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## CHEN, Syue-jhen. *The Certificate of Ordination of Priest Kōjō by Emperor Saga and Imperial Calligraphy of the Tang Dynasty: Standardization and Circulation of Wang Xizhi's Style during the Early and High Tang Periods*

The *Certificate of Ordination of Priest Kōjō* (*Kōjō Kaichō* 光定戒牒) at the Enryaku-ji Temple 延曆寺 was written by Emperor Saga 嵯峨 (786–842, r. 809–823) for Saichō's 最澄 (767–822) disciple Kōjō 光定 (779–858) in the fourteenth year of Kōnin 弘仁 (823). Previous studies on this work have pointed out its similarities to the calligraphic styles of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361), Kūkai 空海 (774–835), and Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641), and suggested that the stylistic source lies specifically with Kūkai, given his interaction with Emperor Saga. This paper explores the stylistic influences and implications behind this work and argues for a close affinity between the *Kōjō Kaichō* and the imperial calligraphic tradition of the Tang dynasty. This paper starts with a rigorous stylistic re-examination of works associated with the Tang court brought to Emperor Saga by Kūkai and Saichō. Next, it shifts to the visual connections of the *Kōjō Kaichō* and two important, yet little-studied works, namely the *Character Compilation for the Sacred Teachings Preface* (*Ji Wang shengjiao xu* 集王聖教序) and the *Ode to Pied Wagtails* (*Jiling song* 鶺鴒頌). Finally, this paper reevaluates the *Kōjō Kaichō*'s importance in the history of calligraphy and Buddhism.

Stylistically speaking, the rough brushwork of the *Kōjō Kaichō* appears to be different from Wang Xizhi's exquisite calligraphy. However, a comparison of individual characters reveals that the *Kōjō Kaichō* is reminiscent of the Jin and Tang styles. In particular, it bears a strong resemblance to court-related calligraphy found on rubbings and tracing copies, such as the *Ji Wang shengjiao xu*, suggesting admiration for the established tradition of imperial calligraphy from the early Tang dynasty. It is noteworthy that Emperor Saga was well aware of the overall structure and political implication of imperial calligraphy found in the *Jiling song* by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762, r. 712–756). A rubbing of this work was brought back by Saichō. In order to avoid succession disputes, Emperor Xuanzong wrote this poem about brotherhood in the style of Wang Xizhi, who was admired by the imperial family. Similarly, the *Nihon Kōki* 日本後紀 recounts a description of Emperor Saga's relationship with his younger brother who later became Emperor Junna 淳和 (786–840, r. 823–833). It can be speculated that during the turbulent era of succession disputes, the perception of Emperor Xuanzong's *Jiling song* was not confined to its calligraphic style, but also carried obvious political implications. Emperor Saga not only adopted the “flying-white 飛白書” of Tang imperial calligraphy as a standard, but also imitated the *Ji Wang shengjiao xu*, the famous court collection of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy compiled and interpreted from the early Tang dynasty. It is through the imitation that Emperor Saga demonstrated his mastery over the “collation of Wang Xizhi's style.”

During the Kōnin era (810–824), as part of a series of policies emulating the Tang dynasty, Emperor Saga sought to adopt not only the political strategies of Emperor Taizong 太宗 (598–649, r. 626–649), but also the cultural attitudes toward imperial calligraphy associated with his reign. As a result, I argue that the motivations behind the *Kōjō Kaichō* include a retrospective emulation of the Tang emperor's self-representation and political functions as they are found in his imperial calligraphy. However, Emperor Saga did not passively follow one singular Tang style; rather, he actively selected styles from the Tang court, and combined them to create a nuanced image of imperial calligraphy. It can also be said that the calligraphy of Emperor Saga and Kūkai share a common origin. The *Kōjō Kaichō*, which is both a Buddhist document and an imperial letter, embodies Emperor Saga's attitude toward politics, Buddhism, calligraphy, and the perception of Tang culture, highlighting a multilayered historical and cultural context of the early Heian period.

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