Japanese Envoys to Sui China and the Li System and Buddhism: The Ideology of the Government of the Suiko Court

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In the 7th century, the ideology of the government of the Suiko Court was established by combining the two foreign systems of Li (ritual) and Buddhism. The government dispatched envoys so that Wakoku (Yamato Government) would become a power and a country with rituals and ceremonies within the Asian world through the establishment of Buddhism copied from Sui China. In an international order and international environment where Sui China stood at the top, Wakoku (Yamato Government) realized that it was vital that it not only establish social order based on Buddhist thought, but that it needed to urgently establish the Li system, or ceremonial code, that had its origins in ancient Chinese Confucian thought. The adoption of Buddhism and a ceremonial code was the Wakoku’s international strategy for East Asia. As a consequence, it dispatched official envoys and many Buddhist scholars and students to learn the arts, culture, philosophies and systems of Sui China, and at the same time endeavored to acquire books and various aspects of culture. It was precisely the government’s introduction of the twelve level cap and rank system, the enactment of a seventeen-article constitution, its policies, systems and the diplomacy which was inextricably linked to these procedures and ideas from Sui China that lay at the heart of the political reforms of the Suiko Court.

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