyō* (大集經), which was translated into Chinese in the early 5th century:

The four types of *shōgon* (*shishu shōgon*; 四種莊嚴) are: first, discipline (*kaiyōraku shōgon*; 戒瓔珞莊嚴), which means the Bodhisattva discarding all evil deeds with discipline. Second, meditation (*sanmai yōraku shōgon*; 三昧瓔珞莊嚴), which means that the Bodhisattva gets rid of delusions with meditation. Third, wisdom (*chie yōraku shōgon*; 智慧瓔珞莊嚴), which means that the Bodhisattva removes himself from any clinging by understanding the wisdom. Fourth, *dhāranī* (*darani yōraku shōgon*; 陀羅尼瓔珞莊嚴), which means that the Bodhisattva possesses the virtuous law and never loses it and that although still possessing evil never expresses it. To adorn the absolute body (J: *hosshin*; 法身) with these four laws is like adorning the body with ornaments (*yōraku*; 瓔珞) and therefore is called *yōraku shōgon*.¹⁰

The fact that this passage likens the adornment of the “absolute body” with religious virtues to the adornment of the physical body with ornaments, demonstrates that the original ritual-instrumental meaning of “putting into a state of holiness” of the Sanskrit term *alamkāra* is still fully implicit in the term *shōgon*. It further illustrates the dynamic interrelatedness between the two Buddha bodies—the reward or bliss body (Sk: *sambhōgakāya*; J: *hōjin*; 報身) and the shadow or manifested body (Sk: *nirmānakāya*; J: *ōjin*; 応身)—through which the absolute or cosmic body (Sk: *dharmakāya*; J: *hosshin*; 法身), which is formless, manifests itself.¹¹ The *sambhōgakāya* is acquired and further adorned through religious merit and virtues. This body is only visible to Bodhisattvas and enlightened beings. The *nirmānakāya* is the physical or shadow body in which the Buddha incarnates himself or a body, which “emanates from within himself.”¹² This is the physical body, which is adorned with precious ornaments and radiates, but only to the extent to which the *sambhōgakāya* has been adorned through religious merit. Thus the

¹⁰ Oda Tokuno, ed., *Bukkyō daijiten*, p. 771.

¹¹ Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, pp. 11-12.

¹² Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 11.

concept of *shōgon* encompasses the *sambhōgakāya* and *nirmānakāya* in a dynamic way—as a manifestation of the *dharmakāya*, which is formless.

Both bodies are also referred to as the “form body” (Sk: *rūpakāya*) or in the Japanese equivalent of the Sanskrit term the “colour body” (J: *shiki shin*; 色身). Form and colour refer to the visible manifestations of these bodies, which can be either perceived in a physical-empirical sense as in the case of the *nirmānakāya* or in an intuitive-visionary sense as in the case of the *sambhōghakāya*.¹³ Therefore, both bodies are dynamically interrelated and harmoniously unified in the concept of *shōgon*, not in the sense of adornment symbolizing virtue, but in the sense of adorning virtues-virtuous adornments.

However, this meaning of *shōgon* does not only include the adornment of Buddhist deities themselves with their own virtues, but also extends to the adornment of various realms through the power of their virtues. This is well illustrated in the following passage in the chapter on the “Inconceivable qualities of Buddhas” of the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Sk: *Avatamsaka Sūtra*; J: *Kegon-kyō*), which lists the “ten kinds of supreme adornment of Buddhas”:

All buddhas are able to beautify and purify all worlds by means of spiritual powers, in the space of an instant manifesting the adornments of all worlds, these adornments beyond recounting even in countless eons, all free from defilement, incomparably pure; all the adornments and purities of all buddha-fields they cause to equally enter one field—this is the fourth mastery of buddhas.¹⁴

This passage illustrates that the meaning of *shōgon* as adornment of Buddhist deities with their own virtues and good deeds also includes the use of these “spiritual powers” gained through religious practise for “the adornments of all worlds.” It strongly implies the meaning of the original Sanskrit term *vyūha* of “filling the abstract emptiness of

¹³ Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Thomas Cleary, trans., *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra*, vol. 2 (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1986), p. 228.

absolute reality with variety.”

The second category of references to *shōgon* refers to *shōgon* as the adornment of Buddhist deities with ornaments. However, considering the definition of the concept of *shōgon* discussed so far, these physical adornments of the *nirmānakāya* with actual ornaments are always at the same time spiritual adornments of the *sambhōgakāya*. Only in this dynamic interrelatedness of the sensual-spiritual and ornamental-virtuous can the concept of *shōgon* be fully understood. This meaning of *shōgon* is well illustrated in the *Lotus Sūtra* (J: *Hokke-kyō*; 法華經) in the chapter on the Bodhisattva of Fine Sound:

This bodhisattva’s eyes were like broad, great leaves of the green lotus. Even if one could have combined a hundred thousand myriads of moons, the classic beauty of his facial features would have exceeded theirs. His body was the colour of pure gold, adorned with incalculable hundreds of thousands of merits. His majesty was imposing and glorious, his glow lustrous, his marks as perfect as those of the firm body of Nārāyana.¹⁵

The fact that this passage describes the body colour of the Bodhisattva as of “pure gold, adorned with incalculable hundreds of thousands of merits,” demonstrates that the concept of *shōgon* dynamically encompasses the sensual-spiritual, ornamental-virtuous, *nirmānakāya-sambhōgakāya* and thus provides the conceptual basis for the visual representation of all Buddhist art as a religious-aesthetic expression.

The third category of references found in sūtras refers to the meaning of *shōgon* as the adornment of the Buddha Land. In this sense the term is used to describe the splendour of the Buddhist realms. However, considering the meaning of the term discussed so far, it has to be understood as a sacred splendour, which is dynamically interrelated with the sacredness and holiness of the Buddha Land. This is well illustrated in the first chapter of the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (J: *Kegon-kyō*), in which the paradise of the Buddha is

¹⁵ Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 306.

described:

There were banners of precious stones, constantly emitting shining light and producing beautiful sounds. Nets of myriad gems and garlands of exquisitely scented flowers hung all around. The finest jewels appeared spontaneously, raining inexhaustible quantities of gems and beautiful flowers all over the earth. There were rows of jewel trees, their branches and foliage lustrous and luxuriant. By the Buddha's spiritual power, he caused all the adornments of this enlightenment to be reflected therein.¹⁶

It is significant that this passage states that by the Buddha's spiritual power, all the adornments of enlightenment were reflected in the sumptuous adornments of the Buddha's paradise. This clearly expresses the concept of *shōgon* as dynamically encompassing and harmoniously unifying the seemingly opposite realms of the sensuous-spiritual and aesthetic-religious and thus provides the conceptual basis for the visual representation of Buddhist art in which the beautiful and the sacred are harmoniously united. Therefore, it is important to remember that the concept of *shōgon* when applied concretely to Buddhist art either as the adornment of individual deities or the entire Buddha realm is an aesthetic-religious concept, in which physical adornment is always at the same time spiritual adornment and thus the adornment on the level of the *nirmānakāya* is at the same time the adornment on the level of the *sambhōgakāya*.

In this context, it is also important to examine the function of *shōgon* as a means of veneration and offering. In Buddhism, veneration (Sk: *pūja*; J: *kuyō*; 供養) and meditation (Sk: *dhyāna*; J: *zen*) are the two paths to salvation, which are intimately linked. However, whilst meditation is primarily a means for the advancement of one's own salvation, veneration is a path either for one's own salvation or, more often, for the salvation of another person, for example parents, teachers, and ancestors—either dead

¹⁶ Anne Nishimura Morse and Samuel Crowell Morse, *Object as Insight: Japanese Buddhist Art and Ritual* (Katonah: Katonah Art Museum, 1995), p. 10; Cleary, trans., *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, vol. 1, p. 55.

or alive. Thus the purpose of veneration or offering was the accumulation of merits or good karma either for one's own salvation or the salvation of another person, often deceased.¹⁷ All *shōgon* whether expressed in Buddhist sculptures, paintings, temple halls, illuminated sūtras, or ritual objects serves this function of veneration or sacred offering (J: *kuyō*).¹⁸ This function of *shōgon* is well illustrated in volume ten of the *Daichidoron* (大智度論) of the *Daihōhannya-kyō* (大品般若經), which was translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva (344-413):

Buddha enters into the state of mind of fourteen transformations in the *shizen* (四禪). All the fragrant trees with flowers of the whole world decorate the land in *shōgon* and all sentient beings are harmonised and their minds are transformed to be virtuous. For what purpose is this world decorated in *shōgon*? Because it is to preach wisdom. It is decorated in *shōgon* style for the welcoming of all sorts of Bodhisattvas and celestial beings.¹⁹

The last sentence of this passage, which explains that the world is decorated in *shōgon* style for the welcoming of all sorts of Bodhisattvas and celestial beings fully expresses the function of *shōgon* as a means of veneration. Thus, the beautification of the world through *shōgon* is at the same time a spiritualization of the world as the ultimate act of veneration and offering, which in turn bestows blessing in the form of merit and good karma on to the worshipper. In this sense the splendour of *shōgon*, which contains the splendour of physical ornaments and spiritual virtues, serves to express the deepest veneration felt by the worshipper and in turn accumulates merit through his act of adoration.

Thus, patrons commissioning objects of *shōgon* such as Buddhist sculptures,

¹⁷ For a more detailed discussion on veneration and offering, see Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, pp. 192-194.

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of the various articles of *shōgon* in Japanese Buddhist art, see Sekine Shunichi, *Hotoke, bosatsu dōnai no shōgon*, Nihon no bijutsu, no. 281 (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1989), pp. 33-80.

¹⁹ Mochizuki, ed., *Bukkyō daijiten*, vol. 3, p. 2607.

paintings, temple halls, illuminated sūtras, and ritual objects and artists making these objects of *shōgon*, both participated in an act of veneration (J: *kuyō*), through which they accumulated religious merit. Therefore, it is important to understand that all objects of *shōgon* primarily serve the function of veneration or sacred offering and that the concept of *shōgon* is intricately linked to the concept of *kuyō*.

2. The Expression of *Shōgon* in *Danzō*

From the above discussion of the meaning of the term *shōgon* it became clear that *shōgon* is a religious-aesthetic concept, which provides the conceptual basis for the visual representation of all Buddhist art as a religious-aesthetic expression.²⁰ However, I will demonstrate that the concept of *shōgon* is of particular importance for *danzō*, since the concept of *shōgon* deeply pervades and unites the two elements of material and form in the concept of *danzō*, making *danzō* into objects of *shōgon* par excellence.

The expression of *shōgon* in the material element of *danzō* is demonstrated by the choice of sandalwood as a material. Sandalwood was a most precious material appreciated for its medical and ascribed spiritual properties in ancient India.²¹ One of the magical functions of the Sanskrit term for *shōgon* in ancient India, *alamkāra*, was the use of odours of fragrant trees—amongst them sandalwood—to drive away demons.²² This provides evidence for the association of sandalwood as a sacred material with magical

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the complexities in the creation of Buddhist art, see Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, pp. 177-80.

²¹ See Chapter 1, pp. 16-18.

²² Gonda, "The Meaning of the Word *Alamkāra*," p. 105.

properties with the concept of *alāmkara* in the sense of purification as adornment.

Furthermore, sūtras list sandalwood amongst the precious materials that adorn Buddhist deities and paradises in the sense of *shōgon*. This is well illustrated in this passage from the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Sk: *Avatamsaka Sūtra*) in the chapter on The Ocean of Physical Marks of the Ten Bodies of Buddha:

Next there is a mark of greatness called cloud producing the sounds of all universes, adorned with oceans of jewels and finest sandalwood, emitting great webs of flames filling the cosmos, producing therein subtle sounds pointing out the ocean of all actions of sentient beings.²³

This passage illustrates that sandalwood was regarded as a material for *shōgon*. One can surmise that it was the combination of its physical characteristics such as fine grain, beautiful yellow or red colour, intense fragrance and its medical and ascribed spiritual properties that made sandalwood a suitable material for the expression of *shōgon*.

Having established that *shōgon* is expressed through sandalwood in the material element, it is possible to see the question of substitute materials in a different light. The choice of substitute materials with regard to their resemblance to both the physical and spiritual characteristics of sandalwood can be understood as the desire to express *shōgon* in the material element as closely as possible to the highest level of *shōgon* expressed in sandalwood. Thus the closer the physical characteristics of the substitute wood to the qualities of sandalwood such as fine grain, yellow or red colour and sweet fragrance the greater the expression of *shōgon*. Furthermore, the small size of *danzō* was a natural limitation imposed by the physical nature of sandalwood. However, the small size also expressed the preciousness of the material and became a visual indicator for the fact that the sculpture was made out of sandalwood and that, therefore, *shōgon* was expressed in

²³ Cleary, trans., *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, vol. 2, p. 248.

the material. Thus the small size of *danzō* as a visual indicator for the highest expression of *shōgon* had to be preserved, particularly when using substitute materials in order to come as closely as possible to the highest expression of *shōgon*, which was realized through the use of sandalwood.

Similarly the question of *danjiki* or colouring imitating the natural yellow or red colour of high quality sandalwood can be understood as an attempt to achieve the ultimate expression of *shōgon* through the material element in *danzō*. This interpretation of *danjiki* as a means of ultimate expression of *shōgon* is further backed up by the fact that a number of *danzō* made out of sandalwood have *danjiki* applied to their surface (pls. 27, 33, 34, 44- 46). If *danjiki* was simply a means of making *danzō* made out of substitute materials look physically more similar to *danzō* made out of actual sandalwood, it would not have been applied to *danzō* made out of real sandalwood. Thus, *danjiki* has to be understood as the ultimate expression of *shōgon* in the material element of the concept of *danzō*, which was applied to *danzō* made out of sandalwood as well as substitute materials as the ultimate adornment—both physically and spiritually (*shōgon*)—and can therefore even be understood as an “act of *shōgon*” in its own right.²⁴

From the discussion thus far it has become evident that the material element of *danzō* is imbued with the concept of *shōgon* in the choice of sandalwood for both its aesthetic and ascribed spiritual properties, the selection of substitute materials for their resemblance to the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of sandalwood, the small size, even of sculptures made out of substitute materials, as a visual indicator for the highest realisation

²⁴ Shimizu Zenzō lists *danjiki* amongst *shōgon* on the body of Buddhist sculptures, see Shimizu Zenzō, “Bukkyō bijutsu ni okeru shōgon ni tsuite: Chūgoku chōkoku,” in *Bukkyō bijutsu ni okeru shōgon*. Kenkyū happyō to zadankai. Vol. 15: Josei kenkyūkai hōkokusho (Kyoto: Bukkyō bijutsu kenkyū Ueno kinen zaidan, 1987), p. 4.

of *shōgon* expressed through sandalwood and *danjiki* as the ultimate surface adornment—both physically and spiritually. Therefore, one can conclude that the material element in the concept of *danzō* fully expresses the concept of *shōgon*.

Before examining the expression of *shōgon* in the second element of the concept of *danzō*, which is form, it is essential to provide a clear definition of this element. Form consists of style and iconography. Both style and iconography determine the material form of *danzō* and therefore have to be equally considered. Previous studies on *danzō* merely concerned with style²⁵ did not consider the fact that in Buddhist sculpture, form consists of both style and iconography and both of these elements are essential to the artistic process and to the definition and understanding of form.²⁶

Furthermore, for a definition of style it is vital to distinguish between type-style and period-style. Style can be defined as the constant elements, quality and expression of a type or a period.²⁷ In this sense, when attempting to define the style of *danzō*, it is essential to distinguish between those stylistic elements belonging to the type-style, which are constant and those stylistic elements belonging to the period-style, which are changing. This is a methodological approach that is particularly important when examining Buddhist art, as suggested by Dietrich Seckel, who states that, “the linear sequence in style phases is, therefore, interrupted or at least modified by style-determining factors which cut across sequences in time. True judgement can only be obtained by observing the interaction of type-styles and period-styles.”²⁸

²⁵ Mōri, “Heian jidai,” pp. 134-45; and Kuno, “Danzō chōkoku,” pp. 31-55.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of Buddhist iconography and artistic process, see Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, pp. 23-36.

²⁷ This is a modified definition to that expressed by Meyer Schapiro: “Style,” in Meyer Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), p. 51.

²⁸ Seckel, *Buddhist Art of East Asia*, p. 217.

In the case of *danzō* it means that its type-style are those stylistic elements that remain constant during the time period under investigation in this study, namely from the 8th to the 14th century, in spite of changes in period-style. In other words, those stylistic elements, which remain constant in *danzō* despite changes in period-style form the common denominator of all *danzō* and define them as a group (type-style).

Previous studies on *danzō* concerned with the issue of style have failed to provide a coherent definition of a *danzō* style due to their failure to distinguish between type-style and period-style. Mōri Hisashi and Kuno Takeshi base their definition of *danzō* style on a small group of imported Chinese *danzō* of the Tang dynasty and Japanese *danzō* of the 8th and 9th centuries, which combines stylistic elements of both type-style and period-style.²⁹ Therefore, as they progress in their investigation of *danzō* into the 11th and 12th centuries, the period-style elements, which, however, according to their definition have not been clearly distinguished from the type-style elements and thus form part of it, change and thus their definition of *danzō* style no longer applies to those sculptures with different period-styles. Therefore, Mōri Hisashi concludes, that *danzō* do not play any significant role after the middle of the Heian period, since due to his definition of *danzō* style, he is unable to recognise any examples after the middle of the Heian period because of the change in period-style.³⁰

In contrast to this, Kuno Takeshi does consider *danzō* of the 11th and 12th centuries, but concludes, that they have lost the special characteristics of *danzō* style³¹ and particularly by the 12th century, “*danzō* became just a plain wood sculpture and the characteristics of *danzō* became oblivious and they came to show hardly any difference

²⁹ Mōri, “Heian jidai,” pp. 134-45; and Kuno, “Danzō chōkoku,” pp. 31-55.

³⁰ Mōri, “Heian jidai,” p. 143.

³¹ Kuno, “Danzō chōkoku,” pp. 51-53.

from the plain stage of gold coloured and coloured sculptures prior to their application of *kinpaku* or colouring. These factors gradually led to the decline of *danzō* style sculptures.”³² This conclusion is due to a definition of *danzō* style, which does not distinguish between type-style and period-style and therefore fails in its application to *danzō* of different period-styles.

Oka Naomi follows a similar approach of defining *danzō* style as an imported style based on Chinese *danzō* containing both elements of type-style and period-style and therefore concludes that “*danzō* style, which was an imported style, was followed, but gradually lost its characteristics.”³³ The fact that the *danzō* style “gradually lost its characteristics” is again due to the definition of *danzō* style based on an undifferentiated blend of type-style and period-style of imported Chinese *danzō* of the Tang dynasty and thus when the period-style inevitably changes in later *danzō*, the characteristics of the style appear to have been lost.

Although Inoue Tadashi’s research on *danzō* mainly focuses on issues of material, he nevertheless uses the term *danzō* style without properly defining it and argues that, “by the late Heian period *danzō* was no longer a special type of particularly holy sculpture, which was expressed in a special way. Thus, the style of *danzō* became no different from ordinary lacquered or painted sculptures and had lost its special characteristics.”³⁴ This once again shows that the failure to distinguish between type-style and period-style results in a definition of a *danzō* style, which is not applicable to *danzō* of all periods and is incapable of accommodating *danzō* with different period-styles. The pitfalls of these approaches show that it is essential to clearly distinguish between the type-style, which

³² Kuno, “*Danzō chōkoku*,” p. 53.

³³ Oka, “*Danzō yōshiki*,” p. 55.

³⁴ Inoue, *Danzō*, p. 74.

is constant and defines *danzō* as a coherent group, and the period-style, which changes over time and interacts with the type-style.

Donald Wood, investigating *danzō* of Jūichimen Kannon, has recognised these shortcomings in the definition of a *danzō* style and argued that, “the characteristics that form the basis of this so-called style, appear to constitute instead a body of technical knowledge that is characteristic of plain wood sculpture in general, rather than a particular artistic style.”³⁵ He concludes, “that artistically these pieces changed with the styles of the times, while technically the special features of wood sculptures that are manifest within them remained relatively constant. The establishment of a sandalwood style of sculpture is thus somewhat inconclusive.”³⁶

I would agree with Donald Wood that, “artistically these pieces changed with the styles of the times,” which I would like to call the period-style and some of the elements, which he calls “technically the special features,” which “remained relatively constant,” I would like to call the type-style. Therefore, I would like to propose the following definition of a type-style for *danzō*, which remains constant and interacts with the period-style:

1. Made out of sandalwood or suitable substitute materials such as *kaya*, *sakura* and occasionally *hinoki*
2. Small size and mostly single wood block construction (J: *ichiboku zukuri*)
3. Plain wood finish or *danjiki*
4. Finely carved and finished to the highest level of craftsmanship (including the use of *kirikane*) as an expression of *shōgon*

The first three characteristics partly refer to the material element and the expression of *shōgon* in this element has already been discussed. The fourth characteristic entirely

³⁵ Wood, “Eleven Faces of the Bodhisattva,” p. 356.

³⁶ Wood, “Eleven Faces of the Bodhisattva,” p. 359.

belongs to the element of form and the concept of *shōgon* is expressed through the fine and intricate carving, and smooth surface finishing to the highest level of craftsmanship.

Whilst all four characteristics remain constant, the expression of *shōgon* in the fourth characteristic changes according to the period-style as for example in the application of intricate *kirikane* on *danzō* of the Fujiwara period (pls. 27, 28, 41, 44, 56) or the revivalist tendency of carving intricate jewelry directly on *danzō* of Bodhisattvas during the Kamakura period (pls. 42, 49, 50).

However, the expression of *shōgon* in the element of form is not only determined by period-style, but also by iconography. Previous studies on *danzō*, particularly those by Mōri Hisashi and Kuno Takeshi have one-sidedly focused on style without considering the importance of iconography in the definition of the form of *danzō*.³⁷ Since Mōri's definition of *danzō* is based on a small group of Chinese *danzō* of the Tang dynasty and Japanese *danzō* of the 8th and 9th centuries, all of which are representations of Jūichimen Kannon, his fourth characteristic of *danzō*, "intricate carving," only refers to the particular expression of intricate carving on the elaborate necklaces, earrings, crowns, arm-and brace-lets of the particular iconographic type of Jūichimen Kannon.³⁸ Therefore, as Inoue Katsutoshi has argued convincingly, Mōri's fourth characteristic as defined by him, is only valid for representations of Bodhisattvas, but would not hold true for representations of Buddhas, which are iconographically required to be unadorned.³⁹

Thus, I would like to propose that the defining factor in the element of form of *danzō* is the concept of *shōgon* in the expression of intricate craftsmanship, which is expressed in all iconographic types and periods and in fact, is the essential factor

³⁷ Mōri, "Heian jidai," pp. 134-45; and Kuno, "Danzō chōkoku," pp. 31-55.

³⁸ For Mōri's four characteristics of *danzō*, see Mōri, "Heian jidai," pp. 138.

³⁹ Inoue, "Danzōkō," pp. 11-12.

determining the form of all *danzō*. Although the expression of this defining factor of *shōgon* in the element of form is constant, it varies according to iconography and period-style. Thus, due to iconographical stipulations, a *danzō* of Yakushi Nyorai (pl. 26) shows a different expression of *shōgon* in the element of form from a *danzō* of Jūichimen Kannon (pl. 39). Furthermore, due to differences in period-styles a *danzō* of Jūichimen Kannon of the Tenpyō period (pl. 36) demonstrates a different expression of *shōgon* in the element of form from a *danzō* of Jūichimen Kannon of the Fujiwara period (pl. 41).

From the above discussion, it became clear that the concept of *shōgon* expressed through the fine carving and smooth surface finishing to the highest level of craftsmanship is the fundamental defining factor in the element of form in the concept of *danzō*. Furthermore, it was shown that the expression of the constant factor of *shōgon* (type-style) in the element of form is determined by period-style on the one hand and iconography on the other. Thus, due to the central importance of *shōgon* in the form of *danzō*, the expression of *shōgon* according to iconographic types and period-styles will be a major theme to be explored in the examination and discussion of *danzō* in the following chapters. In order to facilitate this examination, *danzō* will be classified according to iconographic types.