Outline Lecture Eleven—Silla Unification in 7th Century Korea

I) Political Developments in 7th century Korea
   a) The Three Kingdoms
      i) Koguryo in the north, Paekche in the west, and Silla in the south
      ii) Rise of Paekche ambitions in 660 C.E.
   b) Tang China’s Intervention
      i) Consistent with Tang imperialist ambitions in Korea
      ii) Pincer Movement
      iii) “Protector-General to Pacify the East” to its victorious general
   c) Assertion of Independence under Unified Silla (668-935 C.E.)
      i) Silla King Munmu attempt to undermine Tang presence
      ii) 676—pivotal year of Korean independence
      iii) Benefits of relations with Tang
          (1) In theory, tributary state
          (2) Active trade with China
          (3) Gained first-hand exposure to workings of Chinese bureaucracy
              (a) Capital at Kyongju modeled after Chang’an
              (b) Office of the Chancellery (Chipsabu)
              (c) Provincial management
          (4) Overall erosion of aristocratic power in favor of centralized monarchy

II) Buddhism in the Silla State
   a) Initial Entry of Buddhism between 4th to 6th century
      i) Strong resistance from Silla nobles—steeped in shamanist rituals
      ii) The Martyrdom of Icha-don
   b) Korean Buddhism in 7th century
      i) By 7th century, Buddhist faith already pervaded all social classes
          (1) Among the elites, esoteric schools like Huayan were more popular
          (2) Among commoners, devotional sects like Pure Land were more popular
   c) Monarch as Chakravartin
      i) Kingship modeled after Ashoka as “The Turner of the Wheel of Dharma”
          (1) Hyecho’s pilgrimage to India (704-787)
      ii) Silla kings assumed this role by commissioning Buddhist sites

III) Sokkuram: A Case-study of Religious Syncretism through Art
   a) Construction of Sokkuram in mid-8th century
      i) Interior layout: hierarchical progression to the central figure of the Buddha
      ii) Gaining “cosmopolitan credentials” as a legitimate member of the Buddhist world
      iii) Power through “mathematic perfection”
          (1) Meticulous balance and symmetry in the layout
          (2) Evocative of a concrete, three-dimensional mandala
   b) The Persistence of Indigenous Traditions
      i) Sokkuram also reflected local use of sacred space to invoke cosmic powers
          (1) Exact function of Neolithic Korean sodos
          (2) Reminiscent of royal burial mounds of Neolithic people in Korea
ii) Buddha Vairocana?
   (1) Direction it faced provided spiritual protection

iii) Residual Shamanism in Korean Buddhism
   (1) Shamans seen as intermediaries between gods and people
   (2) Royal family seen as direct descendents of the high-god, Chonshin

iv) Synthesized shamanistic role of king with Buddhist notion of a *Chakravartin*
   (1) “Temple of the Yellow Dragon”